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Timber Tales

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Forest carbon markets

By Jinggang Guo

Forests play a critical role in our environment, offering a range of benefits beyond simply providing timber products. They help purify the air, maintain biodiversity and offer recreational opportunities. Through photosynthesis, forests also absorb carbon from the atmosphere and store it in their biomass. The growth of forest carbon markets in recent years has been driven by increasing concerns over climate change and the need to lower greenhouse gas emissions. Like the forest timber market, the forest carbon credit market is complex and involves multiple players, such as forest landowners, compliance buyers and voluntary buyers. To understand the market, it is crucial to first understand the concept of forest carbon credits.

A forest carbon credit is a certificate that represents a unit of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reductions resulting from activities such as reforestation, afforestation and improved forest management. After being verified, certified and registered, these credits can be transacted on forest carbon markets and used by companies and governments to offset their GHG emissions on forest compliance markets and/or voluntary markets.

Forest landowners are the primary participants in forest carbon offset markets, including individuals, organizations and companies that own the forests and are responsible for the management practices that reduce emissions and increase carbon sequestration.

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A closeup of a redbud tree (*Cercis canadensis*) in bloom. Photo by David J. Stang (Wikimedia Commons).

Tree planting considerations

By Keith Hawkins

Homeowners who aspire to add trees to their landscapes would be well advised to consider other potential issues. A free, downloadable publication from the AgCenter, Native Tree Growing Guide for Louisiana provides 16 pages of good advice for an attractive, shady landscape.

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Forest carbon credit verifiers are independent organizations responsible for verifying the accuracy of carbon credits generated by a project and ensuring that they meet the standards set by the relevant carbon credit certification scheme.

Forest carbon registries are independent organizations that maintain a database of all forest carbon credits that have been created, traded and retired. There are several different registries that certify these credits, and the Verified Carbon Standard is the most widely used. It registers offsets for afforestation,

avoided conversion and improved forest management. Other most used registries are Verra, the American Carbon Registry, the Climate Action Reserve and Gold Standard.

Carbon credit aggregators are entities that group together several carbon credits from different projects and sell them as a portfolio. They often help small-scale project developers and landowners access the carbon credit market by aggregating the credits and making them more accessible to buyers.

Buyers on the forest carbon credit market can be divided into two main categories: compliance buyers and voluntary buyers. Compliance buyers

are companies and governments that are subject to mandatory carbon reduction targets under various carbon-reduction schemes, such as the European Union Emissions Trading System and California Air Resources Board cap-and-trade program. Voluntary buyers are individuals, companies and governments that choose to purchase forest carbon credits to offset their carbon emissions voluntarily, as a way of demonstrating their commitment to reducing their carbon footprint and promoting sustainable forest management.

The process of selling forest carbon credits for a small landowner typically involves the following steps:

1. **Determine eligibility:** The first step is to determine if the forest is eligible to participate in a forest carbon credit program. Eligibility criteria may include factors such as the type of forest, the location of the forest and the current management practices of the forest.
2. **Quantify carbon sequestration:** The landowner will need to quantify the amount of carbon dioxide that is being sequestered by their forest. This process usually involves conducting a forest inventory and using established protocols to calculate the amount of carbon stored in the trees and the soil.
3. **Obtain certification:** The landowner must obtain certification from a third-party organization that verifies the accuracy of the carbon sequestration calculations and confirms that the forest management practices are sustainable.
4. **Register the credits:** Once the landowner has obtained certification, they can register their forest carbon credits in a forest registry. This registry will track the ownership and location of the credits, as well as any transactions involving the credits.
5. **Market the credits:** The landowner can market their forest carbon credits through various channels, such as online marketplaces, brokers or directly to potential buyers.
6. **Negotiate a sale:** Once the landowner has identified potential buyers, they can negotiate the sale of their forest carbon credits. The price of the credits will depend on various factors, such as the current supply and demand for credits, the location of the forest and the certification status of the credits.
7. **Transfer the credits:** Once the sale is complete, the forest carbon credits will be transferred from the landowner to the buyer. This transfer will be recorded in the forest registry.
8. **Monitor and maintain:** The landowner will need to continue to monitor and maintain the forest in accordance with sustainable management practices in order to ensure the continued sequestration of carbon and the validity of the credits.

By following these general steps, forest landowners can sell their forest carbon credits and benefit from the carbon sequestration

of their forests. The process of selling forest carbon credits can be complex. Without the expertise of an aggregator, buyers and sellers may

struggle to find each other, negotiate prices and ensure that transactions are executed properly.

