

FLORIDA LAND STEWARD



A Quarterly Newsletter for Florida Landowners and Resource Professionals

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Hurricane Preparation Tips

By Dr. Michael Andreu and Chris Demers, UF/IFAS School of Forest Resources and Conservation

Hurricane season is around the corner, starting June 1 through November 30. As we have learned in recent years, powerful hurricanes can make their way inland and do considerable damage to forest and agricultural lands and enterprises. It's never too early to start preparing for a major hurricane that could make a direct hit on your land. There is no way to fully prepare for major devastation in advance, but there are some strategies and steps you can take to prepare yourself and your land for a major storm and recover more smoothly.

Connect with Professionals

Don't go it alone. There are resources and services available to help with your land management activities, and these connections can give you a leg up in the

event of a hurricane or other natural disaster.

Work with a Professional Forester and Get a Forest Inventory

Consulting foresters provide technical assistance in all phases of forest management for a fee. Their services include management plan preparation, forest inventory, timber sales, thinning, tree planting, herbicide and fertilizer application, and prescribed burning. The expertise, guidance, and connections of a forester can be invaluable in the recovery process after the storm. An inventory completed within the last 5 years will provide an estimate of the number and types of trees, their size, and the value of the standing timber. This will be important when requesting financial assistance after a hurricane or other natural disaster.

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Hurricane season begins soon. Get yourself and your property ready. Photo by Chris Demers

Review Your Road Network with a Forester and Road Construction Contractor

A professional forester can help you survey your roads to determine if they are properly graded, crowned, and surfaced given your local site conditions. Intense rainfall and flooding during storm events can wash out poorly constructed roads and blowout culverts. By working with an experienced construction professional, you can ensure your roads meet the water quality standards of Florida's Best Management Practices (BMPs). For more information on forestry BMP's, see <https://www.fdacs.gov/Divisions-Offices/Florida-Forest-Service/Best-Management-Practices-BMPs>

A professional forester can also advise you on the road network design. Ensuring you have access to all parts of your property will increase the likelihood that salvage operations can take place on your property following a storm. If new roads need to be built to access parts of your property after a storm event these areas will likely not be accessible for salvage operations.

Get Connected to Assistance before the Storm

Don't wait for disaster to strike to contact the people and agencies that can help and provide management and recovery assistance. Get to know your University of Florida IFAS County Extension Agent and Florida Forest Service County Forester. They can provide valuable management assistance and will be knowledgeable about local recovery efforts, workshops, and available assistance after a hurricane. The Florida Land Steward Program maintains an updated calendar with educational programming for individuals interested in learning about a wide range of topics associated with land ownership and management. (http://sfrc.ufl.edu/forest_stewardship)

Also contact your USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and

Farm Service Agency to see what assistance they can offer to help you reach your land management goals. Having your land or farm enrolled in an assistance program will help you get connected to recovery assistance programs if they are available after a natural disaster.

Pre-Storm Preparation

- **Shut down thinning operations that are underway, or scheduled to begin, when a hurricane is predicted to make landfall in your area** – Thinning operations that open the stand structure can leave the stand more vulnerable to windthrow and damage if the trees have not had time to respond to the new open conditions.
- **Do some pruning** – Trees, especially those over structures and fences, should be pruned regularly to remove broken or dead limbs that could cause damage.
- **Fill the tanks** – Tanks containing fuel, herbicides, fertilizer, and other materials should be kept full, or otherwise secured, and to ensure that sufficient fuel is available for machinery used in recovery efforts after the storm.
- **Keep ditches and culverts clean** – If present, ditches and culverts should be kept clean so excess storm water can drain properly.
- **Emergency equipment** – Make sure that all emergency equipment; including generators, chain saws, air compressors, and other equipment; is on hand and in good working order.
- **Communications equipment** – If you have them, ensure that radios are in good working order. Have hand-held portable radios with extra charged battery packs available for family or hired help after the storm. Direct truck-to-truck radio communication is most reliable when phone lines are down, but cellular phones with radio capabilities and standard cellular phones can help

family and workers save valuable time during the recovery process, as opposed to communication systems that require communications to be relayed through a base unit.

