

ANOTHER YEAR IN THE LIFE OF THE FOREST AT GWP

by Frank B. Shockley, BSF, MBA, Certified Forester

The weather's finally cooling off, days are getting shorter, and another year in the cycle of the forest at GWP winds down. Not stops, mind you. Even though leaves are falling and plants are becoming "dormant", life still goes on in the forest, just at a little slower pace. Well, maybe everything's not slowing down. This is the time that forest stewards begin planning for the coming year while finishing the previous year's projects.

A successful harvest was conducted on 37 acres at the southern end of Pirtle in April 2003. Herbaceous and woody plants that would compete with planted seedlings will be controlled by the end of October, preparing the site for planting in January-February. Crews will come in with planting tools called hoedads, long-bladed mattocks with axe-type handles, and will hand-plant about 27,000 pine seedlings. Repeated grafting or cross-pollination from superior quality East Texas pines will have genetically improved those seedlings. As a result, the trees will grow faster and straighter and be more resistant to drought, insects, and disease.

One of the great stories about that new forest is that the Texas Reforestation Foundation of the Texas Forestry Association is going to pay the costs of seedlings and planting as a memorial to Mr. J. Brady Wadsworth. Mr. Brady was an East Texas Forester and long-time friend of the forest who passed away last year. Details about the dedication of the Memorial Forest will be forthcoming.

Two other 2003 forest stewardship projects are planned for completion by the end of the year; the painting of the camp's exterior boundary lines and the establishment of a wildflower meadow in the pipeline at the entrance to GWP. The contract for the boundary line maintenance was sent to CJT & Associates, GWP's Forestry Consultant, and that work will be complete by the end of October. The Horticulture Club of Stephen F. Austin State University will plant the wildflower meadow under the direction of Mr. Frank B. Shockley, CF, and Dr. David Kulhavy, GWP Forest Stewardship Committee members. By next spring visitors to the camp will be able to enjoy the beauty of that meadow while catching glimpses of the insects and birds that use the area.

To round out the year 2003 at GWP, Mr. Shockley made an on-the-ground inspection of the camp's forest. There appeared to be no continuing insect damage or other threats to the health and well being of the forest. During summer camp 2003, Troop 136, Lufkin, planted millet seeds in the road near the April harvest area to prevent erosion, until the native plants reclaim that road.

With direction from the camp's stewardship committee, CJT & Associates will begin implementing the Forest Plan's 2004 projects. Those will include a selective harvest of the area known as the Administration Area, a first thinning of the pine plantation east of the camp's entrance, and a harvest of the hardwood area located on the northeasternmost tip of the camp.

The primary purpose of the "Administration Area" harvest will be to ensure the safety of Scouts and users of GWP. That area lies north of the power line behind the health lodge to the lake and north of the Rangers' house to a small power line. Trees that are considered to be dangerous, either now or in the near future, to humans and buildings, will be removed. Diseased, deformed, and weakened trees will also be harvested.

The young pine plantation that is a portion of the area known as the "Colo Creek Streamside Management Zone (SMZ)" is located north of the camp entrance road and east of the creek. It will be thinned for the first time since it was planted. That harvest will primarily remove deformed and diseased trees. An inspection of the area revealed a large number of seriously forked trees and trees infected with a pine rust disease commonly known as *Cronartium* rust. That common disease seriously weakens infected trees and can spread to other pines if not removed from the area. Additional trees will be removed to improve the spacing between the remaining trees, allowing them to maintain healthy, vigorous growth through reduced competition for sunlight, water, and nutrients.

Another harvest will take place in the hardwood area known as the "Below the Dam Area". Past harvests removed the better trees in that area, leaving less vigorous, disease-susceptible trees in many cases. There is also a shortage of young hardwood trees that would form the future forest. Next year's harvest will concentrate on removing poorer trees, releasing previously planted hardwood trees on the old oil well site, and encouraging the natural reestablishment of native forest

trees. Dr. Kulhavy, Mr. Shockley, and Dr. Hans Williams, Professor of Ecology and Tree Physiology at the Arthur Temple College of Forestry, will inspect the area and confer with the consultant to plan the optimum treatment of that area.

With the support of the East Texas Area Council's Executive Committee and Board of Directors, the GWP Forest Stewardship Committee is actively pursuing the Forest Stewardship Plan that was approved in 2001. Implementation of activities is on track, improving the health of the forest and ensuring that Scouts and Scouters will find a sustainable environment at G. W. Pirtle Scout Reservation for generations to come.