

A PINE REFORESTATION ACTION PLAN FOR SOUTHERN FORESTS

ROBERT J. LENTZ 1/

I compliment you for your accomplishments for the past decade. As Bob Hitt indicated, your success has been through a common sense approach of recognizing the need and going out and getting the job done.

Although you have made significant progress in the 70's, I believe the challenge for the 80's will be even more demanding and crucial to the future of forestry. The Resources Planning Act (RPA) assessment projects rising timber prices which will increase the timber harvest. This means that we can expect a bigger reforestation job.

As Bob mentioned, our track record on regeneration is not the best, for only one half of the acres harvested on pine sites on non-industrial private forest land (NIPF) are adequately regenerated to pine.

RPA emphasizes the importance of these private non-industrial forest lands in the east. Future increases in wood supply must come from NIPF lands. We expect some increases on industry owned lands, however, NIPF lands are really the only land base that we have to increase our timber supplies in the South.

These NIPF lands are the focus of the Pine Reforestation Action Plan for the South. This plan will be distributed within the next few weeks. I won't go into detail here, but will highlight some of the major actions affecting you that are in this plan. A similar effort is under way with forest industry, entitled "Increasing Productivity on Private Non-industrial Forest Lands," published by the National Forest Products Association.

We recognize that reforesting these lands is a challenge and times have changed, for today there is less room for error and inefficiency. We are faced with a need for higher production on a smaller land base, with increased emphasis on economics and more accountability. This means, we must seek out and regenerate the most productive sites at the least cost to sustain our wood supplies.

The real challenge in quantified terms is set in the RPA program direction. The RPA Program set the challenge for the 80's with the target of one million acres regenerated annually on NIPF lands in the South before 1990. We also have a target that by 1990 all the seedlings planted in the South will be genetically improved. This effort of one million acres includes efforts on NIPF lands by all segments of the forestry community, for example, State Incentives Programs, industry, State-Federal Cooperative Programs, Soil Conservation Districts, and other forestry program efforts.

This one million acre target will require a mass effort from everyone working in the fields of forestry, no one needs to feel left out. The need is there, demands are identified, and the lands are ready for better management.

1/Staff Director, Forestation and Management, USDA Forest Service,
Southeastern Area, State and Private Forestry, Atlanta, Georgia.

Research indicates that economic opportunities exist for more intensive management on 168,000,000 acres of commercial timber lands in private ownership in the South. This one million acre annual goal could just be the beginning of a major expansion in the future.

Some skeptics say that the one million acre target cannot be achieved. I believe it will be achieved. In fact, it must be achieved for the economic good of our country. It is attainable; during one year of the soil bank program over one million acres were replanted in the South.

But we know times are different than the soil bank days so we must find other ways to reach non-industrial private forest landowners. We also know that during the height of the soil bank program many state nurseries were established or refurbished.

Once again we are at the threshold of a major reforestation effort that will require expansion of nursery and tree improvement programs. The bait is dangling before us, will we take hold, attack, and lick the reforestation program?

Do we have the courage to take a program that requires an additional 700,000 acres regenerated annually above our current rate? Can we substantiate our needs for reforestation resources and gain public support? Will we act responsibly for the good of forestry, for the economic security of our country by replenishing our renewable resources?

I believe that the forestry community will rise to the occasion and unite to take on this challenge. When the chips are down, we will pull together now as we have in the past, and make significant gains for the forestry community. However, this effort will require strengthening of both government and private sectors striving to achieve a common goal.

Where do we start? The Forest Service in cooperation with State Foresters has prepared an action plan. This plan defines nearly fifty actions to begin this effort. "Beginning" is a key word because the plan should only serve as a tool to initiate the reforestation effort. It needs your ideas, and your actions. Mid-course corrections will be made as needed and I will personally see that these corrections are made as we move through the process. One key action that you need to be aware of in this plan is that the State Foresters will serve to unite forestry interests in individual states through state forestry planning committees or other organizational units set up in the state. This group will identify reforestation problems and needs. This is where you must get involved. You must substantiate the reforestation needs. You must identify how we can share our expertise and resources to get the job done.

Your input is essential. Nursery and tree improvement programs must be recognized as an integral part of the total regeneration picture. This means a look at total wood demands, acres needing regeneration, tree breeding strategies, assistance and cost share programs for seed and seedling production, site preparation, seedling and planting, management and protection of young stands.