



COVEY RISE®

P.O. Box 99
 Wetumpka, AL 36092
 1-866-311-3792 Fax 334-567-3284
 Email: coveyrise@bellsouth.net
www.coveyrise.net
 ISSN 1553-9687

Publisher & Editor.....Kim N. Price
Associate Publisher.....Tim Price
Marketing/Admin. Ast.....Christy Cooper
Quail Consultant.....Gordon Forbus
Production.....Jan Collier
The Wetumpka Herald Co.

Contributing writers: The Southeast Quail Study Group, Outdoor Writers Association of America, Auburn University, Mississippi State, Texas A&M Extension Services, Tall Timbers and USA quail experts.

Legal Counsel
Morris, Haynes & Hornsby
Counsel.....Randy Haynes

Covey Rise is published 12 times a year by Price Publications, Inc.
 P.O. Box 99
 Wetumpka, AL 36092.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted without written permission from the publisher. Publisher may reject any submitted items for advertising or editorial content.

Covey Rise is for serious quail hunters and for those who seek to preserve the sport of quail hunting, and who will preserve and protect the industry by promoting responsible quail habitat management and conservation practices.

Copyright 2008 Covey Rise® is a registered trademark Price Publications, Inc.

Subscription Rates

- 1 Year - \$24.95 (Regular \$49.80)**
 - 2 Years - \$39.85 (Regular \$99.60)**
 - 3 Years - \$59.00 (Regular \$149.40)**
- Periodical Class Permit pending

The Longleaf Pineland Legacy: CP36 and NWSG enhance wildlife

By Amie Dunn, Marketing Communications Manager, BASF Professional Vegetation Management
 Special to Covey Rise

In these hottest months of summer, it may be hard to remember the cool moisture of the spring grass planting season. But landowners who completed CP36 installations in the Southeast last spring may already be seeing the fruits of their labor. This federal cost-sharing and technical resource program helps landowners reestablish the longleaf pine ecosystems that once dominated the Southeast region. Rows of longleaf pine planted at expanded intervals create space for native warm-season grass plantings, which diversify habitat and enhance land value for wildlife.

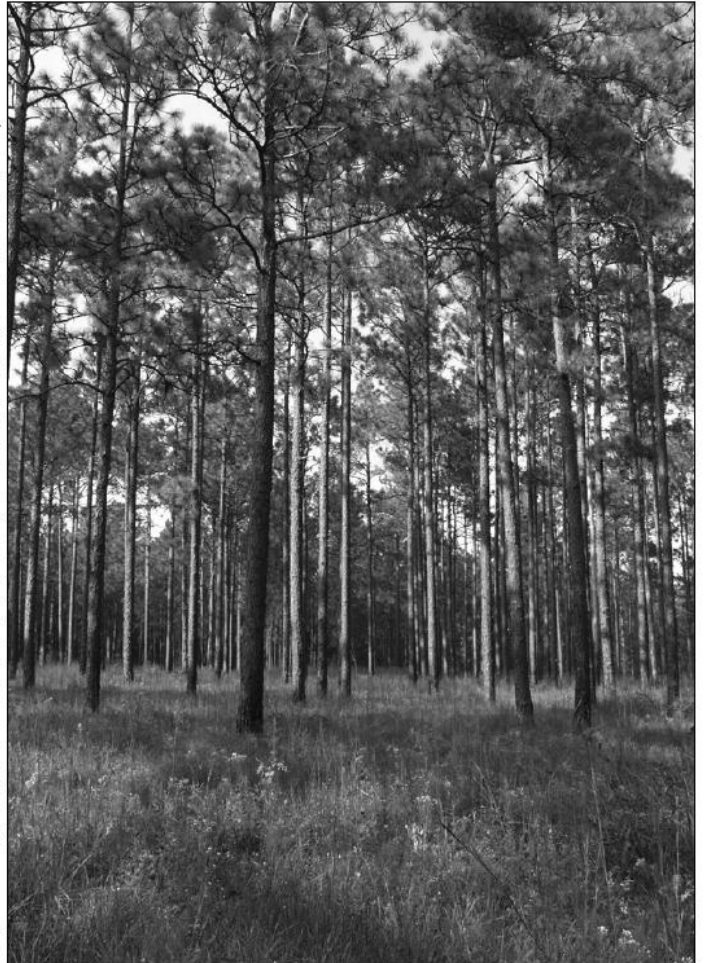
In the May edition of Covey Rise, we introduced you to the goals and particulars of the CP36 program, as well as the ins and outs of planting longleaf for this specialized program. In this edition, we will delve into the specifics of native warm-season grass planting for CP36. The program we will describe was developed for local use by the Jimmy Carter Plant Materials Center in Americus, Ga., but there are qualifying acres throughout the region, and each Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office is developing localized protocols within the confines of the federal program.

