

# Another Conservation Success Story...

## Richmond County, Georgia

October 2010

### WHIP Funds Aid Forest Steward Plant Endangered Tree Species

An electrical engineer by trade, Thomas Mims is a conservationist at heart. "I like to do it. It's my hobby," Mims said. What Mims calls a hobby, however, others call a strong commitment to conserving natural resources.



91,355 long leaf pine seedlings will be planted on 151 acres on Mims's property.

Mims discovered a passion for wildlife preservation in 1972 after buying back land that had once been owned by his grandmother. He tried raising cattle for awhile but quickly developed an interest in wildlife and began preparing habitat for them.

Over the last several years, Mims has spent a great deal of time planting trees and food plots to help improve wildlife habitat on Silver Bottom Farm in Hephzibah.

In the various food plots located on Mims' land, there are annual and perennial plants like chickweed and clover that deer and wild turkey feed on for survival.

Everything is managed to provide food sources and cover for the wildlife. "I like to do the best I can with conserving and preserving wildlife," Mims explained.

With funding from the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP), Mims is able to accelerate his conservation work.

This year, Mims has set aside 151 acres of old pasture land to convert to wildlife habitat. In the next few months, he will plant a total of 605 long leaf pine seedlings on each of the 151 acres in the program.

"I've already prepped it and I'm hoping to plant them between December and February.

That's when the survival rate is higher," Mims explained.

WHIP is a voluntary program for developing or improving high quality habitat that supports fish and wildlife populations of National, State, Tribal, and local significance. Long leaf pine is native to Georgia and can withstand fire—an important consideration in this climate.

NRCS District Conservationist Cread Brown has worked with Mims on this project and others in the past.

"I've known Tom for five years and he's always been willing to conserve resources. He would be doing it with or without our help," Brown said.

Mims has steadily been improving his forest stands—even without technical and financial assistance. His dedication is apparent in his community.

That's why Thomas Mims has received the distinction as Richmond County's first forest steward.

The Forestry Stewardship Council (FSC) awarded Mims the distinction because of his dedication to preserving forests over the last 17 years.



District Conservationist, Cread Brown (left) and Thomas Mims (right) have worked together for five years.

**"I think everybody has a duty to leave land better than when they got it. We're all just borrowing it really,"-Thomas Mims**

Mims plans to continue working to conserve natural resources on his property and spreading his message to others throughout his community. "I think everybody has a duty to leave land better than when they got it. We're all just borrowing it really," Mims said.



This is one of several ponds located on Silver Bottom Farms in Hephzibah.

Central Savannah River RC&D  
706-798-7967

 **NRCS** Natural Resources  
Conservation Service  
706-724-2247

Brier Creek Soil And Water  
Conservation District