



# Folk Land Management, Inc.

## WOODLAND AND WILDLIFE CONSULTANTS

NEWSLETTER

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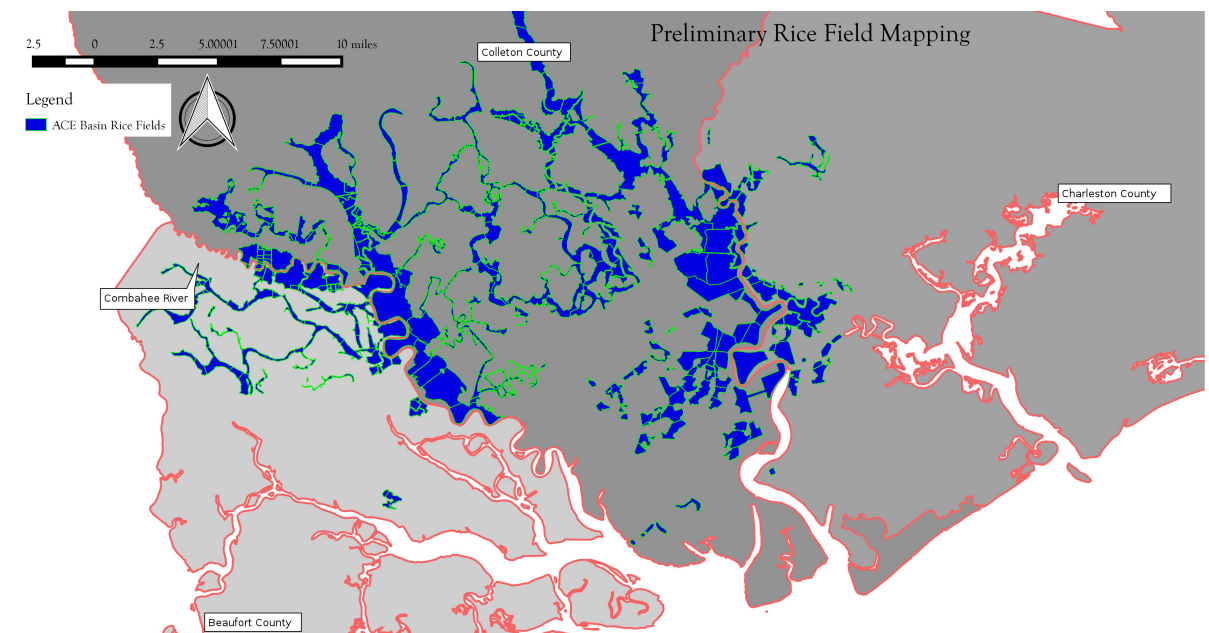
### Folk Land Management, Inc. Newsletter

#### Wildlife in Agricultural Ecosystems

According to the United States Census Bureau, the world population reached seven billion in March 2012. The number is anticipated to reach nine billion before the year 2050. Inevitably, this growth means that more land will become devoted to food production. These trends create negative impacts to wildlife, including habitat loss, habitat fragmentation, and poor environmental conditions. If you look at most agricultural systems these days, such as row crops or even pastures, you would likely see plant monocultures existing as a result of specialized farming practices. Additionally, farming productivity is much greater with modern technology than it was in the early-to-mid 20th century. This efficiency and specialization has allowed farmers to essentially eliminate non-target (weed) species that may provide valuable wildlife food and cover that would have been more prominent in the agricultural systems of grandparents and great-grandparents. There are several ways to alter an agricultural system to create and maintain habitat for insects, songbirds, game birds, and mammals. Some of these practices can involve field borders, hedgerows, food plots, and alternative tillage practices (such as no-till planting). Planting and maintaining permanent vegetation on field edges increases vertical and horizontal habitat diversity, potentially providing food and cover for wildlife. The same practice could be applied toward the center of a field, thus adding travel corridors and edge habitat through the landscape. The Farm Bill includes wildlife habitat initiatives that offer incentives to farmers through financial assistance, easements, and partnerships.

