

# FOREST STEWARDSHIP

GEORGIA FORESTRY  
COMMISSION

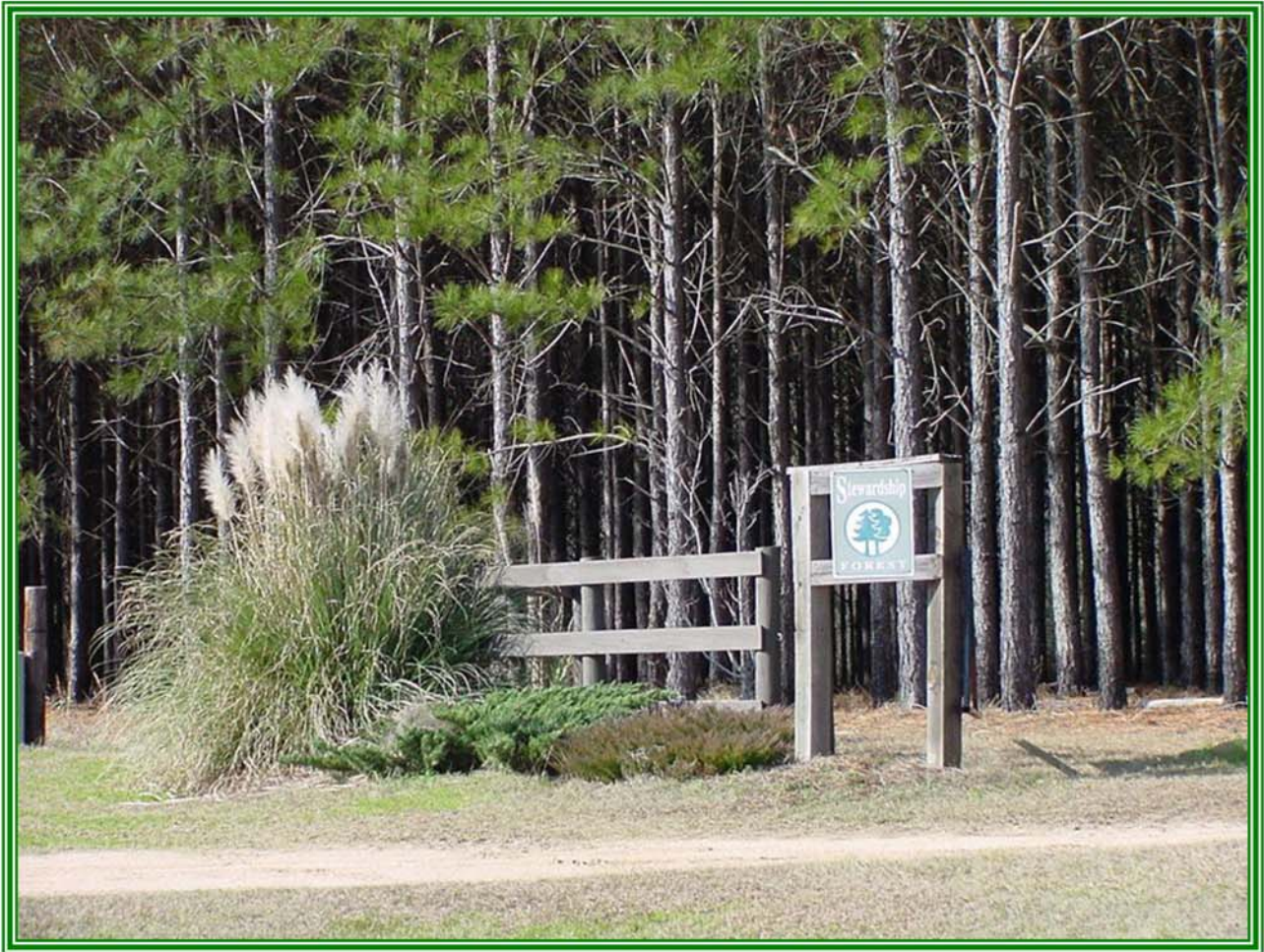


## Guidelines for Forest Steward Designation

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**There are specific guidelines used to set the standards to judge sufficient stewardship management of forest resources and to be deemed a “Forest Steward.”**

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## CERTIFICATION GUIDELINES

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These guidelines are intended to set the standards for judging whether or not landowners have accomplished sufficient stewardship management of their forest resources to warrant their designation as a "Forest Steward" and their property certified as a Stewardship Forest by Georgia's Forest Stewardship Program.

