



ALABAMA CHAMPION OF soil health

Dr. Salem Saloom
Conecuh County
1,762 acres
Crop: trees



Conserving and protecting soil health for forest and wildlife

Dr. Saloom and his family are not first-timers when it comes to growing trees. Their deep commitment to managing the family-owned woodlands has received several awards for outstanding sustainable forest management.

Dr. Saloom pays attention to the health of his forest. He manages for ecological benefits such as improving soil health, reducing erosion, adding nutrients back into the forest system, and filtering sediments and other pollutants before they enter a water body.

His wildlife benefits include a thriving habitat for the threatened gopher tortoise and other animals including bobwhite quail, deer, and wild turkey.

Healthy longleaf forests yield improved water quality and are more resistant to insect and disease infestation, wildfires, and storm damage than other pine species. When Hurricane Ivan roared through Saloom's property in 2004, he found that his longleaf pines were better off after the storm than his loblolly. In 2006, through the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), he received financial assistance to replant 81 acres to longleaf pines. Today, Saloom has 472 acres in longleaf pine.

Timber harvesting is a vital part of any well-managed forest and the Saloom family intentionally plans this type of activity for their tree farm. As a certified "Tree Farm," a written management plan guides their harvesting activities and helps maintain or improve forest productivity, health, and growth while protecting the soil and other associated resources. Some of these practices include planned skid trails and loading areas, improved stream crossings, and required Best Management Practices (BMPs) for forestry to ensure water quality is protected.



The presence of the gopher tortoise, a threatened species, verifies that Saloom’s longleaf pine forest is a thriving habitat for wildlife.



Saloom’s longleaf pine roots hold the soil tightly; thus reducing erosion. Decomposing pine needles add to soil organic matter thus improving nutrient availability and soil water-holding capacity.

Over the years Saloom has become convinced that longleaf pine promises better economic benefits. He expects a greater return on his investment through the demand for longleaf straw, improved quality of wood for pole production, and better lumber.

Amy Bell, NRCS District Conservationist in Conecuh County says, "Dr. Saloom is always seeking new information to make his forests more productive and to transition to longleaf, where possible. It is a pleasure to work with landowners like Dr. Saloom who are proactive and strive to promote good stewardship on their property."

I want to leave this place better than I found it, meanwhile, I want to enjoy it along the way.
- Dr. Salem Saloom

"Soil is the substance of life and upon which life depends," said Dr. Saloom. "Maintaining healthy soils and forests are dependant upon good stewardship practices."

Saloom manages his private family forest for clean air, clean water, wildlife, and wood products as a sustainable renewable resource. He concentrates on stewardship and education and advocates for policies that ensure family woodlands remain forested for our environment.

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