#### Coastal Rice Field Survey

Rice fields in the ACE Basin are an important part of the history and culture here; however, no one knows how many acres of rice fields we have. The South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, The Nemours Wildlife Foundation, and Folk Land Management have partnered to map the inland and tidal rice fields in the ACE Basin. Michael Gouin, a student from Clemson, has been combing through digital imagery to map all the rice fields this summer. He has also been making site visits to ground-truth what is seen from the aerial photography. Hopefully, the result of his labor will be the size and location of all of the rice fields in the ACE Basin.



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## Best Management Practices (BMPs)

BMPs are voluntary guidelines used during forest management activities to minimize environmental impact. These activities include forest road construction, timber harvesting, site preparation, prescribed burning, and fertilizer and pesticide application. Impacts the BMPs are designed to avoid include rutting, soil compaction, and siltation into streams. Water quality is the major concern in the BMPs. Forest management activities should never permanently mar the landscape. Logging can have the most detrimental impact because of its intensity compared to other management activities. It can and should be done in a manner that does not have long term impacts on the soil, such as deep ruts, or acute temporary ones like silting into a stream. A thinning in which BMPs are not followed can be far worse for the environment than a clear cut that did follow BMPs. Clear cuts may look bad and not appear to be sound management, but there is more to responsible management than what things look like at first glance. Erosion and silting into streams can impact fish and other wildlife downstream. This silting is not as long term as rutting, but

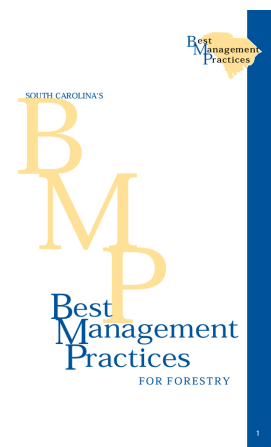
it can be have serious effects during and after logging. Improper stream crossings can lead to long term erosion problems with permanent silting into streams.

A link to the current BMPs can be found here:  
<http://www.state.sc.us/forest/bmpmanual.pdf>



*Sedimentation and water quality issues BMPs prevent.*

*Photo courtesy of Pennsylvania Sustainable Forestry Initiative*



*The South Carolina BMP manual.*

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## Personnel Changes

Andrew McIntyre has left us to take a job in San Francisco where he has embarked on a career with UAVs. He was instrumental in helping us further our UAV program and spent a lot of his own time researching, learning, and building and flying his own UAVs. He will be missed and not just because he really brought a lot of knowledge to our UAV efforts.

We have hired two professionals that will be doing wetland permitting, wildlife consulting, GIS, and numerous other tasks across the range of services we offer. Paul Henchcliff comes to us from the US Army Corps of Engineers where he was a project manager in the Regulatory Division.

Jonathan Owens earned a Bachelor's of Science in Forest Resources, while majoring in Fisheries and Wildlife Sciences from the University of Georgia. Before joining Folk Land Management, Jonathan worked for an environmental consulting firm for three years on projects in the southeast and mid-atlantic regions of the U.S. The types of projects included raptor nest surveys, environmental site assessments, and Section 7/NEPA and Section 106/SHPO consultation. Additionally, Jonathan worked for three years with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission on the Tosahatchee WMA and Seminole Ranch WMA implementing a variety of habitat management practices involving exotic plants, prescribed fire, wildlife and plant surveying, and hunter-check station operation.

## Southern Pine Beetle Outlook

Each year the Forestry Commission puts out traps in every county to collect beetles that prey on southern pine beetle. The populations of these beetles are very good indicators of the southern pine beetle (SPB) activity to come. This year's survey was recently completed and the outlook is that most of SC can expect a year of low to minimal loss to SPB and related bark beetles."

