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Twelve Days of Arkansas Agriculture: Forest Stewardship Program Helps Landowners Manage Forests

LITTLE ROCK, AR – The Forest Stewardship Program, which began in 1990 and is administered by the Agriculture Department’s Forestry Commission (AFC), provides guidelines for good forest management through the development of forest management plans. Arkansas currently has 407,385 acres of privately owned forestland actively enrolled in the state’s Forest Stewardship program. Private landowners own almost 70% of Arkansas’s 19+ million acres of forestland.

Forest management plans are developed by foresters to achieve objectives that are specific to landowner needs including enhanced wildlife habitat, recreational use like hunting, improved soil and water quality, timber production, wetland restoration, and more. Landowners eligible for the program must own a minimum of 10 forested acres.

“A forest management plan is a commitment to continue good forest management practices so that your land is healthy now and for future generations,” says Darren Spinks, Forest Stewardship Program Coordinator. “The Stewardship Program provides recognition to landowners who are managing their forests through long term planning. This ultimately makes Arkansas forests healthier, more valuable, and more likely to remain sustainable for future generations.”

Good forest management makes forests more resistant to damage from wildfires, diseases, pests, and drought. “Wildfires move more quickly and intensely through unmanaged forests with thick underbrush and dry, stressed trees. Drought conditions and pests like Ips beetles and southern pine beetles cause much less damage in properly managed forests that are not densely packed with too many trees and underbrush. A managed forest with a long term plan allows trees to be vigorous and strong through multiple decades.” says State Forester Joe Fox.

Forests that are currently being managed under the Forest Stewardship Program are noticeable by signage, which is presented to landowners after all of the program requirements have been met. State and federal agencies help administer program objectives including the AFC, Arkansas Game and Commission, the University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service, U.S. Forest Service and others.

Find more about program requirements, a program application, and an example forest management plan [here](#) or contact Darren Spinks by calling (501) 944-2577 or emailing Darren.spinks@arkansas.gov.

This release is the tenth edition to the Twelve Days of Arkansas Agriculture campaign, which highlights some of the programs and services provided by the AAD that support our state’s agriculture industry. Follow each of the 12 stories by searching the #12DaysofARagriculture hashtag, or visit aad.arkansas.gov. The AAD is dedicated to the development and implementation of policies and programs for Arkansas agriculture and forestry to keep its farmers and ranchers competitive in national and international markets while ensuring safe food, fiber, and forest products for the citizens of the state and nation.

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