THE SOUTH'S SMALL WOODLANDS AND TIMBER SUPPLY

By W. C. HAMMERLE¹

The small, private forest landowner has been recognized as the toughest problem in American forestry. Since the Forest Service Reappraisal² of 1945-46, private industry foresters and conservationists have intensified their efforts to provide educational and assistance programs for this forest ownership group.

It is probably a fortunate thing for the country that interest in the small forest owner has been stirred up. But the magnitude of the problem, as seen in the millions of owners involved and their divided interests, has resulted in conflicts in methods of approach and sometimes even in an attitude of defeatism. It is hoped that the varied, self-centred interests of those concerned can be molded into fully cooperative efforts to improve conditions on these small woodlands and assure adequate timber production.

In the production of forest products on small holdings, the southern states³ have as much, if not more, at stake than any other section of the country. The southern region of the United States, occupying less than 18 per cent of the total land area, contains nearly 40 per cent of the nation's commercial forest land and about 28 per cent of the total timber volume. Over 91 per cent (167,000,000 acres) of the commercial forest land in the South is in private ownership. Small holdings (less than 5,000 acres) comprise 73 per cent of all private holdings. While this is slightly below the average for the United States (76 per cent), the acreages owned (122,066,000 acres) is the largest in small ownership of any geographical section of the nation.

Equally important in the consideration of these holdings is the number of landowners involved. Here the Forest Reappraisal shows 1,649,456 small owners or 99 per cent of all forest landowners in the South. Again this exceeds the number of small forest landowners in any section of the country, with only the combined total for the Lake States and Central States (over 1½ million small owners) approaching this number.

Perhaps it would be well to pause here to take a look at the people of the South. Basically they differ little, if any, from the same classes of people in other sections of the country. They are pretty much typical Americans. Traditionally, they have acquired a few more extreme characteristics than their counterparts in other sections of the country. These characteristics, of definite importance in considering the small landowner problem, have been aptly expressed by Captain I. F. Eldredge in his book "The 4 Forests and the Future of the South,"⁴ from which the following paragraph is quoted:

1. Forester, Southern Pine Association, New Orleans, La.
2. Forests and National Prosperity. Miscellaneous Publication No. 668, U.S.D.A., Forest Service, August 1948.
3. The southern region as designated by the Forest Reappraisal comprises the following states: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, southeast Oklahoma, and east Texas.
4. The 4 Forests and the Future of the South. I. F. Eldredge. Charles Lathrop Pack Forestry Foundation, 1947.

"Southerners of all walks of life are almost instinctively conservative; . . . they are slow to accept or to adopt changes of a radical nature. Reforms and new ventures have come in the past, and many more are in prospect, but, as always, they will come slowly, cautiously, and only after full adaptation to Southern conditions. Southerners also are individualists of the first water; they grant power to their governments—city, county and state—very grudgingly indeed, and consistently fight every one of the repeated movements to expand the field and strengthen the power of the Federal Government. They are the nation's No. 1 advocates of local self-government—and they do not want too much of that, either."

These characteristics of conservatism and individualism, combined with an abiding loyalty to American traditions and ideals, are perhaps more accentuated in this group comprising the small landowners of the South. Who are they? Farmers own 55 per cent of the total forest acreage in small holdings. Lumber manufacturers own nearly 2¼ million acres—less than 2 per cent. Unclassified owners account for the balance of the forest acreage. This group comprises local merchants, country bankers, widows, estates, insurance companies, real estate men, retired workers, and professional men of all types. Some do not even reside within the state in which their lands are located. A number have acquired holdings purely for speculative purposes. Except in recent years relatively few of these owners have acquired their holdings with the idea of managing their timberlands for permanent production.

The condition of these small woodlands is just about as diverse as their ownerships. They have one thing in common in far too many cases—neglect, or lack of management. With few exceptions, these woodlands have been clear cut to obtain ready cash, burned regularly because the owners were careless or had misconceptions about their value, and overgrazed with a resulting destruction of young seedlings. In some cases the lands have suffered from decadence because of strong sentiment against cutting in any form.

In spite of this neglect and abuse, however, the small woodlands of the South have been a prime factor in maintaining the region as a major producer of lumber and other forest products. Perhaps there are more of these small landowners than the records indicate carrying on conservative cutting practices. Possibly the practices do not meet technical requirements or the land is not fully productive. Admittedly nature has generously reseeded heavily cut-over and abandoned agricultural lands. It is a known fact that many small holdings, as well as some larger ones, have been cut-over two to five times since the original growth was removed. This is especially true in the southeastern states, from Virginia to Georgia, where the lumber industry attained its earliest development.