- **Hazardous materials** – Hazardous materials should be secured prior to a storm, and gasoline pumps, if present, should be shut down.
- **Lock your gates** – Keeping your roads locked will prevent unauthorized individuals from damaging wet roads and reduce liability.
- **Emergency contacts** – Have a list of phone numbers you might need in an emergency, including numbers for phone and internet service, utilities, fire department, police, and medical facilities.
- **Take photos** – Take photos of your stands and/or fields before the storm so you have a record of the condition of these areas before damage occurs. This could help with records needed for insurance claims and/or government assistance programs.
- **Time for harvest?** – If in line with your management plan and objectives, consider harvesting mature timber stands to capture the full market value of the products you have. A salvage sale of a storm-damaged stand will only yield 10-15% of the normal market value.

See Steps to Marketing Timber, <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/fr130>, for important considerations for selling your timber.

References

- Zekri, M., R. Rouse, and J. Crane. 2017. Hurricane Preparedness for Citrus Groves. HS-804. Gainesville: University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences. Available online: <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ch178>
- Demers, C. and A. Long. 2019. Selecting a Consulting Forester. SS-FOR-16. Gainesville: University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences. Available online: <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/fr125>

Sighting Northern Bobwhite Quail on Florida's Privately-Owned Lands

If you have not yet added sightings to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's Northern Bobwhite Quail sightings page this year, it's time to start! Private Landowners can impact bobwhite quail management in Florida by sharing when and where they see or hear Northern bobwhite quail on their property here: <https://public.myfwc.com/HSC/Quail/>. This partnership with private landowners is helping FWC gain a better understanding of Northern bobwhite quail distribution on private lands, evaluate locations for workshops and identify financial assistance program needs. If you would like to speak with a professional biologist regarding managing or restoring Northern bobwhite quail habitat contact your local FWC LAP regional biologist. Find your biologist here: <http://myfwc.com/conservation/special-initiatives/lap/contact-us/>. To explore other wildlife sightings pages visit the following link: <https://myfwc.com/get-involved/volunteer/citizen-science/sightings/>



Don't miss out on news and events!

Sign up for the regular updates! Send an email to cdemers@ufl.edu to be added to the email listserv. Florida Land Steward email updates are sent once a week or every other week and include the latest calendar of workshops, tours and other events; a link to the current issue of this quarterly newsletter; updates on cost-share and other assistance programs, opportunities, and resources; and other stewardship related news and information.

ACF Consultant Corner: Alternative Incomes for Forest Landowners

By Don Curtis, Florida Chapter Association of Consulting Foresters

Forest Landowners in Florida are continually looking for ways to improve the financial return from their lands. In real dollars (inflation adjusted), the prices for timber have been going down since the Great Recession started and have not recovered fully. This is in spite of three years of an improving economy and Hurricane Michael destroying so much current and future timber supply in the panhandle.

In this article, we want to provide new information on two activities for which forest landowners may not be taking full advantage: saw palmetto berry sales and pine straw sales.

Saw Palmetto (*Serenoa repens*) Berries

These berries have been harvested for use as an over-the-counter herbal supplement for prostate

health. The retail products can be found in health food stores and some pharmacies. These products are very popular in Europe and our entire crop, once processed, was headed to European markets.

The market for berries has been very erratic for landowners, with theft problems occurring, various pricing schemes among buyers,

Continued on pages 4 & 5

and unfulfilled contracts. However, over the past 18 months, we've experienced some success on a project in Pasco County that we want to share.

The Forestry Company (TFC) manages a large ranch for timber production, water supply, threatened and endangered species, and cattle production. In some of the natural forests (not planted pines), we conducted a dormant season prescribed burn on 350 acres of what would typically be considered "range land" consisting of oaks, a few scattered longleaf pines, and a thick understory of palmettoes. The burning was done in November and December of 2018. There were a few wetland areas that were part of the burn but were too low and wet for saw palmetto. The purpose of the burn was to prepare future Florida Scrub Jay habitat, reduce the risk of wildfire as this area had not been burned for several years, and experiment with stimulating palmetto berry growth.

The prescribed burn tremendously increased the flowering and berry production as compared to unburned areas, and as compared to

summer burns (conducted in June) of saw palmetto on the adjacent ranch.