The full, 7-page report can be found here:

<http://www.state.sc.us/forest/id15.pdf>



*A pine stand with a southern pine beetle infestation*

*Photo courtesy of Ron Billings*



*A southern pine beetle on the left, grain of rice in the middle and a black turpentine beetle on the right.*

*Photo courtesy of The University of Georgia*

## Native and Non-Invasive Exotic Plants

Whether in the broad landscape of our woodlands or in our backyards, native plants have a place. Not only are they generally more resistant to insects and disease, but they tend to grow better in the environment in which they evolved.

They can create beauty and wildlife habitat. Some of them can be encouraged by simply knowing when to put a plow into the ground, such as partridgepea and ragweed on well drained uplands, and smartweed and chocolateweed on wetter soils, all prolific seed producers and cover for birds. Prescribed burning stimulates the germination and growth of wildlife beneficial grasses and forbs too.

Plantings within the woodland of native species such as Chickasaw plum, persimmon, redbud, crabapples, flowering dogwood, dwarf buckeye, American beautyberry, wax myrtle (yes, it's good for birds), native hollies, Viburnums, blueberries, and many other trees, shrubs, forbs, and grasses can enhance the aesthetics and wildlife productivity of any property. Proper juxtaposition



*Eastern redbud is a common native tree.*



*Eastern redbud and southern magnolia.*

within the landscape is important and should be planned carefully.

Closer to home, the backyard landscape can benefit from native plants too. Birds and butterflies are appreciated by all, and planting native species that attract them should be considered. Many of the species mentioned for woodland use can be planted in the yard too. They will provide beauty, food and cover. The addition of exotic plants that do not spread out of control, can be considered for the yard too, for example, vitex (good for honeybees), butterfly bush, and Lantana.

In summary, a variety of native and noninvasive exotic plants should be a part of your woodland and backyard if you want to enhance your wildlife habitat and aesthetic beauty. Fortunately, these plants are readily available and you can contact us to prepare a plan for their use in your woodland or backyard.

## Legislative Issues

Legislation and regulations impact us and our woodlands from a variety of perspectives: taxes, liability, and allowed activities or practices. The issues mentioned here are the ones that have passed the legislative process and will have an impact on landowners. There are numerous other issues that are still being debated and will likely impact landowners in years to come. The South Carolina Forestry Association has information on these issues.

### State: "Trespasser Responsibility Act"

This law now protects landowners from frivolous lawsuits by trespassers. For example, a trespasser ignores your "No Trespassing" signs and while walking through a recent clear cut, he trips on the logging debris and breaks his leg. Because you have not caused willful or wanton injury, you are not responsible for his injuries.

### State: Suspending Truck Weight Limits for 120 Days During a State of Emergency

The Governor now has the authority to allow logging trucks to weigh 90,000 during a state of emergency. The normal limit is 80,000. This is important because during a timber salvage operation after a major storm, it is critical that wood get to the mills as quickly as possible. Downed trees will get blue-stain fungus and will no longer be valuable as sawtimber.

### State: Forest Management Plans and Agricultural Use Exemption

Some of you may be aware of the Attorney General's opinion last year stating that counties can not require a forest management plan in order to qualify for the agricultural use classification for property taxes. Then and now, even after the Attorney General's letter, some counties still required these plans. The SCFA has now started legal action against Calhoun county, one that is still requiring forest management plans in order to qualify for the agricultural exemption. A ruling has not been issued yet. An incomplete list of other counties still requiring management plans are Abbeville, Aiken, Anderson, Charleston, Greenwood, Jasper, and Spartanburg.

### Federal: Endangered Species Act: listing of Northern Long-Eared Bat

The US Fish and Wildlife Service has announced it is listing the Northern Long-Eared Bat as threatened. With this listing, come some proposed restrictions on timber harvesting in states where their habitat is found; South Carolina being one. The public comment period just closed so we are waiting for the final outcome. The reason for the population decline is white-nose syndrome, a fungus that the bat contracts while dormant in caves mostly in the northern US during the winter. The Northern Long-Eared bat's summer habitat in South Carolina is found in Laurens, Anderson, Pickens, Greenville, Spartanburg, Oconee, Abbeville, Cherokee, Union, York counties.

