

Another Conservation Success Story...

Jones County, Georgia

November 2011

Farmer Uses EQIP Funds to Improve Timber Production

Amos Ryce grew up in the city but he would always look forward to visiting his uncle's farm in Gray.

"It's terrific out here," Ryce said.

Years after those cherished visits, in 1994 Ryce had an opportunity to relocate to Georgia and manage the family farm. He relocated from New York, moved into the 75 year old home surrounded by 200 acres and transitioned into a lifestyle change. A few years before Ryce's actual move to Gray, he envisioned a management plan that would help

"It goes beyond just dispensing information and advice. NRCS has been tremendous as far as supporting what my objectives are,"—Amos Ryce

achieve your long range plan," Ryce explained.

An interest in the technical and financial assistance that was provided by NRCS to farmers led Ryce to apply for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). Unfortunately, applying and getting approved for assistance took time and patience. In 1998, Ryce was approved for his first EQIP contract. That con-

tract and a 2006 EQIP agreement have helped him manage his timber by performing a thinning and

prescribed burning.

Thinning and prescribed burning helped to improve timber production and benefit wildlife habitat by allowing more sunlight to reach the understory encouraging the growth of native plants and provided a vital food source that the wildlife depends on for survival.

"If you don't complete prescribed burn, things really become overgrown," Ryce explained.

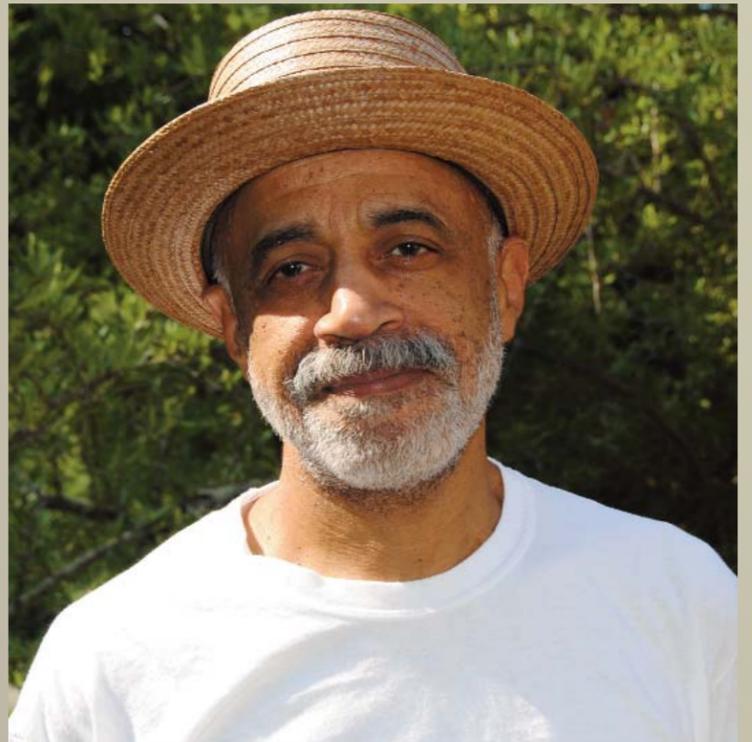
Ryce said it's great to see the conservation practice in action because he leases parts

of his property out to hunters and keeping the understory manageable is excellent for hunting.

"Right after a fire, you can see the wild turkeys out there browsing," Ryce said.

He has implemented a Pest Management Plan to assist with controlling invasive species such as Sweetgums and privet control.

Ryce was a recipient of the American Recovery & Reinvestment Act (ARRA) and the Southern Pine Beetle Initiative cost-share from Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC) to continue



Amos Ryce has been tree farming since 1995. He manages 200 acres of timber.

with his Prescribed Burning plan that started as a result of EQIP.

The 68 year old said that NRCS District Conservationist Dennis Brooks has really been a great help in meeting his objectives on the farm.

"It goes beyond just dispensing information and advice. NRCS has been tremendous as far as supporting what my objectives are," Ryce added.

Ryce plans to continue being a good steward of his family's land by continuing to manage his timber for optimum production.

Brooks said that he wishes more farmers were as passionate and committed as Ryce because, "I know that he will try his best to leave the land better than he found it for future generations"



Prescribed burning and thinning helps improve wildlife habitat by clearing the understory for plant growth.

to optimize timber production following a 1993 timber sale.

"That was my first experience with timber harvesting and it opened my eyes to ways to implement a plan that could be more efficient and sustainable, as well as to gain access to programs that could help with that objective," Ryce explained.

By 1995, Ryce had built a relationship with both the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC) and gained a working knowledge of best management practices for growing and managing timber.

"Anyone should know that managing property is hard work. There are a lot of things you have to stay on top of like maintenance to



Ryce's farm in Gray, Georgia has been in family for many years.



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Piedmont Soil And Water Conservation District