

## **GWP FORESTRY OPERATIONS - 2007**

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It dawned on me that I use some forestry jargon when I write and that I need to define terms to make these articles easier to read:

**Release** – remove trees and other vegetation that are in direct competition with desirable seedlings or trees. Harvesting, herbicide applications, or prescribed burning are commonly means of removing or killing competing vegetation.

**Residual** – those trees that are left after a harvest.

**Selective Harvest** – a forestry operation in which trees to be harvested are individually selected and marked with paint to show the harvesting contractor which trees are to be cut.

**Stand** – an area of the forest that will be managed as a single unit. Tree size and age, past treatment of the area, and species mixture are similar enough throughout the area to treat it in the same manner, now and in the future.

Two-thousand and seven started off with replanting activities on George W. Pirtle (GWP) property below the Lake Murvaul Dam. A combination of feral hogs, too much water early in 2006, and too little water later that year resulted in almost complete mortality for the 8,000 hardwood seedlings planted in 2006. International Paper Company's Super-Tree nursery in Bullard once again generously donated 8,000 hardwood seedlings, saving the East Texas Area Council about \$2,000. Those seedlings were planted and survived well.

With direction from GWP's Forest Stewardship Committee and approval from the East Texas Area Council (ETAC) Executive Committee, CJT & Associates is implementing the camp's Forest Plan's 2007 harvesting and pine seedling release projects. Those include a selective harvest of the area known as the Southeast Corner Stand, a first thinning of the pine plantation south of the COPE road near the camp's west gate, and a release of pine seedlings in 37 acres that were harvested south of COPE in 2006.

The Southeast Corner Stand consists of about 60 acres of pine-hardwood forest. Most of the trees selected for harvest were pines that can be marketed for valuable products like lumber and plywood. Some small pines and occasional hardwoods were also selected. The smaller trees will be used to make paper and increasingly important wood panel products like Oriented-Strand Board (OSB).

Southern pine species that grow at Camp Pirtle are called "shade intolerant" because they don't grow successfully in the shade of other trees. A harvest increases the amount of sunlight reaching the forest floor by creating sizeable openings in the canopy. Competition for water and nutrients is also reduced, benefiting the trees that remain. Tree seeds that reach the soil's surface have a better chance of successfully germinating and surviving to regenerate a new, vigorous forest.

The GWP Silver Circle Trail passes through the Southeast Corner Stand and hikers will have an up-close opportunity to watch a young forest grow to maturity. They will also see the natural succession of plants and animals as the forest changes. The camp's only "primitive forest" is located near the camp's southeast corner. That stand is considered to be primitive because it hasn't been harvested since the Boy Scouts purchased the property. It will be excluded from current and future harvest operations. An active

beaver pond is located nearby on a neighbor's land. It's a beautiful, interesting area; well worth the hike to experience it.

A total of 14 acres, 19% of the original Southeast Corner Stand, will be excluded from the harvest to protect streams and the primitive area. The harvest contractor will remove harvest debris from the Silver Circle Trail. In compliance with Texas' Best Management Practices for Silviculture, the contractor will restore roads that were used during the harvest operation.

A harvest will also be conducted in the stand known as the South Plantation, located along the county road on the west side of the camp. The 40 acres in that stand are ready for a first thinning to improve residual tree growth, tree vigor, and forest aesthetics. A variety of wildlife species also benefit from thinnings. The harvest was originally scheduled for February of 2008 and may be moved up to take advantage of volatile pulpwood market conditions.

In a first thin operation about one-third of the trees will be harvested and marketed as pulpwood. Those small trees are important in the manufacture of paper and OSB. Thinning the plantation will remove diseased, deformed, and crowded trees from the area while releasing nutrients, water, and sunlight to the residual trees.

Trees that are left in the thinned area will also be less susceptible to the *Ips* bark beetle, a forest insect that has been plaguing Camp Pirtle for several years. The increased vigor of those trees makes them better able to withstand insect attacks.

In 2006 a 38 acre stand south of COPE was selectively harvested. The management plan called for seeds falling from residual trees to germinate in the recently disturbed soil. An inspection in 2007 by CJT & Associates, private forestry consultant, confirmed the presence of sufficient seedlings for future growth. It also revealed a dense growth of weedy plants and woody shrubs competing with those seedlings. That would eventually cause high mortality of the tree seedlings and the stand would not be stocked with a desirable future forest.

Silva Tech, South, a Forestry firm from Center, TX, has been contracted to treat the area with competition-controlling herbicide to reduce the competition and release the seedlings to grow freely and vigorously before the competing species return in the future. University studies have shown that removing competition in the first year of seedlings' growth may result in as much as a 20% gain in seedling survival and significant increase in seedling size.

Along with those activities, the East Texas Area Council is working to obtain a road access agreement with one of the camp's neighbors to ensure that the 100 acres on the east side of Colo Creek will be accessible for future forest management and camp-related activities. Another interesting recent activity entailed tracking down the owner of the small pipeline that crosses Camp Pirtle. Documents are being prepared to have that right-of-way given back to ETAC.

All-in-all it's been a busy year in the Camp Pirtle forest. A dynamic resource like a forest demands regular visitation and management operations. The GWP Forest Stewardship Committee is grateful for the support of everyone involved with the East Texas Area Council. We are fully committed to managing that renewable natural resource sustainably.

Plan to visit Camp Pirtle this fall or winter to hike and camp along the Silver Circle Trail. Ken Skinner, Camp Ranger, has been working hard to open the trail. Check with the Ranger to file a hike plan and ensure that the section of the trail that you want to visit is open. Take your troop into GWP's woods this fall. You'll find some fantastic sights along Colo & Holly Creeks. I promise they'll enjoy the trip!