

FLORIDA LAND STEWARD



A Quarterly Newsletter for Florida Landowners and Resource Professionals

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Alters Named Outstanding Tree Farmer of the Year 2015

By Lee Ann Fisch, Florida Forestry Association

John and Elizabeth Alter, of Malone, FL, have been named the 2015 Tree Farmer of the Year. They were honored at the Florida Forestry Association's Annual Meeting held recently in Panama City Beach, FL. Landowners, foresters and resource professionals also had a chance to tour their property on October 24.

The Alters own and manage nearly one thousand acres in northeast Jackson County. The land includes their home site and 18 tree farm stands, as well as profit-generating pasture lease for beef cattle, cultivated land for row crops, and a 100,000 square foot fenced plot with a wireless communications tower. They also hold hunting leases on the forested areas.

The Alters' Tree Farm features 600 acres of pine plantations, including

longleaf, slash and loblolly. Cypress trees more than 100 years old can be found in wetlands on the property. The land also supports abundant wildlife.

Portions of their land have been in the family since 1855, with new acreage added in 2002. Their stands range in age from 45 years to seedlings planted in January of this year. Continuing family ownership and management of the property is important to the Alters, so an LLC was formed in 2006 to assure smooth and efficient transition of their investment to their sons John Alter III and Mark Bevis Alter as the next generation responsible for Alter-Bevis Farms.

The Alter family clearly believes that to achieve successful silviculture and land management, landowners must create *and use* a practical management plan. To prepare their guidelines, they enlisted the assistance of their consulting foresters (American Forest Management), plus frequent invited visits by the County Forester—a truly valuable resource. Their intensive land and timber management includes timely treatments of prescribed fire, judicious herbicide applications, and appropriate mechanical removal of competition. Defined fence lines clearly demarcate property boundaries for the landowner as well as their neighbors.

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Natural Resources Conservation Service



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John Alter also believes that advocacy is an essential responsibility for landowners. As such, he has taken part in nearly ten visits to lawmakers in Washington, D.C., and Tallahassee, FL. According to Alter, face-to-face relationships are valuable to the support of the entire forest products industry.

“State and national forestry organizations do a great job of representing us at their respective levels, but that personal touch by the landowner is often what makes the difference,” said Alter.

Alter also believes in the importance of working with the media to educate the public about the forest industry.

Alter serves on the National Public Affairs Committee of the American Tree Farm System. He is also active on the Florida Forestry Association’s Communications Committee and serves on the Association’s Board of Directors. In 2012, he was appointed by Gov. Rick Scott to serve on the Governing Board of the Northwest Florida Water Management District.



The Alter Family is proud to be selected as Florida’s 2015 Tree Farmer of the Year. It has been their intent to actively promote and practice good forestry by using best management practices, and through community outreach and education.

For information on land management planning, succession planning, available assistance, and a variety of related topics, see the Florida Land Steward web site at <http://floridalandsteward.org/>.

Invasive Species Feature: Creeping Indigo

Creeping Indigo (*Indigofera spicata*) is a legume that is native to Africa. It was introduced in Gainesville, FL around 1925 to investigate nitrogen fixation and the plant’s potential as a livestock forage. While it is likely a good nitrogen fixer, it is NOT a good forage and was found in the 1930s to be toxic to livestock.

This plant is a low growing legume with pink blooms, somewhat like those of clover, and small slender bean-like seed pods. The leaves and

Continued on next page





stems are hairy. Leaves contain seven to nine leaflets, and the prostrate stems creep along the soil surface. The plant can also form mats underneath a healthy pasture canopy, making it even more difficult to find if it migrates to pastures. Flowers grow from the base of the leaves and contain many pink blooms. Seed pods are about 1 inch in length and stiff, growing in dense downward-pointing clusters. The perennial root is a taproot, capable of growing at least two feet deep.

Creeping indigo should not be confused with hairy indigo (*Indigofera hirsuta*), which can approach waist height. Creeping indigo will barely rise above the toe of your boots.

Toxicity

Creeping indigo is toxic to horses, cattle, sheep, rabbits, goats, guinea pigs, and fowl. Horses suffer from central nervous system disturbance, with seizures, corneal opacity, ulcerations and redness of gums, and miscarriages or abortions. Cattle are susceptible to creeping indigo poisoning when the diet contains >50% creeping indigo. Symptoms of cattle

poisoning include dullness, anorexia, muscular twitching, aimless walking, pressing head against objects, alternating diarrhea and constipation, abortion, and stillborn calves. Post-mortem findings typically include kidney and liver lesions, as well as lung and intestinal hemorrhaging, liver cirrhosis and hepatitis.

