

FLORIDA LAND STEWARD



A Quarterly Newsletter for Florida Landowners and Resource Professionals

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Congratulations Stephen and Danna Matheny, 2023 Florida Land Steward Landowner of the Year

By Chad Allison, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Megan Ellis, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

Stephen and Danna Matheny own and manage approximately 90 acres in Madison County, most of which has been in their family for generations. Steve grew up watching the orange glow of prescribed fire creep across a dark landscape as his family performed night burns on their property. Outside his window, light and shadows cast by flames and vegetation fought until only glowing embers remained in their wake, sparkling like stars across the forest floor. Steve knew his calling was to be among the backlit silhouettes of his family on those burns one day, so that he too could preserve the history of their land and the wildlife that call it home.

Steve's family lived on and managed the "big woods" for generations, and stories dating back to the Civil War were passed down to him. Over time, as the Matheny family grew and aged, the children divided the property and converted much of the old piney woods to agricultural crops until only Steve's 90 acres and his parent's 70 acres remained, isolated and changed by oak encroachment and harvesting. It is here that Steve dedicated the rest of his life to the conservation and restoration of the longleaf pine forest on their property and has spent the last decade working to rehabilitate these

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An Equal Opportunity Institution.



Stephen and Danna Matheny, 2023 Florida Land Steward Landowners of the Year, photo by Megan Ellis, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.



The property has received the Wildlife Habitat Recognition Program sign.

woods. Working closely with Blanton's Longleaf Container Nursery, he strives to restore the historic ecosystems on his property to preserve the legacy of the land using Florida trees in-place-of Alabama trees when able. He is devoted to *The Art of Managing Longleaf: A Personal History of the Stoddard-Neel*

Approach, and his property reflects this devotion.

Steve has worked with the Florida Forest Service, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Natural Resources Conservation Service to achieve his goals on the property. He has a Forest Stewardship Plan and received a Wildlife Habitat Recognition Program sign for his efforts in promoting wildlife habitat. He completes most land management activities on his own including prescribed fire, hardwood reduction treatments, mowing, and fireline maintenance. He will occasionally take off work from his day job with the railroad to complete necessary management practices on his property that require certain timing to achieve his goals.

Steve has a passion for land stewardship and is eager to share his experience and success with other members of the community, and he does so by offering his property as an educational opportunity for anyone interested including the Madison Landowner Cooperative Group. He has also worked closely with his County Forester, Zachary Butler, for



Early morning fog at a forest edge.

years to improve management and host school children for lessons in longleaf pine ecology. These interactions educate the next generation of longleaf advocates while encouraging other landowners to explore options for wildlife conservation and habitat restoration on their own properties.

Today, a family of pileated woodpeckers forage in the adult longleaf pines, fox pups play at the mouth of a gopher tortoise burrow, northern bobwhite sing every spring day, and young gopher tortoises feast on bountiful herbaceous plants. Steve has replanted longleaf pine on 20 acres, reduced hardwood encroachment and used prescribed fire to restore 30 acres of adult longleaf pines and robust native groundcover while encouraging natural regeneration of longleaf pine. He retains snags on the property for wildlife habitat and plans to manage the mature longleaf pines using the Stoddard-Neel method, maintaining varied ages in the trees long-term. Steve views his woods through an ecological and landscape-scale lens and strives to promote habitat in an area that has fragmented and degraded through time. His property remains one of the last areas of intact groundcover and adult longleaf pines actively maintained with fire in the area, and he hopes to keep it that way for many years to come.



Groundcover plant diversity is enhanced with prescribed fire, by Megan Ellis, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

Florida Tree Farm Program Prepares for 2023 Assessment



The Florida Tree Farm Program is preparing for our 2023 program assessment. The Program has been assessed three times since 2010 with no significant issues. The purpose of the

assessment is to ensure the Florida Tree Farm Program is meeting the 2021 American Forest Foundation Standards of Sustainability, online at <https://www.treefarmssystem.org/view-standards>.

A small percentage of Florida Tree Farms will be selected for the assessment. The assessors will look at the selected landowner's management plan and then an interview will be conducted at the landowner's convenience. The interviews will be conducted at the property and a Florida Tree Farm representative will accompany the assessor. The assessment process began in January 2023. If your Tree Farm is chosen you will receive a phone call soon, if not already. The assessment is not a judgement of your management.

