

Timber Management-Timber Harvesting

Timber Harvesting:

Thinning is a forest management practice that is generally performed at some point(s) in time during the course of the growth and development of both natural and planted pine stands. Thinning (as a forest management practice) can be defined as the calculated removal of certain trees from an existing stand and is usually conducted with a specific objective in mind.

There are various reasons why thinning should be employed as a management practice in pine stands. Thinning promotes the growth of individual trees within a stand by removing surrounding trees, which compete for water, sunlight, and soil nutrients. Most natural and planted stands require thinning at certain stages of their development in order to sustain good tree growth throughout the life of the stand. Thinning is beneficial to the overall health of a stand of trees. Certain methods of thinning allow for the removal of a greater portion of diseased trees and trees that are of poor quality and form. Many of these poorly formed, cankered trees will die before the final harvest. Therefore, the landowner is capturing an early economic return with the thinning (removal) of these poor quality trees. Thinning can be effective in enhancing habitat for certain wildlife species.

Thinning Indicators: A common question from landowners is: "When should I thin my stand of trees?" The answer to this largely depends on their objective(s) for the stand. Most landowner objectives involve three major factors: rotation age, products to be grown (pulpwood, sawtimber, poles, pine straw), and stand health/vigor assuming timber production is a high priority. There are several indicators that can aid in determining when a stand should be thinned.

- Live Crown Ratio: The height of the live crown (the part of the tree with live branches) divided by the total height of the tree. When the average live crown ratio falls below 35 percent, the stand should be thinned. For example, if the average tree height is 45 feet and the average length of the live crown is 16 feet, then that stand needs to be thinned soon ([16/46]x100 = 35.5%).
- **Basal Area:** The area in square feet taken up by an individual tree trunk at DBH (diameter at breast height or 4.5 feet above the ground). Basal area per acre is the sum of the square feet represented by all of the trees growing in one acre. Basal area per acre is a measure of stand density. When the basal area for loblolly, slash, and longleaf pine is greater than 100 to 120 square feet per acre then the stand biologically is in need of a thinning.



If you are interested in having your existing timber harvested, it is recommended to have a consulting forester in your area come and evaluate your trees. If harvesting is possible, use them to handle the bidding and contract along with managing the harvest. Insist that Georgia's Best Management Practices (**BMPs**) are met or exceeded during the harvesting. For a thinning, have them mark any diseased, forked, or otherwise suppressed trees to be removed. For a good balance of timber productions and your wildlife and recreational interests, thin the stand down to a residual basal area of 60 to 70 ft²/acre.

The links below can assist you with any timber harvesting advice along with what types of products could be growing in your woodlands.

https://gatrees.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/SellingYourTimber.pdf https://gatrees.org/forest-management-conservation/timber-sales-harvest-advice/

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