The theory of multiple resource management holds that all the component resources of the forest will be managed together with the management of each modified in light of the needs of the others. In practice, multiple resource management, or stewardship management as it is promoted by Georgia's Forest Stewardship Program, provides for greater emphasis being given to the resources of greatest concern to the landowner with at least a minimum and adequate level of management being applied to those resources of least concern to the landowner. When a landowner ranks his/her concerns for the resources in question, then the management of each should reflect some give and take, the relative amount of which is determined by the priorities of the landowner.

These guidelines reflect this give and take and are a fair measure of the quality of a stewardship management program providing that the landowner's true objectives have accurately been ascertained.

### ELIGIBILITY

**To be eligible for "Forest Steward" designation, all landowners will be required to have:**

1. Demonstrated to field personnel their commitment to the practice of stewardship management.
2. Met, through their accomplishments, **all** the General Guidelines for all ownership's as set forth below. **Some exceptions may be considered but they should be explained and justified by field personnel.**
3. Made **significant** progress toward meeting the Specific Guidelines which apply toward their primary and secondary objectives, as set forth below.

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## GENERAL GUIDELINES: ALL OWNERSHIPS

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### BASIC

1. Forest land should be actively managed under an approved Forest Stewardship Plan.
2. All state and federal natural resource laws (including but not limited to burning regulations, endangered species protection, wetlands protection, game laws, and pesticide regulations) should be adhered to by the landowner.
3. Forest Stewardship Certification nominations should be submitted to the District Stewardship Coordinator. This individual will arrange a site visit for initial approval and then provide the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Georgia Department of Natural Resources Wildlife Division to make objections within a 60-day period. If the 60 days elapse with no objection from either agency and the GFC District Stewardship Coordinator has approved the certification then that landowner will be automatically designated a "Forest Steward".

### TIMBER

1. Forests should be protected from fire, insects, and disease.
2. Damaged timber should be salvaged when possible (unless directly in conflict with primary management objective).
3. Specific plans should be made to regenerate all lands after final harvest (unless land use changes)

### SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION

1. Best Management Practices (BMP's), as outlined in the publications *Recommended Best Management Practices for Forestry in Georgia* and *Best Management Practices for Forested Wetlands in Georgia* should be followed in all forestry operations.
2. Active soil management should be practiced on all lands owned by the individual, including crop and pasture land.
3. On agricultural land, the landowner should use soil conservation practices to reduce erosion to an acceptable level.
4. A program should be underway to control severe soil erosion in existing critical areas with no new activities undertaken which will create additional critical areas, particularly on forest roads.

## WILDLIFE

1. Maintain 2.5 % of the property in evenly distributed, permanent wildlife openings. Cropland supporting soybeans, corn, small grain, winter grazing, clover, alfalfa, bahia or bermuda grass may fulfill a portion of wildlife opening needs. When a substantial portion of the tract is wetland, under active management for forest interior species, or under some other specialized wildlife management regime, modification may be necessary.
2. Maintain habitat diversity with two different timber types or age classes.
3. Wildlife travel corridors consistent with wildlife habitat needs should be maintained. Harvest along stream corridors should maintain some tree cover.
4. Stands with greater than 50 percent hardwood stocking should not be burned unless in the pursuit of specific silvicultural objectives. This burning should not drastically reduce suitable levels of wildlife habitat on tract.



