

STATE FORESTER'S WELCOME

21st SOUTHERN FOREST TREE IMPROVEMENT CONFERENCE

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FIRST let me extend a warm and hearty welcome to the participants of the 21st Southern Forest Tree Improvement Conference!

We in Tennessee are happy to host you and hope that your visit with us will be productive.

I know Russ Cox and Scott Schlarbaum will do all they can to make you feel at home.

I was recently reminded by Russ that almost one year ago he had asked me to extend this welcome to you today.

Now --obviously I'm not a geneticist, so I won't pretend to be an expert in the field. However, what I can do is offer you a challenge (or encouragement) for the future.

In thinking about what I should say, I took the liberty of reflecting on Tennessee Division of Forestry's past.

29 years ago I started to work for this agency.

At that time there was no official Tree Improvement program.

Since that time we have made progress.

Today we have a program.

AND --we are aware of the benefit that a good Tree Improvement program can bring to the forest landowners.

We have made this progress

- *Without a large Tree Improvement staff

- *Without a large Tree Improvement budget

What we have had is a few individuals dedicated to their cause.

As a result, our agency now has:

- *250 acres of seed orchards

- *300 acres of forest genetics studies

- *AND---much of our seedling production comes from our own orchards.

In the mid 1980's we decided to take a look at our Tree Improvement Program.

Because we were able to recognize our limited resources early, two important things resulted:

- 1) We developed a Memorandum of Understanding with the University of Tennessee that more clearly defined the two agencies roles in Tree Improvement and allows us to combine our resources into one program-- Tennessee's Tree Improvement Program.

2) A document was developed with the help of various Tree Improvement "experts" inside and outside the state, that helped us focus where Tennessee needs to go in the future in forest genetics.

The goals of Tennessee State Government today are three-fold, to improve:

- Economy
- Environment
- Education----the three E's!

I think Tennessee's Tree Improvement Program fits those goals well.

Although you will understand, most people would not, when say that an effective Tree Improvement Program is an important part of maintaining that economic focus.

More people would understand that trees are important to the environment. Therefore, I'm pleased to see your keynote session entitled "Tree Improvement and Environmental Change".

AND--what about Education, that third "E"? We all have a tremendous challenge to educate the public on not only the value of trees, but also to the importance of improved tree species.

We know we can use trees to:

- *Improve regional economics
- *Improve the quality of life of our citizens

What public doesn't know is that Tree Improvement is an important, but almost unseen, part of the puzzle in maintaining economic growth and overall quality of life through the use of trees.

However, with the tree improvement specialist, as with other specialists, dedication to a cause told you to press on--for the good of the resource.

Why, in my opinion, should the Southern Forest Tree Improvement Conference exist? Four reasons:

- 1) To set Direction
- 2) Inform/Educate
- 3) To Protect and Enhance our Future Forests
- 4) To Encourage Good Forest Management

In setting the direction, you, the expert, must help chart the course in creating our future forest.

In informing/educating, you, the experts, can help make the public aware of the value of improved trees, both economically and environmentally.

You, the expert, can help protect our future forests by the improved trees you develop.

You, as experts, can encourage proper forest management by creating better trees than those that currently exist.

So--in short, your improved trees can become an incentive to landowners to properly reforest their lands!

And in doing so, you can improve the visibility, viability and versatility of a very important tree program that benefits all society.

The reality is this! In today's economy none of us can go it alone.

There's not enough people or money.

So--we need the coordinated approach that this conference can provide.

Some of you can provide basic research.

Others, applied research.

We need public and private Tree Improvement Programs that join hands to accomplish mutual goals.

I assume that's partly why this diverse group is here today.

A sharing of information can move us ahead faster, cheaper, and with a better overall focus---for the betterment of our regional forest resource.

How do you meet the challenge? Two Suggestions:

1) "STRETCH" Message

- * Consider a rubber band.
- * It can stretch to encompass many different things.
- * Our Tree Improvement Program must do the same.
- * For example:
 - We are good at providing improved pine species
- * BUT--there is a new challenge before some of us.
- * The challenge of providing quality hardwoods for reforestation.
- * AND--then there is the challenges of global warming, greenhouse effect, urban forestry and fiber production, as they relate to healthy and viable forests.

2) QUALITY MESSAGE

- * Quality is the building block in the foundation on which all Tree Improvement Programs stand, and
- * The quality of our seedlings is the attribute by which we will be measured.
- * Without it, we provide a substandard service.
- * With it, we provide an exceptional service to our public.
- * SO--let's continue to strive for quality in our Tree Improvement Programs as we move ahead in this meeting and back home in the workplace.

I hope your stay in Tennessee is informative and pleasant.

I know Russ and Scott have worked hard to provide a good program.

THANKS for the opportunity to visit.

AND---

Come back to see us soon to work or play.

REMEMBER--Tennessee is a good place just to visit!