

Minority Landowner

Spring 2012

MyLandPlan.org

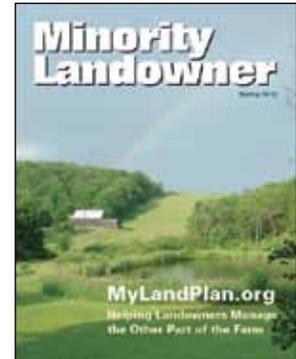
**Helping Landowners Manage
the Other Part of the Farm**

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Involving Private Landowners in Reforesting the Lower Mississippi Alluvial Valley



Aerial view of Green-Trees interplantings

Photo by GreenTrees.

By Claire Payne

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The Forest Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service partners with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Mississippi State University, and others to reforest previously forested land that was cleared and converted to marginally productive farm land in the Lower Mississippi Alluvial Valley (LMAV).

The Lower Mississippi Alluvial Valley represents the historic floodplain and valley of the lower Mississippi River. The term alluvial valley means “the floor of the valley where water availability is sufficient for subirrigation (a method of irrigation where water is delivered to the plant root zone from below the soil surface) or flood irrigation agricultural activities, but does not include upland areas.”

The Southern Research Station’s (SRS) Center for Bottomland Hardwoods Research (CBHR) located in Stoneville, Mississippi, developed the technique of interplanting cottonwoods with other hardwoods such as Nuttall oak. The method quickly creates a forest environment in which slower growing hardwoods

can develop straighter, less branchy stems while sheltered by fast growing cottonwoods.

Ted Leininger, CBHR project leader, provides some background on how the research jumped into application to provide economic and conservation benefits for private landowners and corporations. “About 2005, leaders of Wildlife Mississippi, a Stoneville nongovernmental organization, became interested in the interplanting concept because of the rapid capture of the site by the cottonwoods and the great potential for carbon sequestration (storage of carbon) that the rapid growth offered,” he says. “Wildlife Mississippi in turn knew people at GreenTrees®, and a meeting was set up here

in Stoneville so that SRS research forester Emile Gardiner and I could show them our study and explain the silvicultural and economic advantages behind it.”

GreenTrees is a privately managed forest restoration and carbon sequestration program created for landowners within the seven states of the Lower Mississippi Alluvial Valley (Louisiana, Mississippi, Arkansas, Kentucky, Tennessee, Missouri and Illinois). GreenTrees was created and is managed by C2I, LLC of Virginia.

Leininger explains that within the next year or two, GreenTrees adopted the interplanting method for their afforestation efforts in the mid-South and began asking him and Gardiner about modifying the method to include twice as many hardwoods per acre. The original design called for 302 cottonwoods and 151 hardwoods per acre. GreenTrees now plants 302 cottonwoods and 302 hardwoods per acre; conservation objectives determine the mixture of hardwood species planted.

GreenTrees seeks to restore open and marginal farmland in the LMAV, the nation’s largest watershed, to hardwood forest ecosystems capable of sustainably sequestering large amounts of carbon dioxide, providing habitat for wildlife and birds—and benefiting landowners economically by leasing their land to GreenTrees, and from timber harvests. GreenTrees leases private lands for planting millions of trees in the LMAV, including parts of Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi. Page Gravelly, GreenTrees’ senior di-

rector, says, “The 302-302 interplanting regimen not only accelerates carbon sequestration and benefits wildlife populations and habitat development, it also enhances water retention, and buffer impacts.”



Photo by GreenTrees.

Maturing Nuttall oaks in GreenTrees stand

“GreenTrees has restructured the lease agreements they now offer to landowners,” says Gardiner. “It’s changed from a 70-year lease to a 15-year lease. The redesigned, shorter term lease is more aligned with the 15-year lease landowners typically enter into through the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) Conservation Reserve Program (CRP).” The CRP helps agricultural producers use environmentally sensitive land for conservation benefits. Producers enrolled in CRP plant long-term, resource-conserving covers, including trees, to control soil erosion, improve water and air quality, and develop wildlife habitat. In return, the FSA provides participants with rental payments and cost-share assistance. NRCS provides technical assistance.

GreenTrees also offers lease agreements to landowners enrolled in the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Wetlands Reserve Program. The USDA Farm Bill offers both of these voluntary programs to provide conservation and economic benefits to landowners.

Two corporations, Duke Energy, one of the largest utility companies in the South, and Norfolk Southern, a Class 1 railroad shipping and transportation company, partner with GreenTrees in a reforestation program designed to offset carbon dioxide. GreenTrees consultants work with landowners to deliver conservation on the ground while increasing their income. GreenTrees offers a means of producing capital for landowners for long-term, sustainable conservation through the restoration of high quality bottomland hardwoods. “GreenTrees and landowners have demonstrated in the field on 40 different sites that planting the right trees in the right soils at the right pH levels leads to success: three-year-old sites have 7-foot hardwoods and 20-foot cottonwoods,” says GreenTrees’ Gravely. “Building on CBHR research, GreenTrees adds a layer of forest management for private landowners, accelerating conservation benefits, while charging a management fee to corporations dedicated to sustainable environmental policies.”

For the Other Part of the Farm



Forty-percent of America’s farms include woodlands. Sustainably managed, a farm’s forest can improve soil retention and water quality, provide habitat for wildlife, and provide other income.

Go to MyLandPlan.org

A resource for woodland owners, by woodland owners