## RECREATION AND AESTHETICS

1. All parts of the tract visible from public roads should be maintained in an attractive manner, with obvious eyesores removed.
2. Property should occasionally be used for some recreational purpose.



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## **SPECIFIC GUIDELINES: TIMBER OBJECTIVE**

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### **PRIMARY:**

**Landowners professing a primary interest in timber management should be modifying their management program to achieve the following:**

#### **Protection Activities**

- A. Fire hazard should be periodically reduced.
- B. When economically feasible, there should be a timely salvage of all dead, diseased and damaged timber.
- C. Stands should be managed in a manner to reduce insect and disease hazards.
- D. Access for firefighting should be provided and maintained.

#### **Regeneration Activities**

- A. Specific regeneration plans should be made before final harvest of timber.
- B. Regeneration of harvested areas should be completed within three years of harvest.
- C. Regeneration level should be sufficient to produce a fully stocked stand.
- D. Appropriate site preparation should be implemented to encourage adequate regeneration.

#### **Stand Management Activities**

- A. Timber should be harvested at an economic rotation age.
- B. Stocking control appropriate to rotation management should be utilized to improve stand health and vigor.
- C. Timber stand improvement appropriate to stand type and age should be carried out when needed.
- D. Timber species favored should have commercial potential and be well adapted to the site.
- E. Size and shape of harvested areas should be compatible with other objectives.

## **SECONDARY:**

**Landowners professing a secondary interest in timber management should be modifying their management program to achieve the following:**

### **Protection Activities:**

- A. Salvage of dead, diseased, and damaged timber should be accomplished when compatible with primary objective.
- B. Stand should be managed in a manner to reduce insect and disease hazards when compatible with primary objective.
- C. Access for firefighting should be provided and maintained.

### **Regeneration Activities:**

- A. A regeneration plan should be made before final harvest of timber.
- B. Regeneration of harvested areas should be completed within five years of harvest.
- C. Regeneration level should be sufficient to produce a commercially viable timber stand.
- D. Some form of site preparation should be utilized to enhance regeneration.

### **Stand Management Activities:**

- A. Timber harvests should be near a specified rotation age which is compatible with primary objective but before overall stand decline.
- B. Stocking control should be utilized to prevent stagnation of growth.
- C. A sufficient level of timber species should be maintained so that the stand remains commercially viable.
- D. The size and shape of harvested areas should be compatible with other objectives.

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## SPECIFIC GUIDELINES: WILDLIFE OBJECTIVE

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### **PRIMARY:**

**Landowners professing a primary interest in wildlife habitat management should be modifying their management program to achieve the following:**

### **Timber Management Activities**

#### **Regeneration:**

- A. Herbicide selection and the timing and method of application should reflect the habitat needs of target species.
- B. Organize regeneration units to maximize edge and diversity appropriate for target species.
- C. Artificial regeneration should be managed to facilitate browse production before crown closure.
- D. During site preparation activities, optimize cover along swamps, marshes and creeks as appropriate for wildlife species.
- E. When available, leave five or more 12" dbh snag trees per acre during site preparation to provide cavity nesting habitat.

#### **Stand Management - Pine:**

- A. Stands managed for mixed products.
- B. Stand thinning should begin at earliest commercially feasible age and continue throughout rotation.
- C. Thinning technique should remove diseased and low vigor trees and be heavy enough to provide sunlight to the forest floor.
- D. Conduct habitat improvement burning regularly on a schedule reflecting target species' needs and vegetative response. Suggested burning schedules would be once every 3-4 years for whitetail deer or turkey management and once every 2 years for quail management. Scheduling burns in late winter before mid-March will help avoid interfering with nesting seasons.
- E. Large stands should be reduced in size by modified management techniques and rotation ages.