The ups and downs of "King Cotton" left their mark on the South's woodlands as well as on its people. Favorable markets witnessed the clearing of additional farm woodlands for cotton production. Market declines, plus land deterioration from the one-crop, clear cultivation system, resulted in the abandonment of hundreds of acres of cotton land. There are many instances of two crops of timber having been grown and harvested on cotton lands abandoned during and immediately following the War Between the States.

The small woodland owner has not been entirely the forgotten man. Educational efforts were directed toward the farm woodland owner in the 1920's primarily by the State Agricultural Extension Services. Real concerted efforts to reach the small woodland owner, primarily the farmer, did not develop or become effective until the next decade, 1930-40. The wide-spread activity in this field of education, demonstration and assistance is indicated in the following paragraph, quoted from the 1950 Annual Report of the Chief of the Forest Service:

"The continued educational efforts of the (U.S.) Forest Service and the state and extension foresters, cooperative fire protection and tree distribution under the Clark-McNary Act, work of the Civilian Conservation Corps, Agricultural Conservation Program payments to farmers for forestry practices, the Soil Conservation Service farm planning and tree planting program, the woodland management work of the Tennessee Valley Authority, and the program sponsored by the forest products industries for the promotion of better forestry—all these have helped give impetus to the application of more forest management to small woodlands, particularly those on farms."

The Norris-Doxey Cooperative Farm Forestry Act of 1937 authorized the federal government to cooperate more fully with state forestry agencies, land grant colleges and farmers in the regeneration, protection and management of woodlands, and the utilization and marketing of their products. This act was superseded in 1950 by Public Law 729, known as the Cooperative Forest Management Act, which extended cooperation *through the state forestry departments* to enable them to provide technical services to private forest landowners without restriction to farm woodlands. The act further provided that the federal-state cooperative activities authorized should be carried out in such manner as to encourage the utilization of private agencies and individuals furnishing services of the same type.

In addition to the federal cooperative programs, practically all of the southern states provide in varying degree direct assistance to private forest landowners. These programs are financed entirely from state funds, or, in some cases, supplemented by charges made for direct technical services. South Carolina and Virginia have taken the lead in this field. Both states provide such free services as necessary from an educational standpoint to sell sound forestry practices to landowners but make a nominal charge for direct technical services leading to the sale of forest products. The programs are primarily designed and operated, under the enabling State legislation, to reach the small landowners to whom the services of consulting foresters are not always readily available. The method of operation is concisely set forth in the following quotation from the "Annual Report of the South Carolina State Commission of Forestry for the Fiscal Year 1949-50":

"The State Commission of Forestry and the Clemson College Extension Service cooperate in providing technically trained foresters to assist landowners in managing their timber lands.

"Any landowner in the state can receive this service. A forester, with the landowner or his agent, will look over the woodland, give on-the-ground

advice and prepare a report covering recommendations on any cutting, fire protection and reforestation measures needed.

"In cases where cutting of timber is recommended, a representative of the State Commission of Forestry will, at the request of the landowner, mark the timber to be cut, provide the landowner with an estimate of the volume marked for cutting, and furnish the landowner a list of prospective buyers, a suggested form of advertisement, and a sample timber sale agreement. The only charge for this service is 50c per thousand board feet or 13c per cord for timber actually marked and tallied. All other services are provided free of charge.

"During the year Commission foresters made 880 woodland examinations on 163,334 acres of forest land, and a total of 13,283,940 board feet and 3,385.3 cords were selectively marked for 242 landowners on 8,427 acres of forest land.

"It is estimated that during the year industrial and private consulting foresters marked an additional 117,400 cords of pulpwood and 35,000,000 board feet of sawtimber on 34,000 acres of forest land."

The same report shows that since the "marking service" program was initiated in South Carolina in 1941, state forestry personnel (1) made woodland examinations for 3,669 owners on 971,623 acres, and (2) marked for cutting over 158 $\frac{3}{4}$ million board feet of saw timber and nearly 19 thousand cords of pulpwood on 121,000 acres for 1,338 landowners. Unfortunately, data are not available on the number of landowners serviced by consulting and industry foresters during the same period.

Small landowners in practically every southern state can secure at no cost and without obligation the services of technical foresters from most of the pulp and paper companies. These men, commonly termed "conservation foresters," are employed by the companies to work entirely with pulpwood dealers and contractors for the purpose of improving forest cutting practices and assisting landowners in the proper harvesting of pulpwood. A substantial number of lumber manufacturers provide similar marking services to landowners through their company foresters—though these men are not assigned exclusively to such work. In spite of the many difficulties involved, such as the owners' desire for the greatest immediate financial return and the highly competitive markets for stumpage, progress is being made in this field. Many different approaches in education, demonstration and direct service have been tried—not all successfully. The important thing is that efforts have not ceased because of failures but have led to development of new methods of approach.

