



INCREASING FOREST PRODUCTIVITY AND SUSTAINABILITY IN SC: PINE STRAW WORKSHOP AND FIELD TOUR

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Background

Forestry is the #1 industry in SC with an annual economic impact of \$21.2 billion dollars. The forest industry is also #2 in labor with 98,306 jobs and \$4.95 billion in annual income. Although timber products are the primary market, landowners often look for alternative sources of income from their forested lands.

Pine straw is extremely popular as a mulch in the southeastern United States, and because of this pine straw harvesting is a strong industry in the region. Longleaf pine straw is the most desirable of the southern pines because of its long and durable needles, but slash and loblolly pine straw can also be used. Raking pine straw can be an attractive and valuable source of income for forest landowners, providing an opportunity to cover some of the costs associated with establishment and maintenance associated with longleaf pine ecosystems. Commercial operators bale pine straw and sell it to contractors and garden centers who, in turn, sell it to homeowners.



Needs

Multiple prior program evaluations indicated a desire to learn more about pine straw harvesting as an alternative income source for forest landowners in SC. Prior to program development a needs assessment was conducted including questions such as:

- 📌 Do you currently rake pine straw?
- 📌 Has this area been fertilized?
- 📌 Do you use a contractor for raking services?
- 📌 By what method is pine straw harvested?
- 📌 How often is pine straw harvested?
- 📌 If you are not currently harvesting are you interested in doing so?

Goals

Increase the knowledge, productivity, and profitability of forest landowners in the following areas:

- 📌 Pine straw markets
- 📌 Pest management in pine straw producing stands
- 📌 Forest health and invasive species
- 📌 Ecological impacts of raking pine straw
- 📌 Prescribed fire and pine straw production
- 📌 Fertilization of pine straw producing stands

Activities

Using information from the needs assessment, the Pine Straw Workshop and Field Tour was developed and offered on September 10, 2019. The workshop portion included a 3.5hr classroom session followed by a field tour. During the classroom portion of the event, participants heard from experts in various fields. After lunch, a summary of the content was covered followed by a question and answer session. Participants then boarded a tractor drawn trailer and were taken to 3 demonstration areas.

Due to an abundance of interest for the first workshop, it was offered a second time at the same location on November 14, 2019. Both workshops included a written evaluation following the conclusion of the field tour.



Figure 1. Dr. David Coyle presents "Introduction to Pine Straw Production"



Figure 2. TJ Savereno presents "Ecological Impacts of Pine Straw Raking"

FIELD TOUR



Setting up a pine stand for a successful pine straw harvest

How to rake and bale pine straw & best management practices



Managing for native species, species identification, and ecological values.



STOP #1 - Ryan Bean discusses the longleaf pine planting demonstration area at Sandhill Research and Education Center

STOP #2 - A contractor demonstrated how to rake and bale pine straw and discussed business practices

STOP #3 - TJ Savereno teaches participants to identify native species and their ecological values

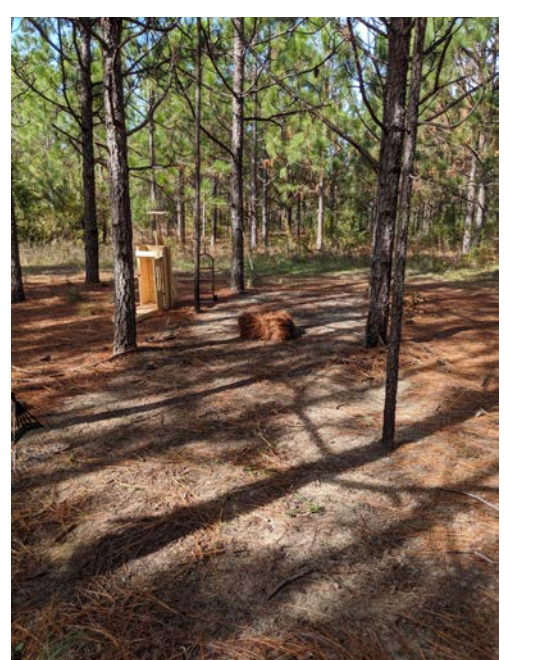


Figure 3. Prior to the workshop on November 14, Ryan Bean built a pine straw baler box. The day before the workshop, Ryan and TJ Savereno prepared the raking demonstration area.

Impacts

Eighty-one participants from SC, NC, and GA attended two workshops/field tours. Based on evaluations, 51% currently rake pine straw with 43% raking 0-25 acres, 29% raking 51-100 acres, 14% raking 26-50 acres, and 14% raking 100 or more acres. It was also indicated that 100% increased their knowledge, 86% found the field tour to be beneficial, and 100% were interested in attending advanced level workshops in the future. Approximately 82% of participants indicated that they would also save and/or earn more money as a result of the knowledge gained by attending this workshop/field tour.



81 PARTICIPANTS



82% WILL SAVE/EARN MORE MONEY