Control

Mechanical control may be a feasible option if the population is small when you find it. If you pull or hoe the plants, make sure you remove and destroy any seeds as well as the plants. Seed can be viable surprisingly early and the stem and leaves remain toxic after they die and dry. The plant has a deep tap root, so mechanical control can be challenging.

Chemical control is under investigation but GrazonNext HL applied at a rate of 24 oz. per acre may be effective as it has good control of other legumes. As always, ensure that you use proper personal protective equipment when using herbicides and follow all instructions on product labels.

Remember the dead plants in your pasture are still a threat. Manure from animals grazing treated pastures or hay from treated fields should not be used for compost. Inspect your pastures and lawns for creeping indigo and other toxic plants. Your livestock and your neighbor's livestock rely on your vigilance. If you suspect you have creeping indigo in your pastures, contact your local County Agent for assistance in identification and management.

For more information on invasive exotic species, assistance, and regional efforts to prevent and control infestations see the Florida Invasive Species Partnership web site at <http://www.floridainvasives.org/>.

References

Sharon Gamble. Creeping Indigo (*Indigo spicata*) – Toxic to Livestock <http://www.volusia.org/core/fileparse.php/4179/urlt/Creeping-Indigo.pdf>

Dr. Rob MacKay. Creeping Indigo Toxicity <http://largeanimal.vethospitals.ufl.edu/2014/11/03/creeping-indigo-toxicity/>

Sellers, Carlisle and Wiggins. South Florida Beef Forage Program. Creeping Indigo: A Small, Yet Lethal Plant http://sfbfp.ifas.ufl.edu/articles/article_2013_june.shtml

USDA NRCS Programs Help Farmers and Ranchers Conserve Natural Resources

Florida farmers and ranchers can apply until Dec. 18, 2015 for financial and technical assistance from USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) programs for fiscal year 2016 funding. Although applications are accepted on a continuous basis for all programs, funding selections are typically made once a year.

Through the **Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)**, landowners may receive financial and technical assistance to improve soil, water, air, plants, animals and related resources. Eligible land includes cropland, rangeland, pastureland, private non-industrial forestland and other farm or ranch lands.

The **Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)** provides financial and technical assistance to conserve agricultural lands and wetlands. Agricultural Land Easements help farmers and ranchers keep their land in agriculture. Eligible partners are Indian tribes, state and local governments and non-governmental organizations that have farmland or grassland protection programs. Wetland Reserve Easements offer technical and financial assistance directly to private landowners and Indian tribes to restore, protect and enhance wetlands through the purchase of a wetland easement.

**Application
deadline for
financial assistance
December 18**

Begin by visiting your local NRCS field office and requesting help developing a conservation plan. To learn about these programs and other technical and financial assistance available from NRCS, contact your local NRCS field office. Find your local office online at <http://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app?agency=nrcs>

Tax Tips for Forest Landowners for the 2015 Tax Year Available Online



Federal income tax laws can influence a private woodland owner's financial decisions about land management. Yet, special favorable tax provisions on timber that are intended to encourage private forest management and stewardship are commonly unknown. To help woodland owners in filing their 2015 tax

returns, this publication, by Dr. Linda Wang, USDA Forest Service National Timber Tax Specialist, explains the federal income tax laws on timber. The information is not legal or accounting advice. It is current as of September 30, 2015. This publication is available at <http://www.timbertax.org>

USDA Helps Restore, Manage Longleaf Pine Forests on Private Lands

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is providing \$10.6 million to aid forest managers restoring longleaf pine ecosystems on private lands in nine states, including \$1,278,000 for Florida. The **Longleaf Pine Initiative** has helped restore more than 240,000 acres of longleaf forests. NRCS provides

technical and financial assistance to help landowners and land managers plant longleaf as well as manage longleaf forests through practices like prescribed burning.

Assistance is available to land managers in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North

Carolina, South Carolina, Texas and Virginia. Interested landowners are encouraged to contact their local USDA service center. An directory is online at <http://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app?agency=nrcs>

USDA Announces \$350 Million Available to Help Protect and Restore Grasslands, Wetlands, Working Lands

Agricultural Secretary Tom Vilsack has announced the availability of \$350 million to help landowners protect and restore key farmlands, grasslands and wetlands across the nation. The funding is provided through the **Agricultural Conservation Easements Program (ACEP)**, administered by USDA's **Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)**. The program was created by the 2014 Farm Bill to protect critical water resources and wildlife habitat, and encourage private owners to maintain land for farming and ranching. Through the voluntary sale of an easement, landowners limit future development to protect these key resources.