### Other issues being debated:

-State: Highway and Bridge Funding

-Federal: Updates to the Clean Water Act. The changes have been finalized, enforcement won't be seen for a year and litigation contesting the changes has already started from a variety of groups.

A special thanks to the South Carolina Forestry Association. The majority of this information came from them and they are a strong voice in Columbia for the forest industry and landowners on these issues. More information on these issues and to join the SCFA: <http://www.scforestry.org/legislation>



*A swallow-tailed in flight.*

## Swallow-Tailed and Mississippi Kites

The swallow-tailed kite (STKI) and mississippi kite (MIKI) are in the family called Accipitridae and are in the group called Raptors (Hawks and Eagles, according to Audubon.org). The STKI is a medium sized hawk with black and white coloring and a white head and body. The wings are black and it has a long, black, forked tail. The MIKI is also medium sized, long and narrow hawk with pointed wings. The head is light gray with a darker gray body. Their tail is long and black with no fork.

The STKI is a predatory bird. Not only do they take and eat insects in mid-air, they will snatch an entire nest of chicks and eat them in mid-air! They come to the Southeastern and South Central states of the US to nest (FL, SC, NC, GA, MS, LA, and TX). The first GPS/satellite-tracked breeding pair is from the Lowcountry of South Carolina in the Palmetto Bluff community. They nest in the tops of the tallest trees, many over 100 feet tall; preferably cypress and pine trees, to avoid land predators. They like to nest near water with lots of insects. They are a migratory bird and spend half the year in North America, arriving around March and leaving by September to head south to SE Mexico and as far as Southern Brazil and Argentina. They can average 6,000 miles a year flying back and forth.

The MIKI basically comes to the same areas of the US as the STKI, and usually nest in colonies and many urban areas. In recent years, a pair has been recorded nesting as far north as Southern New England. The MIKI are listed as threatened or endangered in some states. Like the STKI, they catch bugs in mid-air and they also skim the ground for prey. The MIKI will go after bats and smaller flying birds. If they are hungry enough, they will scavenge for road kill.

While the STKI glides most of the time, the MIKI uses several wing strokes with short to long glides. By mid July, the STKI are heading south through mid-September and some as late as October. In the fall, large numbers of MIKI will head south through the coastal plains of Veracruz, Mexico with several hundred thousand birds recorded ([ebird.org/content/camerica/news/kite-migration](http://ebird.org/content/camerica/news/kite-migration)). In September, thousands are seen in Central America. Regretfully, the numbers counted in the US, were a little low this year, maybe we will have better numbers next year.



*A swallow-tailed kite feeding.*

## Tax Deductions When Reforesting

Taxes are always a consideration. To keep you from paying more than you owe in taxes, it is important to have a tax preparer or an accountant that knows the tax code as it applies to woodlands and timber. The tax code is complicated and not all tax preparers know all the provisions related to woodlands and timber. One area to be remembered with regard to your property is deducting reforestation expenses. Up to \$10,000 can be deducted the year the work was paid for and the remainder amortized over the next seven years. The tree-planting has to be for commercial purposes. Firewood for heating your home would not qualify. An example: you spend \$200/acre on your 40 acres to reforest after a clear cut. You plant loblolly pine at a total cost of \$8,000, including site preparation, seedlings, and planting; therefore, you can deduct \$8,000 from your income taxes as a result of your qualifying expenses for that year. Had your total been \$12,000, you could deduct \$10,000 that year and the remaining \$2,000 over the next seven years. You can refer to 26 U.S. Code § 194 - Treatment of reforestation expenditures.

More information can be found at <http://www.timbertax.org/>