

From Pine Plantations to Silvopasture

Converting Existing Pine Stands to Working Silvopasture

By Tim Albritton, State Staff Forester; and Eddie Jolley, Agronomist; NRCS, Auburn, Alabama

Introduction

Forest landowners who own cattle can combine livestock, forages, and timber into one production system, called silvopasture. It is estimated that Alabama has over 18,000 acres of existing Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) land in pine plantations. Many of these stands would be ideal to convert to working silvopasture. However, this practice is not widely used and few, if any, demonstrations exist to help promote this system.

Objectives

Two demonstration sites were developed using a grant through the Wiregrass RC&D Council and incentives through the USDA-NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). Both sites were developed on private land and two field days were held.

Practices

1. Thinning to reduce stand density
2. Weed and brush control using approved chemicals
3. Prescribed burning
4. Light disking
5. Applying nutrients by soil test recommendations
6. Grass planting
7. Fencing
8. Watering system

Dale County

Contributors Include: Dale County Landowner Freddy Hayes
Dale County NRCS District Conservationist Craig Peters (retired)



Before



Site Preparation



After

Considerations

Pasture Establishment (site phase)

- Excessive debris
- Soil fertility
- Unwanted or invasive vegetation

Planting of Grass

- Layout of grazing system
- Soil preparation required
- Seed planting considerations

Grazing

- Grazing management plan required
- Follow through required for successful grazing

Operation and Management

- Maintain proper forage heights
- Maintain soil fertility

Covington County

Contributors Include: Covington County Landowner Clayton Bryant
Covington County NRCS District Conservationist, Steve Yelverton



Before



Site Preparation



After

Conclusion

Silvopasture provides a viable option for CRP pine stands coming out of the program. Conducting as much thinning as allowed under CRP would be helpful to the conversion process and may allow the landowner to take advantage of program benefits such as invasive species control, prescribed burning, pruning, and others.

Forest landowners who own cattle can learn how to combine livestock, forages, and timber into one productive silvopasture system.