As TFC foresters saw the crop of berries developing, we sought sealed bids in July from harvesters for an August-October harvest period. The buyers liked the fact that the site was secure from trespass and illegal harvest. They also liked the way the crop was developing in the burned areas. Three companies submitted bids and we went to contract for \$1.50/pound. We required the successful bidder to obtain the necessary palmetto berry harvest permit (<https://www.fdacs.gov/Divisions-Offices/Plant-Industry/Business-Services/Plant-Pest-Permits/Native-Plant-Harvesting-Permit/Saw-Palmetto-Berry-Harvesting>). We also required state-certified scales to be used on-site to measure harvest weights. A member of our staff was present every day to monitor the harvesters and the "weigh-in" as the harvesters completed their day. Once a semi-truckload was stockpiled, payment was made before the truckload left the ranch.

The Results

We harvested approximately 80,000 pounds in August and September 2019, for a total payment of almost \$120,000.00. On 350 acres, this equates to over \$340/acre.

What we Learned

Site security is critical. This prevents theft/poaching from competing harvesters. Research seems to indicate higher yields are possible through infrequent growing season burning (Carrington et al, 2006). However, dormant season burning seemed to be successful for us. The neighboring ranch has been conducting growing season burns (in June) for several years in their saw palmetto areas but have yet to produce a marketable crop of berries.

We offered another 1,000 acres of saw palmetto areas to the buyers, but since those acres had not been burned, the presence of berries was so low that none would harvest those areas.

At the end of the harvest season, our buyer told us our 350 acres had the highest yield of any place he harvested in Georgia and Florida in

Continued on next page



Flowers of saw palmetto (*Serenoa repens*) (L) and Bags and bins of saw palmetto berries (R), photos by Don Curtis



Mechanically baled (left), and hand baled (right) pine straw, photos by Don Curtis

2019. Anecdotally, we're hearing the price was so good in 2019 that other landowners are now conducting winter burning (January 2020) and then fertilizing their saw palmettos this spring.

Pine Straw from Slash and Longleaf Pines

Like many of you, TFC has sold and managed pine straw harvests for years, but we felt like there is untapped potential there. The pine straw market is bit more mature than the palmetto berry market previously discussed, but it can still vary. We saw the market virtually collapse during the Great Recession, but it rebounded in the last three years. We've also seen a premium price paid for longleaf pine straw.

On October 22-23, 2019, Drs. David Dickens and David Clabo, Professors at the University of Georgia, presented pine straw research findings to foresters and landowners. The workshop was titled "**Pine Straw Production - Stand Management and Economics.**" An added benefit was realized as Dr. Dickens is a timberland owner and sells his pine straw. He assessed what works and what doesn't and shared his findings.

Pricing and Contracts

It's difficult to forecast yield and earnings from year to year, particularly when selling by the bale. All sales should be done according to a contract. If selling by the bale, the bale size and dimensions need to be specified in the contract. According to Dickens and Clabo, prices vary from \$0.70-\$1.25/ bale for longleaf pine straw and \$0.50-\$0.75/bale for slash pine straw. Again, bale size and price/bale are linked.

Lump sum contracts tend to be more predictable. Common payment rates are \$60-125/acre for lump sum sales and may be higher for good longleaf stands.

Site, Fertility, and Management

Raking can begin at crown closure, which usually occurs sooner for slash versus longleaf, and continues until the first thinning or the clearcut of unthinned stands. Better sites (like former farm fields) tend to produce higher straw yields than cutover timberland.

On poorer sites, fertilization helped both pine straw and timber production. On better sites, particularly old farm fields planted to pines, fertilization didn't help much. Herbicide and mowing of undesirable vegetation are critical prior to crown closure.

Raking and Baling

Mechanically baled straw usually weighs more than hand-baled straw, thus you get fewer bales/acre on mechanically baled sites.

Semi-annual raking (twice/year) seems to slow tree growth on poorer soils. Annual raking seems to be better for site fertility and tree growth. With bare dirt exposed much of the year in semi-annual raking, there is concern that reduced tree growth may occur from the topsoil holding less moisture and nutrient reduction being more pronounced.

Distilling a 2-day workshop into a few bullet points doesn't do this topic justice. Therefore, watch for their next workshop and make plans to attend. If you want to maximize pine straw income on your land, the information is worth the expense of attending. See the University of Georgia's Continuing Forestry Education calendar at: <http://conted.warnell.uga.edu/>

References

Carrington, M. E. and J. Mullahey. 2006. Effect of burning season on saw palmetto flowering and fruiting. *Forest Ecology and Management* 230(1-3): 69-78. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/236963443_Effects_of_burning_season_and_frequency_on_saw_palmetto_Serenoa_repens_flowering_and_fruiting

About the Author

Don Curtis is the President of The Forestry Company, a forest consulting firm headquartered in Perry, FL. Don's been a member of the Association of Consulting Foresters (ACF) for over 20 years. If you have comments about this article, he can be reached at drcurtisjr@hotmail.com.