"NRCS is committed to preserving working agricultural lands to help protect the long-term viability of farming as well as restoring and

protecting vital wetlands that provide important wildlife habitat and improve water quality," said Russell Morgan, state conservationist for NRCS Florida.

ACEP's agricultural land easements also support environmental quality, wildlife habitat, historic preservation and protection of open spaces. Native American Tribes, state and local governments and non-governmental organizations that have farmland or grassland protection programs are eligible to partner with NRCS to purchase conservation easements.

Wetland reserve easements allow landowners to restore and protect habitat for wildlife on their lands, reduce damage from flooding, recharge groundwater and provide outdoor recreational and educational opportunities. Eligible landowners

**Application
deadline is
January 15**

can choose to enroll in a permanent or 30-year easement. Tribal landowners have the option of enrolling in 30-year contracts as well.

In Florida, the deadline to apply for the program has been extended to Jan. 15, 2016. Applications are available at local NRCS offices and online. Agreements will be evaluated starting in late August.

For more information about agricultural easements contact Nina Bhattacharyya, 352-338-9554. Contact Crenel Francis, 352-338-9508 about wetland reserve easements.



Get Email Updates!

Don't miss out on upcoming events and news! Send an email to cdemers@ufl.edu to be added to the Stewardship listserv. Updates are sent every week or two.

TIMBER PRICE UPDATE

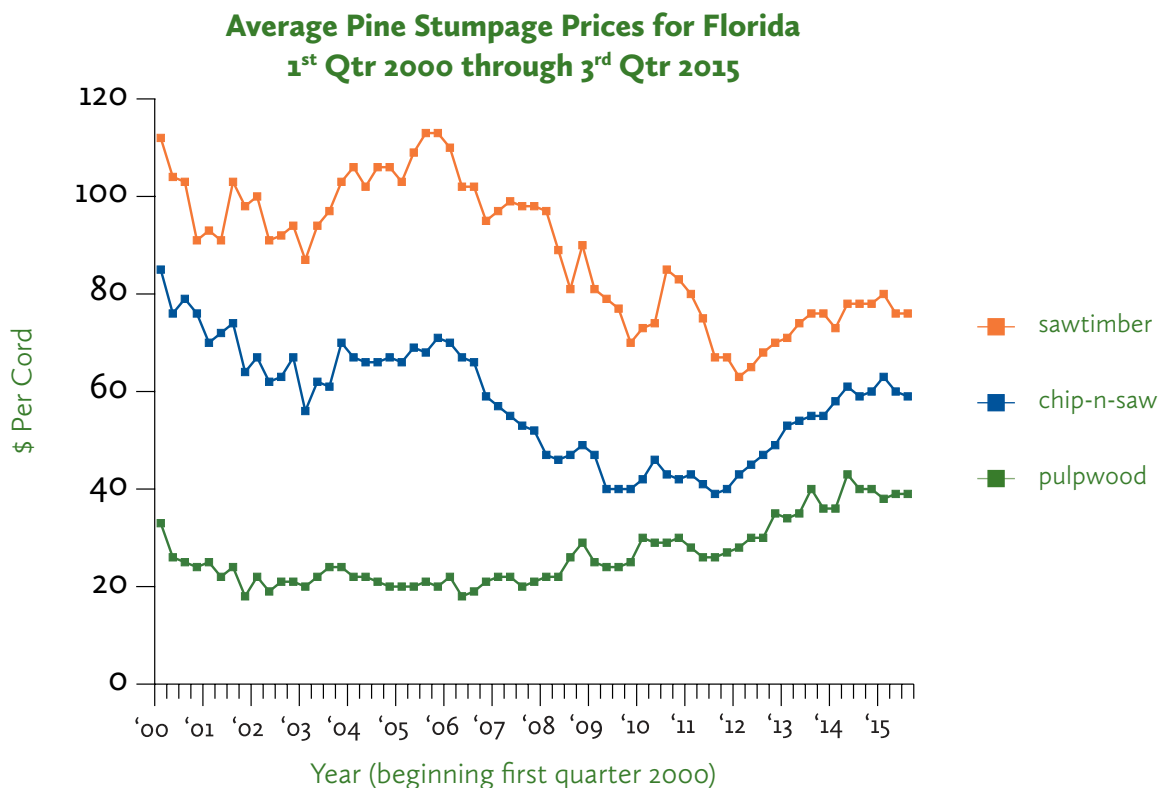
The timber pricing information below is useful for observing trends over time, but does not reflect current conditions at a particular location. Landowners considering a timber sale are advised to solicit the services of a consulting forester to obtain current local market conditions.