Pines in Place

For CP36, longleaf rows should be planted at least 12 feet apart to accommodate native warm-season grasses and the treatments they require. With a 9-foot interval between trees, this spacing still allows 400 trees per acre, on average. This layout gives the trees a 3-foot buffer on either side of a 6-foot grass strip, so that the herbicide treatments required to control any emerging weeds in the native warm-season grasses should not impact growing longleaf seedlings.

Site preparation using Chopper® GEN2™ herbicide can eliminate most hardwood brush competition for both pine seedlings and grasses. This should be done at least 60 days prior to pine planting in the fall. While each management plan should specify timing and rate, treatments are typically 48 ounces per acre with MSO. Chopper GEN2 controls most tough grasses, weeds and hardwoods, increasing the success of the early stages of longleaf growth.

While the trees are part of the foundation for longleaf pineland development, habitat development is also key. Bobwhite quail prefer native warm-season grasses to provide lower cover in openings between the rows. Bunchgrasses provide excellent hiding places without growing as densely as Bermuda and bahiagrass, making it easier for these small birds to move from place to place.



Pure Live Seed (PLS) for Grass Success

At the Jimmy Carter Plant Materials Center, the agronomy team has been developing native grasses for decades. The Plant Materials Center's Agronomist, Malcome Kirkland, is very familiar with the mix of grasses that work best near Americus. But, if local cultivars are available in your area, they should be the first choice for CP36, as the goal is local restoration.

"A cultivar mix we often recommend for use in CP36 includes switchgrass, indiagrass, big and little bluestem, and some forbs like partridge pea," Kirkland said. "The mix will vary based on your location and conditions, but they share some common traits – all warm-season native grasses are perennials. Many of the grasses will be the same, but your local NRCS office can help you determine the right mix during the planning process for your program."

A typical native warm-season grass mix in the Americus region includes the following:

- 1.5 lbs PLS/acre big and little bluestem
- 1.5 lbs PLS/acre Indian grass

Continued on page 5



CP36

Continued from page 3

- 0.5 lbs PLS/acre switch grass
- 1 lb PLS/acre forbs

Wiregrass was part of the original longleaf pineland ecosystem in Kirkland's area, but he said it is hard to find and more expensive than other grasses. When available, he said that it can be used in south Georgia.

The grass and forbs mix detailed above provides a balanced solution to keep one crop from dominating the rest. Some seed companies are beginning to sell CP36 mixes, and some also debeard seed to remove some of the fluff that makes seeds hard to plant and even harder to keep in the ground at the right depth. But since native grasses and cultivars will vary by geography, landowners will want to work with seed companies to get the best mix.

Kirkland said landowners need to be aware of both the bulk seed and pure live seed (PLS) rates.

"PLS is determined by multiplying purity of the seed times the germination rate, and should be on the tag," he said. "But the rate per acre should be converted back to bulk rate for determining the total amount of seed per acre to be planted."

Planting Prairie

Getting the right mix of seed is a key aspect of native warm-season grass planting success, but just as important is the right planting technique. Native grass success runs on a narrow margin, and requires attention to detail, patience and consistency. The timing of planting should be determined based on local conditions, but is typically within the months of March-May.

"The foundation of any good native warm-season grass planting is good soil preparation," Kirkland said. "Check your phosphorus and potassium levels and don't plan to add nitrogen unless you want to give weeds some extra encouragement."

A clean, firm seedbed is essential for grass plantings. The best way to get it is by using a cultipacker before planting. If a field is disked, it should be cultipacked before planting.

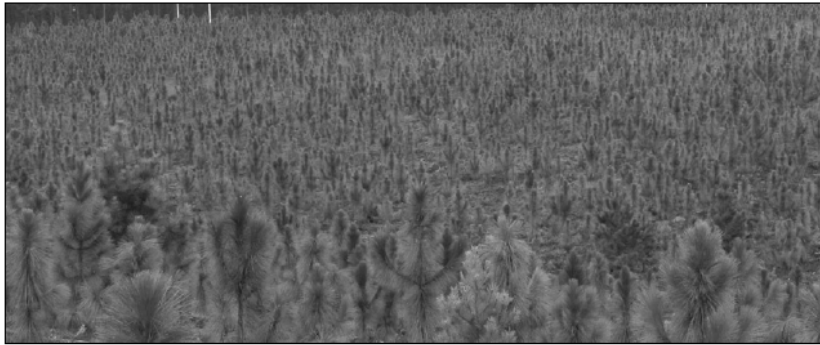
"It takes a lot of patience to plant grass right," Kirkland said. "Cultipacking can help smooth things out, but the tractor or planter speed also needs to be constant, and the machinery has to be in good working order if you expect success."

