

An Ecological Approach to Longleaf Pine Forestry¹

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ABSTRACT

Our early forestry profession led the way in American conservation, and developed systems in which timber quality, aesthetics, and diversity were integral values. But in recent decades economic pressure in many areas has reduced forestry to tree farms, completely lacking the complexities of a forest community. Only through society's desire to retain its natural heritage, particularly on public lands, is there hope for the dual objective of wood production and wildland integrity. This report summarizes a system of southern pine (*Pinus spp.*) forestry that has continued for half a century on private gamelands in the Tallahassee Red Hills region. Important components of the system are aesthetic values which translate into biological diversity; select-tree cutting, patch regeneration, and gradual release of young pines; a variety of pine age classes, dominance classes, snags, and treeless areas within a mosaic; minimal disturbance to soil and groundcover vegetation; and frequent prescribed burning to maintain open, park-like conditions. This approach to forest management is economically sound; it treats the entire timber base as an endowment from which about 90% of the earnings (annual timber increase) is taken each year, sparingly spread over the land base. The principles of ecological forestry could be adapted to meet multiple objectives including endangered species in publicly owned forests of longleaf pine (*P. palustris*).

¹ Abstract only; no paper submitted.