Rather, your property is viewed as a sample of how the state program applies the Standards on properties statewide. If selected, participation in the assessment is required as a condition of certification. However, if you are unable to participate for reasons beyond your control, please let us know so other arrangements can be made.

Please contact your inspector if you need an update to your management plan or if your Tree Farm has not been inspected since 2018. For more information contact the Florida Tree Farm Program at (352) 727-2985 or by email at: gregory.marshall@fdacs.gov.

Doug and Teresa Moore Recognized as National Tree Farmers of the Year

The American Forest Foundation, a national conservation organization that works to deliver meaningful conservation impact through the empowerment of family forest owners, has announced Doug and Teresa Moore as the 2022 National Tree Farmers of the Year. They were selected for this honor from among more than 69,000 landowners, nationwide, who are certified under the American Tree Farm System (ATFS).

Doug and Teresa own South Prong Plantation, located in Baker County, about 50 miles west of Jacksonville, Florida. The

land includes a mixture of pine flatwoods, cypress swamps and hydric hammocks, along with a creek and old homesteads. It also contains the headwaters of the south prong of the St. Marys River, the feature that gives the property its name. Doug and Teresa's objectives balance sustainable timber management with biodiversity and water quality conservation.

This is a tremendous honor for Doug and Teresa as well as the Florida Tree Farm Program. Congratulations to Doug and Teresa, and everyone involved in pursuing this award!



Doug and Teresa Moore. Photo by Mike Branch.

National Council for Air and Stream Improvement, Inc. (NCASI) Seeking Observations of Eastern Diamondback Rattlesnake

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service has been petitioned to list the eastern diamondback rattlesnake as a threatened or endangered species. The eastern diamondback is found in the lower Coastal Plain from South Carolina to Alabama, and historically in Louisiana, Mississippi, and North Carolina. As the Service reviews the status of the eastern diamondback, the National Council for Air & Stream

Improvement, Inc. (NCASI), a scientific research organization that provides technical information on environmental issues for the forest products sector, is gathering data to improve understanding of its distribution and habitat associations. NCASI is seeking observations of the eastern diamondback rattlesnake in forests to provide a report to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

We have several years of observations and want to send out one more request before compiling the data. Please help with this assessment if you can. To learn more about the survey and/or submit an observation, please visit <https://www.ncasi.org/resource/eastern-diamondback-rattlesnake-survey>

Enroll in the Online Forest Landowner Academy!

The Forest Landowner Academy is the first of its kind offered by the University of Florida IFAS School of Forest, Fisheries, and Geomatics Sciences on the UF/IFAS Extension Online Learning catalog. Forest Landowners are encouraged to enroll to connect with forest management experts at the University of Florida and receive quality core educational content on forestry and multiple-use stewardship concepts.

The course modules will cover a variety of topics on understanding your forest resources, developing your management plan, timber management, marketing forest products, other forest enterprises

such as pine straw and hunting leases, wildlife management, and planning for the future. Each module will include an assessment where you can apply what you've learned to your land or situation and begin or continue planning and making contacts. The cost of the course is just \$150. Those completing the course will earn a University of Florida Certificate.

This course will be relevant for Florida landowners as well as those in the neighboring coastal plain regions of Georgia and Alabama. Landowners will build on this course as they receive information and attend educational

events offered by the Florida Land Steward Program and other partners in Florida and neighboring states.

For more information and to enroll in the Forest Landowner Academy visit the course page at <https://ifas-sfrc-for.catalog.instructure.com/courses/for-fla>

For more information, contact:
Chris Demers
cdemers@ufl.edu, (352) 846-2375 or
Dr. Michael Andreu
mandreu@ufl.edu

Check out the New Wild Turkey Science Podcast



Wild Turkey Science is a podcast hosted by Dr. Marcus Lashley at the University of Florida and Dr. Will Gulsby at Auburn University and made possible by Turkeys for Tomorrow. The podcast is science-based and features in-depth discussion about research on wild turkeys, from the past and present. Also, we will regularly have guest leading ongoing research from across the wild turkey range for real time updates on ongoing work.