## **Stand Management - Hardwood:**

- A. Maintain an adequate percentage of forested acres in hardwood type consistent with wildlife habitat needs. Stand conversion to pine type should not eliminate hardwood type from the forested acres.
- B. Manage hardwood stands to favor mast-bearing species such as oak, beech, cherry, dogwood and other hard or soft mast producers. Selective harvests and thinnings should favor mast-producing species of greatest benefit to the target wildlife species.
- C. Thinning or TSI which is conducted in the zone adjacent to surface water should favor mast producing species and should leave a major part of the canopy intact.
- D. All den trees greater than 12" dbh should be left.
- E. Temporary summer drawdown of beaver ponds encouraged to preserve hardwoods and encourage waterfowl food production.

## **Game Management Activities:**

- 1. Specific wildlife specie(s) to be managed should be selected and specified by landowner.
- 2. Wildlife openings, shelter requirements and food sources should be maintained by the landowner.
- 3. The landowner's management program should maintain wildlife populations in proper proportion to the carrying capacity of the site.

## **SECONDARY:**

**Landowners professing a secondary interest in wildlife habitat management should be modifying their management program to achieve the following:**

## **Timber Management Activities**

### **Regeneration:**

- A. Conduct appropriate site preparation with consideration given to wildlife habitat.
- B. Organize regeneration units to maximize edge and diversity appropriate for wildlife species.
- C. During site preparation activities, optimize cover along swamps, marshes and creeks as appropriate for wildlife species.
- D. Consideration should be given to leaving 12" dbh snag trees during site preparation.



### **Stand Management - Pine:**

- A. Sawtimber rotation preferable where compatible with primary objectives.
- B. Begin stand thinning as early as possible in light of primary objective.
- C. Thinning interval should be compatible with primary objective.
- D. Prescribed burning should be utilized periodically, preferably at 2-4 year intervals.

### **Stand Management - Hardwood:**

- A. Maintain an adequate percent of forested acres in hardwood type consistent with wildlife habitat needs. Stand conversion to pine type should not eliminate hardwood type from the forested acres.
- B. Thinning and selective harvest should give consideration to wildlife food needs.
- C. Preserve occasional den trees.
- D. Temporary summer drawdown of beaver ponds encouraged to preserve hardwoods and encourage waterfowl food production.

## **Game Management Activities**

1. The landowner's management program should maintain wildlife populations in proper proportion to the carrying capacity of the site.
2. General management of property conducted in a manner to promote and/or improve basic wildlife habitat.



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## SPECIFIC GUIDELINES: SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION OBJECTIVE

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### PRIMARY AND SECONDARY:

Landowners professing a primary or secondary interest in soil and water conservation should be modifying their management program to achieve the following:

#### FOREST LANDS

1. Particular attention will be given to protecting streamside management zones (SMZ). In the primary SMZ, any type of cutting is allowed but use of machines to harvest, prepare the site, or plant is not. Cables must be used to harvest the primary SMZ and planting must be done by hand or direct seeding. In the secondary SMZ, machines may be carefully used in harvesting, site preparation, and planting. Generally, no activities are permitted in either SMZ which will remove the forest floor or excessively expose mineral soil.
2. All forest access roads will be of proper design and construction. They should follow the contour when possible and generally not exceed 5 percent slope. Broad based dips or other suitable means will be used to remove water from roads to minimize erosion and sediment delivery to streams. Roads in the SMZ should be minimized through proper planning of road networks. Roads in the SMZ should employ properly sized culverts or bridges and should have all exposed soil stabilized with mulch and seed.



3. Prior to harvest, harvesting plans will be developed. Such plans will specify the size of log decks and their location on stable, well-drained areas away from streams. They will prescribe when and how log decks will be renovated through site preparation and seeding after harvest. Plans will also describe how skidding will be done on the contour or gradual grades uphill to log decks. They will caution against leaving tops and other logging debris in streams.
4. Heavy mechanical site preparation will be avoided unless other means prove impractical and is prohibited on highly erodible soils and slopes exceeding 20 percent.
5. Planting mechanically will be done on the contour to the greatest degree possible.
6. Firebreaks will also be located as much as possible on the contour. When located on slopes, waterbars will be installed at frequent intervals to remove water from the break. Areas where fire suppression breaks are used to control wildfire will be renovated where necessary to prevent erosion because of concentrated flow of water.
7. The impact of recreational use on soils will be minimized using the best combination of diversion, control and vegetation.