There are several equipment manufacturers that offer the right planting machinery for the job. Local NRCS offices typically have a list of companies for reference. If you contract for grass planting services, expect companies to have the right equipment to get the job done right on the first pass.

Many equipment companies manufacture or customize equipment for use in these highly delicate applications, and are having great success with installations throughout the region. It's tough to calibrate seed drills to exactly the right depth, but the value of precision planting can't be overstated. Slow, smooth passes with planting machinery can yield good results with native warm-season grasses, which should be no more than one quarter and no less than one eighth of an inch deep. A quarter inch too deep and the seeds will never make it out of the ground. A quarter inch too shallow and the seed may not have good enough soil contact to germinate. The primary key is good seed-soil contact, which can only happen with the proper planting technique.

Kirkland uses a hand-spreader or a cyclone spreader or specially-designed native grass drills. The agitator in a cyclone spreader will mix seeds somewhat, but mixing should still take place before seeding.

After planting, Kirkland goes back over the area with the cultipacker to ensure the correct depth and seed-soil contact. He typically prefers to change direction at the second pass to



enhance consistent depth.

Pineland Protection

Within the first two years of CP36 installations, the results of your hard work should be visible. Seedlings will be in grass stage and native warm-season grasses will have begun to sprout. But getting that first showing is just the beginning. To keep longleaf pineland thriving, regular maintenance is essential.

Many maintenance tools can be used to keep plantings protected. Fire is a natural part of the longleaf pineland ecosystem, so prescribed burns are built into the program. CP36 contracts typically require two burnings in a 10-year contract and three in a 15-year contract. The first burn can be conducted within the first two years of plantings, but a fire that burns too hot in years three through six may kill off many desirable grass species.

According to the Georgia Forestry Commission burns should be done on a 3-year rotation and in a checkerboard pattern throughout the rows. This will leave safe habitat areas and help keep prescribed fire from escaping.

Additional broadcast or spot applications of herbicides for invasive grass control can be done periodically if required, based on the mix of weeds and the timing of your application. Journey® herbicide can be used at 21 ounces per acre in the preemergent phase, but once grasses have emerged, Plateau® herbicide at 8 ounces per acre is the best choice.

Plateau herbicide is available through QVM™ Certified Applicators like FDC Enterprises. These expert applicators work closely with the BASF Professional Vegetation Management team to determine the accurate rate of product to achieve the desired results and to answer any questions regarding vegetation management or wildlife habitat improvements. QVM applicators understand the importance of using branded products that have proven performance both in the lab and especially the field.

Since habitat for quail and

other wildlife is the paramount reason for getting involved in the program, it should be no surprise that management activities should be limited during nesting times, typically April through August. This will give quail an undisturbed area where their young can flourish.

"It is important to discontinue spraying, burning and mowing during nesting months, but management shouldn't fall through the cracks," Kirkland said.

CP36: Growing Success

CP36 is still a comparatively new Farm Bill program, and one with protocols that are both locally adapted

and changing to address new information that becomes available as the program matures.

"The one thing we've learned so far is that we have a lot to learn," Kirkland said. "We're continuing to work with landowners, applicators and other NRCS field offices around the area to improve the program protocols. Anyone enrolling acreage should stay on top of it as it develops in the months to come."

In the meantime, landowners have already installed thousands of acres in Georgia and other parts of the Southeast. Mature stands are still several years off, but Kirkland is already optimistic about the impact of the CP36 program.

"This program promotes hope for longleaf pineland in Georgia," Kirkland said. "Quail habitat will continue to grow within production forests and everyone can share the benefits."

Interested in learning about bobwhite quail and habitat management for quail? If you answered "yes", have we got the program for you!



The Bobwhite Brigade is a leadership development program for youth ages 13-17 which focuses on bobwhite quail. This is a 4- day overnight camp held on private ranches in during July and July.

The Bobwhite Brigade is a non-profit organization in operation for 14 years in Texas. Partners include: Texas Cooperative Extension, Texas Parks & Wildlife, USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, Texas Wildlife Association, Texas Chapters of Quail Unlimited and the Texas Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation. Instructors are professionals in the wildlife and natural resource industry.

WE WANT YOU!
Applications for the summer of 2009 will be available on-line at www.texasbrigades.org. We also need adult volunteers to assist at these camps so don't think you are too old to participate! If deer or turkey are your bag, we have programs for those as well.
Covey Rise is a proud sponsor of the Bobwhite Brigades.