Sustaining Ecological and Economic Diversity Among Limited Resource Landholders by Expanding Opportunities for Management of Productive Woodlands

A joint project of North Carolina State University and North Carolina Agricultural & Technical University

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Combining productive and sustainable woodlands with farming systems raises both

– **Quality of life** and

– **Diversity in rural landscapes**

This is especially true for landowners who have not always been able to take full advantage of forest management opportunities.
Most black farmers are located in the southern “black belt”
Black farm land loss in the U.S., 1910-1997

Source: Census of Agriculture 1997 and preceding years
The Lumbee tribe is the largest tribe in North Carolina, the largest tribe east of the Mississippi, and the ninth largest tribe in the U.S. There are more than 40,000 Lumbee in Robeson, Hoke, and Scotland Counties.
In Halifax and Warren Counties, there are approximately 3,800 Haliwa-Saponi tribal members who are direct descendants of the Saponi, Tuscarora, Tutelo and Nansemond Indians.

There are approximately 1,700 members of the Coharie tribe in Sampson and neighboring counties.
Woodland in NC farms

Source: Census of Agriculture 1997
NC Woodland as proportion of farm land operated by black, Native American, and female farm operators

Source: Warren 2002
Long-term goals

1. To strengthen the capacities of limited-resource, traditionally underserved farm and forest landholders so that they can sustainably and profitably manage their forest resources
2. To identify opportunities for and constraints on participation by these landholders in timber and alternative forest products
SARE generally defines limited-resource farming as
• agriculture on smaller-than-average holdings
• with no, or limited, access to substantial amounts of capital or off-farm income.
• *Additional considerations could be:*
  • beginning farmers;
  • farmers producing for emerging or alternative markets;
  • and individuals and groups, such as minority farmers, traditionally under-served by credit and other farm service institutions.
• Our focus
  – smaller-than-average holdings
  – no, or limited, access to substantial amounts of capital or off-farm income
  – farmers producing for emerging or alternative markets
  – minority landholders (e.g., African American, Native American)
  – women
  – heir-property owners
  – the elderly
Site Selection

- Large populations of minority landholders
- Considerable forest and woodland acreage on farms
- High numbers of non-corporate private forest landowners
Study Counties

- Brunswick County, VA
- Warren County, NC
- Halifax County, NC
- Northampton County, NC
- Sampson County, NC
- Duplin County, NC
- Robeson County, NC
**Black and Native American operated farms in NC**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Operators</th>
<th>Land in Farms</th>
<th>Average Farm Acres</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Duplin</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>6,584</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halifax</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>10,976</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northampton</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>5,928</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robeson</td>
<td>386</td>
<td>68,793</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sampson</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>5,079</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warren</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>6,995</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>720</strong></td>
<td><strong>104,355</strong></td>
<td><strong>125</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census of Agriculture 1997
Objectives

1. To develop and apply methods for identifying and contacting limited resource landholders
2. To describe and analyze the preferences, opportunities, and constraints that influence woodland management decisions.
Objectives

3. To analyze and select technically proven options for woodland and forest management that are sustainable and appropriate for family goals and economic systems.
Objectives

4. To extend these options to landholders
Partnerships

- Department of Forestry (CNR)
- Division of Multidisciplinary Studies (CHASS)
- Department of Agricultural Education,
- Natural Resource Extension
- Concerned Citizens of Tillery (NGO)
- Land Loss Prevention Project (NGO)
- Agribusiness, Applied Economics, and Agriscience
- NCSU
- NCA&T

PARTNERSHIPS
Objective 1

Identifying informants for

- Interviews/Focus groups
- Survey
- Case Studies
Identification of landholders

- NGO partner membership & contacts
- Federal agencies (FSA, NRCS, CES)
- State agencies (DFR)
- Local informants
- Tax and probate records
Objective 2

Survey to determine preferences, opportunities, and constraints that influence woodland management decisions

• Methods
  • Late fall/winter
  • N = 325
  • Local enumerators
  • Conduct face to face questionnaires
  • Information packet
Focus groups

Lumbee Regional Development Association (Robeson)
- 75 acres with naturally regenerated pine & mixed stands
- Half had sold timber; checked with forester, extension agent, or consultant; accepted first bid offered
- Also sold: pinestraw, cones, game lease, firewood
- Half specify heirs in will; most heirs aware but not active

CES in Brunswick County, VA
- Critical of forestry consultants
- Own multiple woodland parcels
Interviews

Key informants

Semi-structured interviews

Inform survey design

Enrich survey information by illustrating how, when, where and why certain opportunities and constraints exist
Case Studies

Purpose:

• richer information on motivations,
• financial and silvicultural decisions,
• land-use history,
• inheritance patterns
• host field days and on-farm demonstrations
Objective 3

To analyze and select technically proven options for woodland and forest management that are sustainable and appropriate for family goals and economic systems

- Market canvass
- Literature review
- Expert input
Objective 4

Outreach and education
Field days
Information sessions
Revised extension materials
Policy recommendations
Lessons

Difficulty of assembling useful databases on limited-resource farmers

Names, addresses, contact numbers
Amounts of land owned
Land use
Contact with agency and agency programs
Lessons

Concern with elderly, particularly widows

Unexpected importance of forests to small landholders (family history – the homeplace, alternative incomes)
Lessons

Positive feedback from agencies and informants

Human face on the decline of small farms in NC
Thanks to

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