Editorial notes

The experience shared here on dormant season burning of saw palmetto to boost fruit production is very interesting and anecdotal. Researchers will continue to study this, and we'll share findings in this and other publications. More on fertilization guidelines for pine straw production can be found in the UF/IFAS Guide to Fertilization for Pine Straw Production on Coastal Plain Sites: <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/fr395>.

TIMBER PRICE UPDATE

The timber price 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.

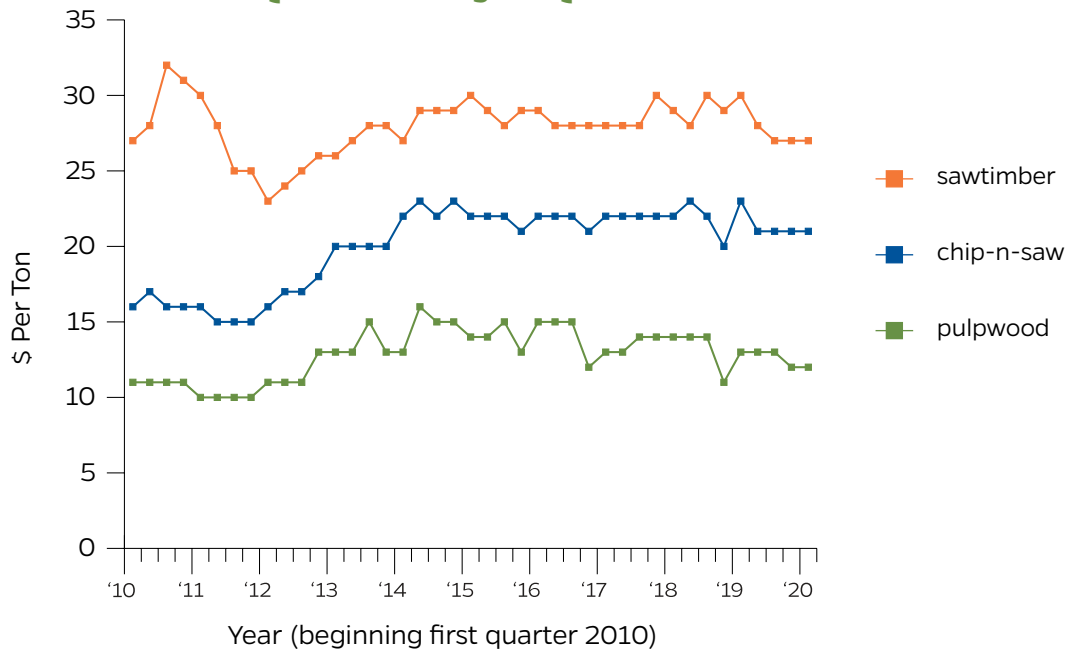
Average stumpage prices for the three major products in Florida, as reported in the **1st Quarter 2020** Timber Mart-South report were:

Florida Stumpage Prices	
Pine pulpwood:	\$12/ton, same as 4 th Qtr. 2019
Pine C-N-S:	\$21/ton, same
Pine sawtimber:	\$27/ton, same

Trend Report

Wet weather in parts of the Southeastern region resulted in stumpage price increases in some areas. Markets were impacted by the COVID -19 outbreak late in the quarter, which dampened some of those weather-related gains. Despite high demand for certain paper products, a decrease in overall demand for wood across the region in March resulted in suppressed gate prices for all the major products. Average stumpage prices for the major wood products in Florida remained where they were in the last quarter and the better part of 2019. As of this update the USDA and FDACS are still hammering out how the \$380 million in block grants for disaster recovery will be distributed to those impacted by Hurricane Michael and other events. We will share the latest information on that and other news as it is available in Florida Land Steward email updates. Send an email to cdemers@ufl.edu to be added to the distribution if you are not on it. This is the best way to stay current on news, opportunities, and events.