## **CROPLANDS**

**Maintain or be actively installing a resource management system under a Soil and Water Conservation District approved NRCS Conservation plan which:**

1. Controls sheet and rill erosion rates to maintain sustained productivity of the soil to the "T" level.
2. Prevents degradation of surface and ground water through minimization of pesticide and nutrient use.
3. Prescribes best crop management practices to optimize production.
4. Manages crop residues to improve soil tilth, provide soil protection and wildlife cover.
5. Controls gullies, concentrated flow and other forms of erosion and actively rehabilitates critically eroding area using approved vegetative and soil management practices.

## **PASTURELAND**

**Maintain a pastureland resource management system under a Soil and Water Conservation District approved NRCS Conservation plan which:**

1. Controls all forms of erosion to the "T" level.
2. Applies management practice to produce desired amounts of high quality forage.
3. Actively rehabilitates critically eroding areas using approved vegetative and soil management practices.

## **SPECIFIC GUIDELINES: RECREATION OBJECTIVE**

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### **PRIMARY:**

**Landowners professing a primary interest in forest recreation management should be modifying their management program to achieve the following:**

#### **Recreational Use**

- A. Substantial current recreational use should be supported by facilities relative to the type of use (such as picnic areas, trails, campsites, boat ramps, docks, nature study areas, hunting camps, blinds, etc.).
- B. The desired recreational uses should be identified and appropriate action taken to sustain and enhance these activities in the future.
- C. Property should be improved for recreational use and access by paths, trails and walkways for effective and safe use of the recreation resource.

#### **Facilities and Forest Management**

- A. Recreational facilities should be created and actively maintained in harmony with other forest management practices to enhance aesthetic and recreational opportunities.
- B. The adverse environmental impact of on-going or planned recreational activities, such as vegetation damage, soil compaction and erosion, water pollution, littering and destruction of wildlife habitat, should be minimized through proper management.
- C. In those areas where hunting is identified as a recreational use, a visible effort should be made to improve the area for that purpose. Examples may include wildlife plantings, prescribed burnings, increased diversity management and the development of compatible recreational facilities.

### **SECONDARY:**

**Landowners professing a secondary interest in forest recreation management should be modifying their management program to achieve the following:**

#### **Recreational Use:**

- A. Recreational uses should be compatible with the primary management objective.
  - B. Property should currently be used for recreational purposes.
  - C. All the guidelines in the primary objective section should still apply, although the landowner's program will tend to involve less intensive development of facilities.
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# **SPECIFIC GUIDELINES: AESTHETIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL OBJECTIVE**

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## **PRIMARY AND SECONDARY:**

**Landowners professing a primary interest in the management of forest aesthetics and environment should be modifying their management program to achieve the following:**

### **Visual Qualities**

- A. All areas visible to the public should be maintained in as attractive a manner as possible to include the removal of trash and debris of all kinds, including any non-historic equipment from past timber or agricultural operations.
- B. Areas of the highest scenic beauty should be identified as they are often the most desirable areas for recreation facilities such as forest drives, trails, picnic areas and campgrounds.
- C. Scenic and historical areas and unique geological and archaeological features should be identified and maintained so as to provide a pleasant and natural vista.
- D. Unsightly areas which may be present on the property should be rehabilitated.

### **Environmental Management**

- A. Species diversity should be maintained in unique ecological areas and restored to appropriate areas on the property.
- B. Native flowers, trees, shrubs and wildflowers that are best adapted for that specific site (including those plants that provide seasonal colors) should be encouraged, promoted, planted or maintained.