A small landowning company in Mississippi initiated in 1947 a program for landowners in its operating territory. The company manages the woodlands for individuals, including the harvesting of all classes of forest products, under a plan worked up by the company foresters who mark all trees to be cut. The landowner is paid the prevailing prices for the products with no agreement limiting the sale to the company. The plan has worked successfully in spite of initial difficulties, and the company now has 25,000 acres of land owned by 125 individuals under the program. The holdings range in size from 8 acres

to 3,600 acres. Other lumber companies in the vicinity have since started similar programs with small landowners.

The Tree Farm Program is another means utilized to awaken landowners to the value of managed woodlands. Sponsored nationally by American Forest Products Industries, Inc., the program in the South has been fostered by the Southern Pine Association since 1942. The programs are organized and operated on an individual state basis under local sponsorship. Standards of forestry practice are established by state forestry organizations, with inspection of woodlands carried out by foresters of public agencies and, in some states, industrial and private foresters. The Southern Pine Association cooperates with and provides limited financial assistance for ten state programs, while the Southern Hardwood Producers, Inc., assists in one state.

The Tree Farms system is designed to encourage the adoption and application of good forestry practices and the continuous production of commercial timber crops by private forest landowners. This objective is accomplished through education and publicity that (1) gives public recognition to private forest landowners who have been and are now operating their forest lands as Tree Farms; (2) establishes Tree Farms as demonstrations that the growing of timber, under proper forest management, is practical and profitable; and (3) encourages other landowners to adopt Tree Farming principles. The name "Tree Farm" designates an area, large or small, that is dedicated to the growing of continuous forest crops for commercial purposes through the application of common sense forestry practices.

As of August 1, 1951, there were 1,735 certified Tree Farms with an aggregate area of 14,195,926 acres in ten southern states. Representing 55 per cent of the number and 60 per cent of the area in certified Tree Farms for the nation, this is evidence that Tree Farming has caught on with southern landowners. While only 4 per cent of the certified acreages is in farm ownership in the South, over 65 per cent of the number of Tree Farms are owned by farmers.

Assistance programs in all phases of forestry are readily available to southern landowners through their state forestry departments and agricultural extension services. Small landowners benefit directly from state or federal-state cooperative programs in forest fire protection, reforestation, and insect and disease control, as well as forest management activities previously mentioned. Educational programs have been carried on in varying degrees, but only in recent years have these efforts been receiving more nearly the attention they deserve. Activities in this field are still far from adequate.

The forest industries cooperate fully with both public forestry agencies and private forestry associations in their state forestry educational activities. This includes direct individual company support, as well as support rendered through regional organizations such as the Southern Pine Association for the lumber industry and the Southern Pulpwood Conservation Association for the pulp and paper industry, and the industries' national educational organization—American Forest Products Industries, Inc. "Keep Green" programs are operating in ten of the twelve southern states while the "More Trees" or "Cash

Crops" programs are functioning in three states. "Keep Green" and "More Trees" are educational programs, one in forest fire prevention and the other in growing trees as a crop.

The Southern Pine Association, through its conservation department, has represented the southern pine lumber industry in efforts to develop adequate control of forest fires, adopt sound cutting practices on both industry and other private lands, strengthen state forestry organizations, and develop sound forestry legislation. The Association advises its subscribers on individual forestry problems, conducts meetings and demonstrations on the practical application of harvesting and logging methods, and engages in general education on forestry. An outstanding phase of its educational program is the Southern Pine Association's activities, including financial assistance, in the Tree Farm systems in the South in cooperation with ten state organizations. Additionally the Association actively participates in the development of educational material, such as the booklet "Ten Lessons in Forestry" cooperatively produced for nine states; the preparation of exhibits; forestry camps; forestry training meetings and demonstrations.

The Southern Pulpwood Conservation Association, on behalf of the pulp and paper industry, carries on forestry educational activities and demonstrations of direct benefit to woodland owners. It cooperates with state forestry organizations and has produced and distributed instructive motion pictures on various phases of forestry; distributed valuable forestry educational leaflets; and annually conducts forestry training camps in most of the southern states.

The importance of the small woodland owner to the forest economy of the South is well established. Public and private forestry agencies and the forest industries recognize fully the problems confronting small landowners, and intelligent efforts have been directed toward these problems, especially during the past five to ten years. A great deal of progress is being made with the small landowner in the fields of fire protection, reforestation and forest management practices. Unquestionably, present efforts of educational and assistance programs can be intensified and the practice of forestry really sold on the basis that it is profitable and economically sound. Forest lands in small holdings should, within the next decade, become a permanent, stable source of the South's second largest industry—forest products.