

Conservation Corner

by James Cummins
Executive Director
of Wildlife Mississippi

The thinning of trees is an important step in the wildlife management process, and it helps improve your pocket-book.

My mother has part of her family's land in Montgomery County. It has been in her family since 1833. Part of the land (25 acres) that was farmland in 1937 (that is the oldest aerial photo I have found) has grown up in a thick stand of green ash and sweetgum. Another part (30 acres) was growing a mixed stand of pine and upland hardwoods. Some of the oaks had died as a result of stress.

Nevertheless, my mother is primarily interested in income and I am primarily interested in wildlife. To reach both goals, we needed to do a "junk" cut or timber harvest. First, let's discuss what

steps we took. We hired a forester to mark the trees which were to be cut. On the upland site, he marked sweetgum and pine that were very old or were crooked and taking up sunlight, nutrients, and space from straighter trees. On the bottomland site, he marked primarily sweetgum, sycamore, green ash, and oaks that were old and diseased. He also marked trees that were too close together so the stand would be evenly spaced and each tree had plenty of water, nutrients, and sunlight.

Both high-quality and low-quality trees are good for wildlife, but the high-quality tree is the best income producer. Small trees are unsuitable for sawtimber because they are too small. In 10 to 15 years from now, both types of trees will be

big enough for sawtimber, but only the quality tree will be used for sawtimber. The crooked pine tree will be used for pulpwood. It will be worth only about \$7.00/ton, whereas the straight pine tree will be worth about \$24.00/ton. Historically, the first tree will have increased in value at an annual compound rate of 5 percent, whereas the second will have done so at 19 percent. As investments, one is great, the other is a loser. You want to eliminate the losers now to increase available water, nutrients, and sunlight for your income producers.

I write this column because of the strong need for good quality forest management in Mississippi. It is good for wildlife (and keeps my mother happy). Plus, you can make your forests/wildlife habitat into superb investments. This won't happen unless you do something now and do it right. And you can teach your children or grandchildren how to do it.

So, by taking care of your

Girl Scouts to cover membership fees for daughters of fallen service members

The University of Memphis announced that it will provide scholarships to cover a college education for children and spouses of fallen service members. In response to this declaration, Girl Scouts Heart of the South announced that the local council will cover the Girl Scout Membership Fee for daughters of fallen service members within its own council jurisdiction.

The Girl Scout Promise begins with "On my honor, I will try, to serve God and my big-dollar trees, you'll protect the environment, create forests that will regularly produce income, produce all the timber we need, and maintain great areas to hunt and view wildlife.

James L. Cummins is executive director of Wildlife Mississippi. Their web site is www.wildlifemiss.org.

country..." The local council is living out our promise by supporting those families who have lost a parent in the line of duty and covering the cost of Girl Scout membership. "This is one way that we can support the daughters of fallen soldiers who have made the ultimate sacrifice for our freedoms. When a family who has lost a parent through military service evaluates the cost of activities for their daughters, we don't want the Girl Scout Membership Fee to be a deterrent to their participation," said Melanie Schild, CEO for Girl Scouts Heart of the South.

The University of Memphis is the first post-secondary institution in the nation to offer a full scholarship for the children of fallen service members. Girl Scouts Heart of the South's headquarters is located in Memphis

and Dr. Loretta Rudd, wife of University of Memphis President Dr. David Rudd, serves on the Girl Scouts Heart of the South Board of Directors. "As we know, the family members of our military service members also sacrifice for our country and those families whose parent paid the ultimate sacrifice endure a lifelong sacrifice. I am proud that the Girl Scouts Heart of the South Council will follow the lead of University of Memphis President Rudd's free tuition for family members of fallen military members and offer free Girl Scout membership to these girls," said Dr. Loretta Rudd.

The annual Girl Scout Membership Fee is \$25 and the local council will cover this fee for qualifying girl members beginning immediately through a girl's senior year of high school. For more information, contact Girl Scouts Heart of the South at 800.624.4185 or by email at customercaresweb@girlscoutshs.org.

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