Average Pine Stumpage Prices for Florida (\$/Ton)
1st Qtr 2010 through 1st Qtr 2020



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

More information about certification in these programs is available at:

<https://www.fdacs.gov/Divisions-Offices/Florida-Forest-Service/For-Landowners/Programs/Forest-Stewardship-Program>

<https://www.treefarmssystem.org/florida>

<https://myfwc.com/lap>

These landowners have achieved certification in the Tree Farm, Forest Stewardship, Forces Forest, and/or Wildlife Habitat Recognition Program and demonstrate excellent stewardship of their land resources.



Aaron Bell (L) with Daniel Penniman, Nassau County



Benjamin "Guign" Wyche (center) with Megan Ellis (L) and Lanie Carter (R), Madison County



James Jernigan, Santa Rosa County



Jean Paul and Natacha Huyghues, Madison County



Lori Korn (center) with Megan Ellis (L) and Lanie Carter (R), Madison County



Marc Dunbar, Gadsden County



Russell and Aliese Priddy with Peter Diamond (L), Collier County



Scott and Jesse Terrell with Greg Barton (L), Marion County

Upcoming Stewardship, Small Farm and Other Events

Date	Event, Location, Contact
On Zoom every Tuesday through June 23	Agricultural Best Management Practices Summit - Virtual on Zoom. Provided by the UF/IFAS Center for Land Use Efficiency. Join us for updates on agricultural BMP research and extension projects. Participants will also hear from growers and agency professionals and have time for discussion. See https://bmp.ifas.ufl.edu/bmp-in-action/2020-virtual-summit/ for details and to join.
June 18	USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) State Technical Meeting , (rescheduled from March 24, information in link above to be updated soon), 9 am -12 pm, Florida Farm Bureau, 5700 SW. 34 th Street, Gainesville, FL 32608. Open to the public and will give an overview of the 2018 Farm Bill programs and conservation easements. NRCS will solicit recommendations for establishing technical guidelines, program criteria and priorities for conservation in Florida. Contact nina.bhattacharyya@usda.gov , 352-338-9554. See https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/eventdetail/fl/newsroom/events/?cid=NRCSEPRD1549425 for details.
Sept. 14-16	Trees of Florida 2020 Conference and Trade Show. Rescheduled, details to be posted at https://www.floridaisa.org/rescheduled-trees-florida-2020-conference-and-trade-show/
Sept. 26-27	Central Florida Sportsman's Expo , Tom Varn Park, 301 Darby Rd., Brooksville, FL 34601. FWC Landowner Assistance Program biologists will be exhibiting and available to answer landowners' questions. \$5 Entry Fee, children under 12 Free. See https://centralfloridasportsmansexpo.com/ for details.
Oct. 27-30	Aquatic Weed Control Short Course , Fort Lauderdale Marriott Coral Springs Hotel, 11775 Heron Bay Boulevard, Coral Springs, FL 33076. Provided by UF/IFAS Extension. Earn Florida Pesticide Licensing and CEUs. Engage with your industry and network with your peers! The Short Course is designed to benefit new and experienced applicators alike. See https://conference.ifas.ufl.edu/aw/registration-information.html for details and registration. For more information contact Dr. Lyn Gettys, 954-577-6331, lgettys@ufl.edu
Nov. 6	Florida Land Steward Tour at Property of Jake English , Pasco County, FL, property of Jake English near Land O Lakes, FL. Join us to learn about longleaf pine forest management, enhancing wildlife habitat, tree planting, Best Management Practices for protecting water quality and wildlife, Tree Farm certification, preparing for the next hurricane, and the challenges of land management in the wildland-urban interface. Details and registration link to be posted on email updates. Contact cdemers@ufl.edu for information

Keep social distancing. WEBINARS are where it's at!
 See <http://www.forestrywebinars.net/> for the latest schedule.

More events and information are posted at floridalandsteward.org

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

Chris Demers (editor)
 UF/IFAS School of Forest Resources & Conservation
 (352) 846-2375 • cdemers@ufl.edu

Dr. Michael Andreu (co-editor)
 UF/IFAS School of Forest Resources & Conservation
 (352) 846-0355 • mandreu@ufl.edu

Tony Grossman (co-editor)
 Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission
 (850) 410-5268
Anthony.Grossman@myfwc.com

Jen Tucker-Jenks (co-editor)
 Florida Forest Service
 (850) 681-5874
Jennifer.Tucker-Jenks@fdacs.gov

John Nash (co-editor)
 Florida Tree Farmer
osceolapines@gmail.com