Average stumpage prices for the three major products in Florida, as reported in the **3rd Quarter 2015** Timber Mart-South report were:

Florida Stumpage Prices	
Pine pulpwood:	\$39/cord (\$15/ton), same as 2 nd Qtr 2015
Pine C-N-S:	\$59/cord (\$22/ton), same
Pine sawtimber:	\$76/cord (\$28/ton), same

Trend Report

Average stumpage prices for the three major pine products in Florida remained at about the same value as those at the end of the second quarter. Those averages for the rest of the region were mostly down. According to the latest issue of the Timber Mart-South Market Quarterly, Florida is among the strongest timber stumpage markets in the Southern region. Timber market conditions remain stable overall. Building construction continues to improve and fuel costs remain low, relative to those in recent years. The big industry news this quarter and beyond is the recent merger of Plum Creek with Weyerhaeuser, creating a \$23 billion timber company. This merger gives Weyerhaeuser diversification and a much greater presence on the east coast.



Timber Mart-South is compiled and produced at the Center for Forest Business, Warnell School of Forest Resources, University of Georgia, under contract with the Frank W. Norris Foundation, a non-profit corporation serving the forest products industry. See <http://www.tmart-south.com/> for information on subscriptions.

CONGRATULATIONS CERTIFIED FOREST STEWARDS AND TREE FARMERS

For more information about becoming a Certified Forest Steward or Tree Farmer, contact your Florida Forest Service County Forester, consultant or learn about it at:

<http://www.freshfromflorida.com/Divisions-Offices/Florida-Forest-Service/For-Landowners/Programs/>

or

<http://www.floridaforest.org>

These landowners have a current Forest Stewardship and/or Tree Farm management plan for their property and have demonstrated excellent stewardship of their land resources.



Mr. and Mrs. W. A. Milton with Chris Otremba, Lake County



Clifford Schnepf (R) with David Findley, Gadsden County



Dr. Mark Todd (center), Joe Gocsik (L), and Chris Otremba, Lake County



Ann Phillips with Dave Conser, Alachua County

Upcoming Stewardship, Small Farm and Other Events

Date	Event, Location, Contact
Dec. 3	<p>Forest Stewardship Tour at Withlacoochee Gulf Preserve in Yankeetown, FL (pdf link), 9:00 am to 2 pm ET, Withlacoochee Gulf Preserve, 1001 Old Rock Road, Yankeetown, FL 34498. Join us for this unique tour of a municipal Forest Stewardship property managed to provide a place for citizens to appreciate the beauty of Florida's Nature Coast wetlands. With streams, lakes, salt marshes, pine and hardwood forests, the Withlacoochee Gulf Preserve is a unique piece of old Florida. \$10 fee covers lunch and materials. <i>Register on-line at https://fsp-tour1203215.eventbrite.com/ or reserve a space by contacting Chris Demers, (352) 846-2375, cdemers@ufl.edu</i></p>
Dec. 8	<p>Forest Stewardship Workshop: Longleaf Pine Forest Restoration and Management (link), 9 am to 3 pm ET, Prairie Creek Lodge, 7204 SE County Road 234, Gainesville, FL 32641. Provided by the Florida Forest Stewardship Program, Society of American Foresters Suwannee Chapter, and Alachua Conservation Trust. Join us to explore the role of biomass chipping in longleaf restoration projects, longleaf forest management, and available assistance programs. \$10 fee includes lunch and materials. <i>Registration at http://fsp-workshop120815.eventbrite.com/ or contact Chris Demers, (352) 846-2375, cdemers@ufl.edu.</i></p>
Dec. 10	<p>Forest Stewardship Polycom Workshop: Forest Health Update, 1-4 pm ET at UF/IFAS Extension Alachua, Columbia, Duval, Gadsden, Jackson, Lake, Santa Rosa, and Walton County Offices. Get the latest on the insects and diseases affecting Florida's forests and available assistance. <i>See above for details and registration. Contact Chris for details: (352) 846-2375, cdemers@ufl.edu</i></p>

For many more events and information see: floridalandsteward.org

The Florida Land Steward Newsletter is a University of Florida/IFAS Extension Service, Florida Forest Service, Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and Florida Tree Farm joint project:

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