The purpose of the podcast is to serve as a hub for research on wild turkeys and how it can be applied to conservation and management on private and public lands. The podcast is available on all the major platforms and we will have weekly episodes that release each Monday morning. Tune in to Wild Turkey Science podcast at: <https://sites.libsyn.com/453219/WildTurkeyScience>

Emergency Conservation Program Deadline Extended to March 23, 2023

If you suffered severe damage from Hurricane Ian, you may be eligible for assistance from the Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) administered by the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA). For land to be eligible, the natural disas-

ter must have created new conservation problems that, if untreated, would be so costly to rehabilitate and return the land to productive agricultural use; created unusual damage that would not recur frequently in the same area; affected the

productive capacity of the farmland; and/or impaired or endangered the land. For more information about ECP, Contact your Local USDA Service Center. Find your Service Center at <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/contact>.

Tax Tips for Forest Landowners: 2022 Tax Year

Many forestry activities we conduct can have tax implications. Generally, all income received is taxable unless excluded by tax law, and nothing is deductible unless a provision allows it. Understanding the forest-related provisions and integrating tax planning into your forest management can help lower your overall taxes. The 2022 Forest Landowners Tax Tips guide is available at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/land/taxtips.pdf>

This publication is intended to be an informational and educational resource for you and your tax advisor, but is not intended as financial, tax, or legal advice. As always, consult with your tax advisor concerning your particular tax situation.



Sign up for USDA NRCS Conservation Stewardship Program

Sign up by February 24

Through the voluntary Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) works one-on-one with producers to develop a conservation plan that outlines and enhances existing efforts

while improving their agricultural operations. Using new conservation practices or activities, agricultural producers can adopt practices and activities that expand on the benefits of cleaner water and air, healthier soil, and better wildlife habitat, all based on management objectives specific to their farming operation. For

more information see <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/csp-conservation-stewardship-program>. Contact your local NRCS field office for more information. Find your field office at <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/contact>.

Don't miss out on news and events!

A LOT happens between quarterly issues of this newsletter!

Sign up for the regular Florida Land Steward email updates so you don't miss out on assistance and educational opportunities. Send an email to cdemers@ufl.edu to be added to the listserv. Email updates are sent once a week or every other week and include the latest calendar of workshops, tours, webinars, 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.

All the latest news and events are online at the new UF/IFAS Florida Land Steward Program web site: <https://programs.ifas.ufl.edu/florida-land-steward/>.

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.

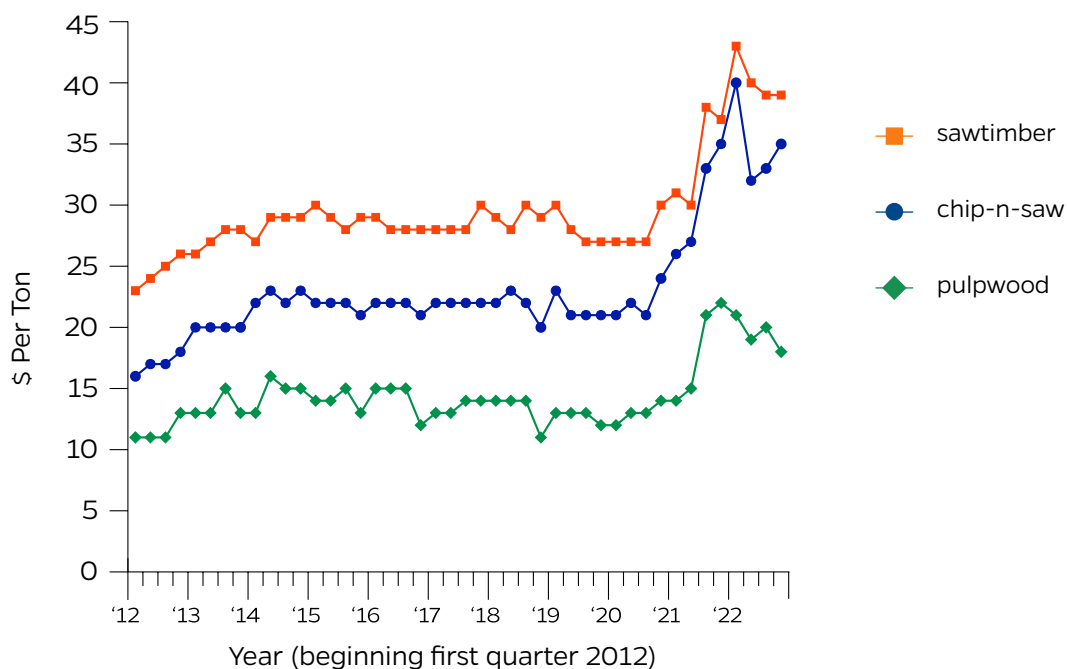
Average stumpage prices for the three major products in Florida, as reported in the **4th Quarter 2022** Timber Mart-South report were:

