

CFM's IMPACT ON REFORESTATION IN THE SOUTHEASTERN STATES
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ABSTRACT: Westvaco's landowner assistance program (CFM)

has brought many high-graded timber tracts under sound forest management. Over 25 million high quality seedlings were carefully planted on private, nonindustrial land **during 1988, one third of a billion since 1947.**

In 1947, shortly after World War II, Westvaco Corporation began a "matching" seedling program for private landowners. At this time the company gave these forest owners a tree seedling for each one they purchased. Westvaco was one of the first forest product companies that recognized the need to address the problem of inadequate stocking on private woodlands. Since about 72 percent of all private forests belong to these nonindustrial, private landowners, it was imperative to bring their timberland into production if a serious wood shortage was to be averted. This was the beginning of what we affectionately refer to as our "missionary forestry assistance program". Intensive management on Westvaco's forests alone would not address the impending shortfall of this renewable resource.

A formal landowner assistance effort was initiated in South Carolina during 1956. Westvaco's Cooperative Forest Management program (CFM) was ultimately established in each of the paper mill procurement areas. These mills are located in Wickliffe, Kentucky; Covington, Virginia; Charleston, South Carolina; and Luke, Maryland. Westvaco procures fiber from northwest Alabama, northern Mississippi, western Tennessee, western Kentucky, southeastern Ohio, southeastern Missouri, southern Illinois, western Maryland, south-central Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia, north-central North Carolina and South Carolina.

In this 13-state area, the CFM program has grown to over 2,000 landowners who own more than 1,350,000 acres (1,100,000 of which is forested). The goal is to assist them in applying modern forest management practices to these high-graded tracts. As they offer timber for sale, Westvaco will compete to buy it, knowing we are fulfilling a responsibility to assure forests in our procurement area are regenerated when they are harvested. The fact that 60 percent of the CFM cooperators' forests have been certified as American Tree Farms attests to meeting this challenge.

Westvaco is particularly proud that 17 CFM tracts have won their respective state's Tree Farmer of the Year award since 1976. A considerable portion of this recognition is directly attributable to the site preparation and planting that our cooperators have accomplished. These honors are also indicative of their high standards of land stewardship. This is largely a result of the CFM foresters encouraging strict adherence to "Best Management Practices" (BMP's).

From a modest beginning, the CFM program has now reached an ambitious current level of annually planting about 25,000,000 seedlings on over 35,000 acres of private, nonindustrial landowners' property. CFM is now the largest customer of Westvaco's forest tree nursery. This South Carolina nursery produces over 40 million genetically-superior seedlings per year. Recent estimates indicated that over the past 42 years, CFM has planted more than 333,000,000 trees on some 400,000 acres. Together with the reforestation on company land, we have put over one billion seedlings in the ground since the late 1940's, with some areas bearing their third crop under our management. Our hats are off to nursery managers for providing the planting stock!

Companywide, our major effort has been to reforest with loblolly pine. In addition to an aggressive goal of establishing pine plantations for our Wickliffe, Kentucky mill, we are also doing a limited amount of hardwood planting on company land in that region. The principal species, in order of production are cottonwood, sycamore, and sweetgum. Some white pine is planted in eastern West Virginia and western Virginia. A small amount of slash, Virginia, pitch, and pitch X loblolly hybrids are used at all of our locations.

Fortunately, our nursery tailors the seedlings to our specific needs. The best seed source is chosen for each geographical area. Seed is selected for its resistance to southern fusiform rust. This provides a more appropriate plant for sites where the chances of infection from this pathogen are high. Normal procedure calls for wrenching and lateral root pruning to stimulate a more fibrous root system that is also more **compact. This procedure keeps J-rooting to a minimum and assures adequate moisture and nutrient uptake during the initial outplanting.**

For the upcoming season, approximately 40 percent of CFM seedlings, the amount scheduled for hand-planting, will receive several top prunings. This technique, coupled with other cultural practices, will produce a shorter tree, more suitable for this procedure. Our nursery will grow a taller seedling for the 60 percent earmarked for machine planting.

Nursery managers must feel the frustration of creating the perfect planting stock only to see the seedlings mishandled when they leave the nursery. To guard against this problem, we operate under rather strict practices. Within reason, the trees are lifted by order at the best planting time. As the seedlings are lifted, they are packed in the field to keep exposure time to a minimum. Modern lifting, storage, and shipping techniques assures that the stock arrives at the planting site in good condition. We target our seedlings for the site and planting method. In addition to this special attention, inspectors have been added to make certain the trees are handled correctly and put in the ground properly by the planting crews.

The June 1988 issue of AHMI reported Forest Service Chief F. Dale Robertson as saying, the 3,000,000 acres planted with 2.3 billion seedlings (767 trees/acre) in 1987 marked the seventh consecutive year that Americans have broken the record for planting trees. He said, we established a record in 1981 and have exceeded it every year since. According to Robertson, the CRP program contributed over one million of the three million acres of trees planted in 1987.

The 1987-88 season marked the first time that Westvaco CFM has set out more trees by machine as opposed to hand since the early days. Undoubtedly this is a direct result of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). About 60 percent of all trees were machine planted, predominantly in open fields eligible for CRP support.

This talk probably sounded like a grandfather bragging about his first grandchild--and I must admit that's about the way I feel! It really is a great movement in which I am playing a small, but satisfying part. Thank you!