

Issues Facing State Tree Improvement Programs

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State tree improvement organizations across the South are confronted by a common dilemma, namely, rapidly decreasing resources in the midst of expanding program demands and opportunities. Legislative appropriations for forestry agencies have been generally declining a number of years. Agencies have responded by looking to other revenue resources, primarily seedling sales, for funding. Yet tree planting in the South remains sluggish. While spectacular gains from clonal forestry in pines are tantalizingly close, poorly funded state agencies drift farther away from capitalizing on the opportunity. Urbanization, restoration, and changing land ownership patterns have shifted tree planting emphasis away from pines and toward hardwood species. This shift suggests a need for improvement efforts in non-pine species, but breeding and testing activities in many species remains non-existent or minimal, at best. With the budgetary constraints typically imposed on state agencies this situation is not likely to change in the very near future.

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