



ALABAMA TREASURE FOREST Association Newsletter

In partnership with the Alabama Farmers Federation

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Hill Family Honored With Moody Award



The Hill family of Elmore County received the Bill Moody Award Nov. 13 at the Alabama Farmers Federation home office in Montgomery. The family owns Paradise in Butler County, the inspiration for the print with which they were presented. The late Dr. Richard Hill owned the property with his wife, Pam, and sons, Trent and Tyler. From left are Tyler, Amy, Pam and Trent Hill.

By Marlee Moore

For five years, Bill Moody Award winners received prints of a painting with sky blue and leaf green brushstrokes inspired by Paradise, a Butler County TREASURE Forest.

Last fall, the owners of Paradise received a copy of the print when the Hill family was honored with the 2020 Bill Moody Award. The award was presented at the Alabama TREASURE Forest Association (ATFA) board meeting in November.

The Hill family — the late Dr. Richard Hill, his wife Pam and sons Tyler and Trent — will be recognized

again for their multiple-use stewardship during the 2021 Alabama Landowners Conference.

"It was exciting to present Mrs. Pam and her sons with the award," said ATFA Executive Director William Green. "Their property was the inspiration for Joel Kelly's painting, and it really represents Dr. Hill's hard work turning a cutover tract into a beautiful farm."

The Bill Moody Award is named after late State Forester Bill Moody, who created the TREASURE Forest program. Bill Moody Award winners are recognized for stewardship, sustainability, education and partnership. It is the ATFA's highest honor.

"The Hills are the type of landowners Bill Moody

envisioned when he came up with the program," said nominator Michael Hagen. "They embody our mission: Taking the land that God gave them and making Him glad He did."

The Hills began their stewardship journey with a 208-acre cutover property in north Butler County. Through the years, Paradise has evolved into a beautiful property with hills covered in hardwood, plantation pines, fish-filled ponds and abundant wildlife.

Besides sustaining resources through planting trees, the family installed over 5,000 watts of solar panels to power their lodge. Additionally, they collect filtered rainwater that is pumped to supply water for sinks and showers.

Though his TREASURE Forest was in Butler County, the late Hill was a faithful member of the Elmore County chapter. He was serving on the ATFA board when he died in 2018. His family remains active in the organization.

The Hill family also founded Xtreme Outdoor Ministries (XOM), which provides families hunting and fishing opportunities, along with spiritual influence.

XOM's goal is to reach families with spiritual, physical or other needs. These include, but aren't limited to, children with handicaps or illness, children of single-parent homes, children with serious or life-threatening illness and families with limited exposure to outdoor opportunities. ■

Alabama Forest Products Industry Has Rich Tradition, Bright Future

By Mark Kelly, Amazing Alabama

The forest products industry has long been important to Alabama, and its evolution is ensuring a continued vital role in the state's economy.

"As an industry, forest products is evolving," said the Alabama Forestry Commission's (AFC) Gary Faulkner. "It's an exciting time, with new technologies, products, sustainable resources, geographical market

shifts and other factors creating opportunities for all segments of the industry. But, at the end of the day, everything still revolves around resources — and we have the resources and the business climate to ensure the forest products industry continues to thrive in Alabama."

The AFC manages, protects and educates the public about forest resources, and Faulkner is its forest

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Visit www.TREASUREForest.org to join the ATFA.

ATFA Members:

I hope and pray everyone is well. Certainly, 2020 is a year we will remember all of our lives. If you are like me, you have witnessed friends and loved ones suffer with COVID-19. Hopefully, with the vaccine becoming available to more age groups, the virus will be behind us by the end of this year.

I would like to express my gratitude to the Alabama TREASURE Forest Association (ATFA) board for allowing me to serve as president. From the first meeting my wife, Terri, and I attended in Atmore in October 2016, the ATFA family welcomed us and made us feel a part of this organization. We knew as we drove back home to north Alabama that we wanted to become part of the group.

Terri and I were educators and athletic coaches for about 30 years. We have been married for 42 years and have three children, Matthew, Molly and Maggie. Sadly, Matthew passed away in 2005 at the age of 22. Molly is married, has one son and is expecting a daughter in June. Maggie is engaged to be married in May. Fortunately, in November 2011, we were able to retire from our careers as teachers. In 2015, I was asked to become a board member in the Winston County Farmers Federation. Because of this connection, we became aware of ATFA, which we wanted to learn more about.

I have always enjoyed being outdoors. I have a passion for deer and turkey hunting and was able to pass that along to our son and daughters. After Terri and I retired, I was able to get her involved in hunting, and she fell in love with it. As we became more knowledgeable of ATFA's mission statement, we wanted to give back to help protect and preserve the land we enjoy so much.

I hope ATFA will continue to reach people with our purpose during these different times of communication. We need to look at our Classroom in the Forest program to see if there is anything that needs tweaking. Additionally, I hope to see if there is anything ATFA can accomplish to assist in TREASURE Forest Certification for landowners.