Florida Stumpage Prices	
Pine pulpwood:	\$18/ton, ↓ from 3 rd Qtr. 2022
Pine C-N-S:	\$35/ton, ↑
Pine sawtimber:	\$39/ton, same

Trend Report

Average pine stumpage prices increased somewhat across much of the Southeast region this quarter, attributable to wet conditions and constrained supply in some places. Average price changes from last quarter were mixed in Florida but didn't shift much in either direction. Markets for pulp producers were down only slightly in the last quarter of 2022. Market conditions for solid wood products have leveled out a bit with lumber prices down more than 60% since March 2022. Despite some challenging economic conditions, residential building construction, a driver of solid wood markets, continues to hold strong. Precipitation levels were mostly normal across the region at the end of 2022, but severe weather events were more common with thunderstorms and tornados causing localized problems.

Average Pine Stumpage Prices for Florida (\$/Ton)
1st Qtr 2012 through 4th Qtr 2022



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 LANDOWNERS

More information about certification in these programs is available at:

<https://www.fdacs.gov/Forest-Wildfire/For-Landowners/Programs-for-Landowners/Forest-Stewardship-Program>

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

<https://myfwc.com/lap>

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



Andy Czuprynski, Escambia County



James Cunningham, Lake County

Upcoming Events

Date	Event, Location, Contact
Feb. 11	North FL Cattlemen Association Annual Meeting, Suwannee County. 9:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. ET at UF/IFAS Suwannee Valley Research and Education Center, Live Oak, FL. Attend to learn where your cattle operation fits in today's beef industry and more. For more information see link above or contact Paulette at UF/IFAS Extension Columbia County at (386) 752-5384. <i>Details and registration at https://www.eventbrite.com/e/north-florida-cattlemans-association-meeting-february-11-2023-tickets-500376398277</i>
Feb. 24	FAMU Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Workshop, Gadsden County. 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. ET, FAMU Research and Education Center, 4259 Bainbridge Highway, Quincy, FL 32352. Florida A&M University, in collaboration with the University of Georgia, USDA Farm Service Agency, and Natural Resources Conservation Service are working to increase participation of underserved landowners in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). CRP is a voluntary program that contracts with agricultural producers so that environmentally sensitive agricultural lands are conserved. For more information, contact Alex Bolques, alejandrobolques@famu.edu , (850) 421-6521. <i>Details and registration at https://www.eventbrite.com/e/famu-conservation-reserve-program-crp-workshop-tickets-490006521697</i>
March 1	Learn How Farming and Ranching Fit in Southwest Florida, Sarasota County. 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. ET. Provided by UF/IFAS Extension Sarasota County. <i>Details and registration at https://www.eventbrite.com/e/learn-how-farming-and-ranching-fit-in-southwest-florida-tickets-463640951567</i>
March 2-3	2023 Urban Forestry Institute (virtual): "Trees for Resilient Communities" The Urban Forestry Institute is a yearly conference hosted by the Florida Urban Forestry Council. This year's theme will focus on "Trees for Resilient Communities" and the program will include talks on how to increase the resilience of the human and non-human parts of the urban forest. <i>Details and registration at https://fufc.org/urban-forestry-institute</i>
March 9	Forest Resiliency Filed Day, Blackwater River State Forest. 8:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. CT at Blackwater River State Forest Bear Lake Recreation Area Pavilion. Provided by Florida Land Steward Program. A well-managed forest is a resilient forest! Join us for a field day exploring the latest on good forest management. <i>Details and registration at https://fls-tour030923.eventbrite.com</i>
April 4	Landowner Financial Assistance Expo, Suwannee County. 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. ET. Provided by UF/IFAS Extension Suwannee Valley Research and Education Center, Live Oak, FL. <i>Details and registration at https://www.eventbrite.com/e/landowner-financial-assistance-expo-tickets-463707320077</i>

More events, webinars, webinar recordings, news, and information can be found at programs.ifas.ufl.edu/florida-land-steward

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

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