

Active Management of Early Successional Plant Communities

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Outline

1. Defining early succession
2. Which species benefit?
3. Planting versus managing the seed bank
4. Switching gears to understory management
5. Find a wildlife biologist near you
6. Cost-share

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What the heck is “Early Succession”?

- “Early Successional Habitat”
- “Early Successional Vegetation”
- “Early Successional Plant Communities”
- “Early Successional Plant Species”

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The Break Down

- **Grasses**
Examples: broomsedge, little bluestem, big bluestem, switchgrass
- **Forbs:** fleshy green herbaceous plants that are not grasses and not woody
Examples: ragweed, goldenrod, beggar’s lice, partridge pea

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Reference for Today's Talk

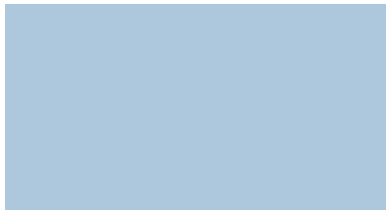
Traditionally:

- Fallow or Old Field

Understory of:

- Longleaf Pine Stand
- Loblolly Stand
- Shortleaf Stand
- Mixed Pine-Hardwood Stand

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Species that Benefit

Game Species

- Northern bobwhite quail
- White-tailed deer
- Eastern wild turkey

Non-game Species

- Red-cockaded woodpecker
- Bachman's sparrow
- Monarch butterfly

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Early Successional Habitat in a Field

Two primary methods to "skin the cat"

- Planting
- Managing the seed bank



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Where?

- Field borders/filter strips at least 50 feet wide
- Poor production
- Small/hard to get equipment to
- Connectivity
- Old pasture
- Power lines

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Site Prep

- Plant ID – both the good and the bad
- Choose the best herbicide
- Burn? Disk? Spray?

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Planting

- Pollinators
- Farm has been worked hard on poor soil
- Looking for cost assistance
- Landowner just likes to plant something and see it grow

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Tips

- Try to avoid the premix options!
- It is worth it to work with someone to custom mix, unless it is a very small area
- Make sure to select the mix based on the species objectives
- Have the seed separated into little/fluffy and large seed size when ordering
- Site prep, site prep, site prep! Did I mention site prep?
- Break your planting site into multiple sections

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Planting Methods - Broadcasting

- Less than 3 acres
- Till the area
- Firm seed bed via cultipacker or ATV/UTV tires
- Broadcast seed
- Pack again to ensure good soil to seed contact
- Pray for rain!

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Planting Methods - Drilling

- Over 3 acres or whenever logistically possible
- Prep site so drill can properly cut through
- Disturb the soil as little as possible
- Locate a drill like a no-till Truax that is setup for this
- Be sure the drill is calibrated properly and set to the right height
- Again, pray for rain! ☺

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Managing the Seed Bank

- Textbook way of doing it
- Your landowner has patience and can see the vision
- By far the cheaper option (without cost-share programs)
- More options for herbicide use

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Seed Bank Methods

- ID the problematic plant species
 - Bermuda
 - Fescue
 - Bahia
- Remove the “carpet” until you reach your target

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Tall
Fescue

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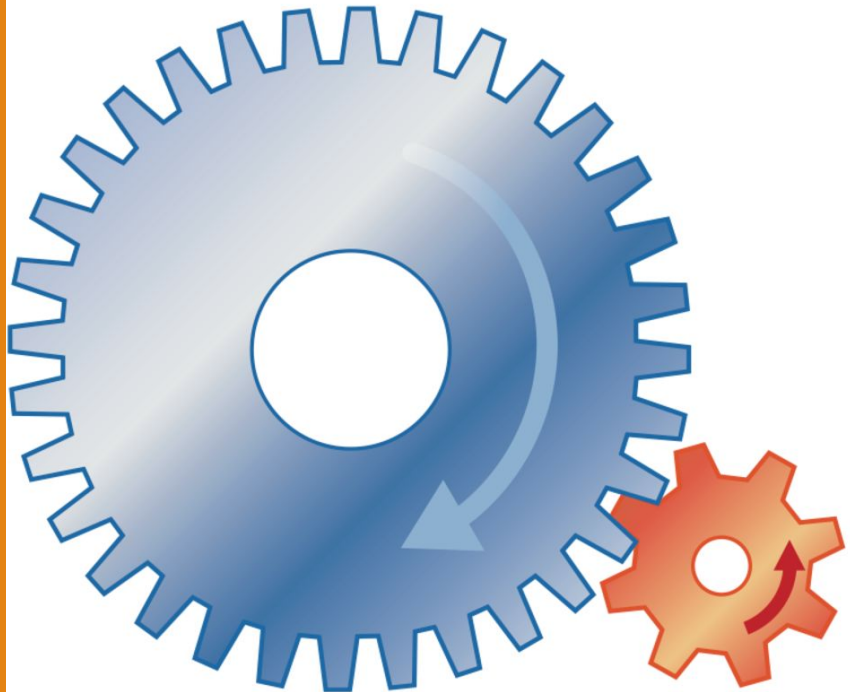
Maintenance

- Disking
- Burning
- Spot spraying
- Mowing (as a last resort)
- Access is access

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Switching Gears – Managing the Understory

Quick drive by on things to consider
when managing a diverse early
successional plant species understory
within pine ecosystems



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Planning is Key

- Daylight paths
- Be strategic with logging operations
- Loblolly, longleaf, or shortleaf?
- “Thin and burn” #DrMoorman

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Considerations for Planting Longleaf

- Site Prep
- Spacing

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Burning – When and How Often?

- Landowner objectives?
- Target species?
- Tree species?

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How About Loblolly?

- A serious delay in burning opportunity
- Hit it with fire after the first commercial thinning
- Drop that basal area
- Control the sweetgum midstory



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Cost-share Opportunities

- EQIP, CSP, CRP, CREP Through the Farm Bill (USDA/NRCS)
- Partners for Fish and Wildlife (USFWS)
- Forest Development Program (NCFS)

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Reach Out to a Local Resource

There is someone in your area!

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Take Away

- Narrow down landowner's objectives and resource capabilities
- Plan and site prep accordingly
- Reach out to a wildlife biologist in your area
- Don't be scared to experiment!

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That's all Folks

Email me with questions:
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