Looking forward to serving you,

Mark Finley
ATFA President



Over the past decade, forest products have added 10,000 new jobs in Alabama.

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economic development specialist. His enthusiastic view is shared by Brian Via, Regions Bank professor and director of the Forest Products Development Center at Auburn University.

"The forest products sector has always been very important to Alabama financially," Via said. "Now, thanks to the commitment to developing new products and reaching new markets, the industry is in prime position to expand."

Alabama's forest products industry is among the state's top-tier manufacturing sectors, especially in rural communities. It produces \$4 billion worth of products annually, including nearly \$1.4 billion in exports.

Nationally, Alabama ranks second in pulp production, second in paper and paperboard production, third in lumber production and sixth in wood panel production.

Over the past decade, forest products have added 10,000 new jobs in Alabama, along with \$6.7 billion in capital investment. Today, Alabama's wood-based economy accounts for more than 43,000 jobs — a figure projected to grow by more than 10% by 2025 — and more than \$2.4 billion in annual payrolls.

While those projections were pre-COVID-19, the industry appears to be weathering the worst impacts of the pandemic. One example is the increased demand for toilet paper from Georgia-Pacific's facility in Choctaw County, where the company employs 900 and recently completed a \$120 million expansion. Two other manufacturers in Mobile and Cherokee counties employ a combined total of more than 1,000 Alabamians in producing toilet paper from recycled paper.

"COVID affected all of us in the forestry sector," Faulkner said. "But the industry has persevered well as a designated 'essential industry,' and the trends continue to look good. As we get to the other side of the pandemic, Alabama's forest products industry will be in the right place, at the right time, with the right products."

Sustaining Alabama's success and building for

the future of forest products lies in managing and expanding the state's rich timber resources. While forests cover approximately 30% of land in the lower 48 U.S. states, more than two-thirds of Alabama's land area is covered by forest timberland. In 2019, the U.S. Forest Service's Forest Inventory Analysis reported that Alabama has 42.2 billion cubic feet of standing timber — the largest recorded inventory in the state's history.

"We do a good job of managing our forests," said Via, pointing out that for every tree harvested in Alabama, 1.6 are planted. "That's a real asset, and it's going to continue to be critical for long-term growth."

At the same time, Via adds, new innovations are emerging to meet the needs of new markets, providing value-added products and jobs from Alabama's renewable resources while continuing to support a service and supply chain that generates additional jobs and economic activity. Via's work includes research and development of sustainable adhesives, fillers and wood composites. He notes the growing use of cross-laminated timber (CLT) for large-scale projects such as high-rise buildings, which will continue to increase with the update of the International Building Code to allow for greater use of CLT.

For generations, the forest products industry has benefited from the combination of soil, water, climate and location that makes Alabama one of the industry's national leaders. Now, as growing numbers of businesses and individuals are recognizing the competitive advantages of sustainability, Alabama is positioned to build on that prominence.

Helping accomplish that task is a dedicated network of professionals who understand the needs of the forest products industry and have the knowledge and experience to ensure continued success. That includes numerous state agencies, educational institutions, local economic developers and the state's utility providers, in addition to landowner-focused groups like the Alabama Farmers Federation and Alabama TREASURE Forest Association. ■



Alabama's forest products industry includes items such as cardboard boxes, toilet paper, lumber and wood panels.

Arbor Day Project Packs A Punch

The Walker County Forestry Planning Committee (FPC) packed a punch this year with its Alabama Arbor Day observance the last week of February.

The group delivered nearly 800 backpacks filled with a coloring book, Smokey Bear goodies, wood cookies, activity sheets and a longleaf pine seedling to second graders and teachers across the county.

Walker County Conservation District's Stacy Williams helped coordinate the giveaway, sponsored in part by the Alabama TREASURE Forest Association

(ATFA) and Walker County Farmers Federation. The Walker County FPC assembled the backpack items as a way to help kids have fun and still learn about trees, their uses and why it's important to replant natural resources.

"We are very thankful to the many sponsors and supporting agencies that made this year's Arbor Day Program possible,"

Williams said. "With COVID restrictions, we were not able to do in-person presentations like we have enjoyed doing the previous 14 years. We had to think outside the box about what we could do for the kids to still get the trees (donated by The. Westervelt Co.) to them and make it fun."

Historically, Arbor Day is celebrated through tree plantings, public giveaways and speaker addresses.

Forestland educators such as Walker County's FPC adopted creative solutions this year because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

ATFA Executive Director William Green applauded the group's resourcefulness.

"It's important to educate children early about the impact of Alabama forests," he said. "I'm excited to see the other creative projects our landowners and supporters will continue to implement."

Need help sponsoring a forest-education event for adults or children? Contact Green at (334) 612-5235. ■



The Walker County Forestry Planning Committee coordinated a backpack giveaway for second-graders across the county to celebrate Arbor Day. The backpacks included a pine seedling, coloring sheets, wood products and more.

