WILDLIFE PAYS ITS WAY

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Abstract.—Supplemental income for private landowners is another potential of multiple use forest management that includes fee recreation use. Landowner objectives for timber, wildlife and recreation together must be part of the management scheme. The management plan can provide marketable forest amenities.

Wildlife is an important component of multiple use forest management. A broad definition of the concept of multiple use forestry is any practice of forestry fulfilling two or more objectives of management (Ford-Robertson 1971). Land ownership as well as purpose make the difference in multiple use practices. Private landowners have a broad range of land uses from monetary gain to personal satisfaction (Davis 1972). To prudently manage for wildlife is to expect a return on investment. An entrepreneur would expect profit in return for his/her effort and to recover the cost of management.

Management requires expenditures and assets to produce goods. If wildlife is to have a niche in the real world, it must pay its way. Wildlife in the tangible form of recreational use can produce revenue for the landowner. Everyone concerned for the future of wildlife should be happy that interests in wildlife can be economically competitive. For economics is a measure of value that transcends many boundaries. Wildlife can be expected to pay dividends if properly managed.

Although timber and fiber production are major objectives of the forest products industry, most companies recognize the potential multiple use benefits to include revenue. For example, Westvaco corporate timberlands' major objective is the production of wood fiber in support of company mills. Besides providing wood, our scientifically managed forests provide habitat for wildlife, help control erosion, protect watersheds, offer opportunities for recreation and give us natural beauty. For this reason, wildlife management is a featured part of Westvaco's multiple use forestry program. Woodlands managers develop wildlife management programs consistent with their fiber production goals. The wildlife management program is compatible with wildlife species, wildlife habitat and social demands. The appropriate intensity of management is determined by the woodlands manager in conformity with the Wood Supply Plan.

Implementation of multiple use practices requires the coordination of natural resource management. At Westvaco, multiple use practices are outlined in the company's multiple use forest management planning guide. The Westvaco Timberlands Division Manager requires each company woodlands to maintain a multiple use management plan. The woodlands plan includes wildlife management objectives, policies and procedures for meeting objectives and responsibility for implementation.

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With respect to recreation use that includes public hunting on company land, the company seeks an appropriate level of income from various sources. These include leases to responsible local hunting clubs, sale of individual hunting permits and participation in state cooperative hunting programs that are revenue sharing. Since before the turn of the century, Westvaco has made its lands available for hunting, fishing and other recreational activities. Each Westvaco Woodlands administers its own locally adapted program.

A review by Guynn (1983) of hunting lease fees in the Southeast showed a range of $0.40 to $4.00 per acre as average; exceptional fees for the best hunting leases were $3.50 to $10.00 per acre. Although fees for hunting have increased significantly, the cost of hunting rights is still a bargain when compared to other forms of recreation. For instance, golf green fees in South Carolina range from about $5 to $14 plus. Fishing on a head boat in Charleston, S. C. costs $35 to $45 per day. Ski lift fees in North Carolina are $20 to $25 per day. The pro rata cost of hunting leases depends on the length of season and club membership. Considering an average of ten hunts per season and 50 acres per hunter, the average cost, based on the lease fees as stated (Guynn 1983), would be $2 to $20 per day.

The company's ability to offer hunting, fishing or other activities depends on recovering enough revenue from user fees to cover operating and maintenance costs. In 1983, over 359,000 recreation days took place on Westvaco timberlands. Approximately 19,000 hunting permits were sold and 400 clubs leased hunting rights. Additional recreation use included public hunting in cooperation with state agencies, fishing, leasing recreation sites, hiking nature trails and visiting the special forest management areas on unique sites.

Camping is one activity not included among outdoor opportunities on Westvaco timberlands. In most areas where the company manages timberlands, improved camping facilities are provided by state or federal parks and commercial campgrounds.

Westvaco has designated appropriate sites on its lands as natural areas. These unique physical and biological units are in conformity with criteria of the Society of American Foresters. Significant geological, biological and historic sites are filed in the computerized forest resource inventory system (FRIS). Management plans are developed for major areas to prevent damage or destruction of special features.

In addition, company foresters have identified and protected nesting sites for endangered and threatened species of the bald eagle, osprey and red-cockaded woodpecker. The company cooperates with wildlife agencies and conservation organizations concerned for recovery and protection. Rare plant communities are reserved for protection. Recently, the world's largest known site of Canby's cowbane (Oxypolis canbyi), was set-aside in cooperation with The Nature Conservancy.

Conservation education programs are supported in states where significant acreage is managed. Each program involves activities on Westvaco lands and
participation by company foresters. Nature trails for self-interpretative study are located in typical forest settings in the lower coastal plain of South Carolina and the Virginia piedmont.

Wildlife and recreation programs that are revenue producing should be developed with socio-economic consideration. Opportunities vary with location and the objectives of landowners. Recreation activities offered by the forest products industry (Kinard 1979) include: hunting leases, hunting and fishing permits, cabin and campsite leases; cooperative agreements with government agencies; nature trails; boat landings and fishing access; roadside parks; natural areas and conservation education sites.

The important contribution of the forest industry in providing recreation for the public is recognized in the national outdoor recreation plan (McCall and McCall 1977). Public interests for wildlife and the demand for forest recreation is opportunity for supplemental revenue for landowners.

Literature Cited