BLUEBIRD BOXES BRING COLOR, CHEER

With its striking vibrant blue plumage and year-long residency in Alabama, the Eastern bluebird is a favorite of bird enthusiasts, homeowners and landowners.

Bluebirds prefer nesting near open areas such as old orchards, parks, yards, roadsides and cutover woodlands — a plus for Alabama landowners. The birds nest in hollow cavities of trees but can't excavate the cavities themselves.

Similar nesting requirements of non-native species, such as the highly aggressive house sparrow, have reduced bluebird habitat, making man-made bird homes vital.

Bluebird Houses

Homeowners can build or purchase a bluebird house. Whether purchasing or building a bluebird house, ensure houses have movable panels or

hinged openings so the boxes can be easily cleaned between nesting seasons.

Erect houses on a free-standing metal pole or PVC pipe to provide protection from possible predators. The houses should be located in an open area with a few trees or on the edge of a forest or wooded lot. If there is no open area in the yard, place the box so the opening faces east and looks onto an open area.

Space boxes at least 100 feet apart. Bluebirds are territorial and don't enjoy having neighbors close by. The farther the houses are apart, the better.

Want to build a house? Visit aces.edu and search for the publication "Bird Houses for Songbirds." The guide includes birdhouse measurements for several different songbird species.



Bluebirds In Alabama

In Alabama, bluebirds produce two to three broods a year. The female usually begins laying eggs in mid-April and will generally lay one egg a day for several days. She incubates eggs approximately 12 days. Not long after hatching, the birds begin sprouting feathers. However, the male birds will not appear fully vibrant until they are 1.

Bluebird hatchlings remain in the nest about 15 days. For several days, the male bluebird cares for the young, feeding and teaching them how to gather food. Meanwhile, the female prepares the nest for the next brood.

More Information

Erecting bluebird houses provides an opportunity to learn about the species' courtship behavior, migration habits, nesting and seasonal plumage changes. (Females, while less vibrant than males, have grayish-blue coloring. Both sexes have a rust-colored breast.)

Watching birds also helps relieve stress and promotes mental well-being.

For more information, contact Alabama Cooperative Extension System's Lynn Dickinson at rhodela@aces.edu. ■

Source: Alabama Cooperative Extension System



Wildlife Trends

with Andy Whitaker



CONDUCT TIMBER HARVESTS EARLY

If a property is scheduled for timber harvest this year, late winter or early summer is the preferred time to conduct these activities.

Harvesting timber during winter, if your property is dry enough, or during early summer will give these areas the entire growing season to re-vegetate — resulting in better wildlife habitat.

Areas harvested late, such as July, do not have much growing season left to recover or re-vegetate, which results in poorer quality wildlife habitat until the next season when plants can reestablish.

However, the wildlife value of thinning or clearcutting timber is more important than the timing of the harvest. The gist: Do not delay a harvest simply because it will occur during late summer.

Establish Photo Points

Early summer is a great time to begin assessing habitat response from management strategies employed over the past year. Photographs are a great way to monitor and document the progress of these habitat enhancements.

Places to monitor include areas where the landowner burned, harvested timber, applied understory control, strip disked

and planted fruit tree orchards and food plots.

Depending on where management strategies are applied, several photo points should be located throughout the area and across the property. Take notes or mark a map where each point is located to ensure the same photo is taken over time. Many landowners take a picture from each location every six months. Photos taken over time will reveal habitat changes and progress.

Establish Quail Thickets

For landowners who actively manage property for quail hunting, consider establishing protective thickets to provide quail with quality escape and travel habitat.

Generally, areas intensively managed as quail woods for hunting are maintained through annual burning, disking and mowing or some combination of these. The goal is to revert plant succession to an earlier stage. Plant succession is the natural progression that takes place as plants reoccupy a site over a period of years.

Annual plants such as ragweed, broomstraw, croton, partridge pea,



Establishing protective thickets will provide quail with quality escape and travel habitat.

wild millets, etc. are considered early successional species and are some of the first to occupy a site after a recent disturbance.

Quail prefer early successional habitats. While these strategies provide overall great early successional environment for quail, it's important to protect some areas to provide increased habitat diversity and escape cover within the actively managed areas. This allows larger plants and shrubs to establish, creating excellent overhead escape, loafing and roosting cover.

These areas need to be disturbed occasionally to set back succession and prevent trees from encroaching. While every property is different, it's common to make these areas 1/4-1 acre and ensure they are distributed roughly 150 yards apart.

If fencerows or ditches are present, leaving a 15- to 20-yard buffer on each side will create similar habitat and a travel corridor or escape route for quail.

For areas that receive fire every couple of years, install a firebreak around the thicket to keep fire out. These are called ring-arounds. To keep the ring-arounds from getting too overgrown, create new ones elsewhere every two or three years. Then, use fire to set back succession in the original protected areas. ■



There is wildlife value in thinning or clearcutting timber, no matter the timing of harvest.



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