To prevent future headaches, here are some things to avoid with respect to tree planting:

- Planting large trees under utility lines.
- Blocking traffic signs or views at corners.
- Planting trees or shrubs too close to ground transformers.
- Planting large trees too close to buildings. Planting closer than 20 feet is risky.
- Blocking windows or desirable views.
- Planting where roots will damage pavement.
- Spacing trees too closely or shading gardens.
- Encroaching on your neighbor.

The tree guide addresses the “why, where, what, when and how” of tree planting in some detail. It includes a list of native trees to consider for landscaping with specific lists for different purposes:

- Trees preferring an acid soil.
- Trees tolerating dry conditions.
- Medium to large flowering trees.
- Small flowering trees.
- Trees tolerating less than ideal drainage.
- Trees with attractive berries or fruit.
- Trees with edible fruit or seeds.
- Trees frequently providing good fall color.
- Fast growing shade trees (up to a certain size).
- Trees with interesting trunks.
- Evergreen trees.
- Trees that attract birds.



Placing vegetation where it can obstruct a road sign should be avoided. Photo by Andrea De Stefano.

If you have concerns about landscape trees, contact your county agent or extension forester and ask for a site visit to examine your tree and to receive recommendations.

Keith Hawkins is the area horticulture agent in Allen, Beauregard, Evangeline, Rapides and Vernon parishes. You can reach him by emailing khawkins@agcenter.lsu.edu or calling 337-463-7006.

New assistant professor of forestry

Andrea De Stefano recently joined the LSU AgCenter as an assistant professor at Hill Farm Research Station. In this role, he will conduct research and develop extension programs to help stakeholders manage their forest resources and support the Louisiana forestry industry.



De Stefano

"I'm excited to be part of the LSU AgCenter and put my knowledge to service to the Louisiana forestry community," De Stefano said. "My research interests and programs are relatively diverse in scope, but most of them fit within sustainable forest management, forest ecology, forest health and invasive species management."

De Stefano holds a Ph.D. in forestry and forest resources from Louisiana State University. After graduation, he worked at the University of Wyoming, Sheridan Research and Extension Center, as a postdoctoral researcher, where his primary role was to provide a region-wide assessment of the ecological and community impacts of invasive grasses and benefits associated with their management in the western U.S. Before joining the AgCenter in 2022, he worked as an environmental scientist for the California State Water Resources Control Board, where he developed permits and certifications to protect aquatic resources.



Blackberry (*Rubus* spp.) flower. Blackberries are commonly found in forest understories, and they provide shelter, nesting sites and food for numerous wildlife species.

Promoting understory for sustainable forest management

By Andrea De Stefano

Understory vegetation represents an important part of forests, playing a key role in supporting ecosystem function and services. The understory is where the greatest biodiversity of a forest is found. Understory plants affect forest biogeochemistry by influencing water availability, litter decomposition and nutrient cycling. They also

provide a habitat for numerous animal species, including arthropods, birds and mammals. The understory also affects the biomass of soil microbial communities, such as fungi and bacteria. These microbial communities are deeply involved in biogeochemical cycles and form close relationships with plant and tree roots.

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Wild azaleas (*Rhododendron canescens*) are flowering shrubs commonly found in moist forests and along streams and riverbanks.



Wild azaleas (*Rhododendron canescens*) display spectacular pinkish-white flowers that bloom in the summer.



Florida anise (*Illicium floridanum*) is a native evergreen shrub or small tree commonly found along shady stream beds and moist wooded ravines in Louisiana and Florida. Its leaves are aromatic, emitting a pungent anise-like odor when crushed.

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From a management standpoint, understory plants compete with newly established tree seedlings, capturing most of the available resources and lowering seedling survival and growth. Both mechanical and chemical competing vegetation control are a critical management component in early forests, before and after the seedling establishment. Once the overstory is well established, maintaining a rich, diverse and native understory is crucial for sustainable forest management.

Resource availability in forest understories is scarce, with trees being the major beneficiaries of nutrients and light. But some silvicultural treatments, such as thinning and prescribed fire, can be beneficial for understory composition and diversity. Thinning manipulates forest canopy structure, allowing light to reach the lower forest layers. The increased light availability will

increase soil temperature, and the thinning residuals will be readily decomposed and transformed into nutrients by soil biota. Properly planned thinning can maintain the stability and the structure of a stand while enhancing timber production. Several studies have reported that moderate intensity thinning can improve the understory microhabitat, reduce inter species competition and promote the abundance and diversity of understory species, while increasing the stand in terms of height and diameter.

Similarly, prescribed burns can have a positive effect on understory communities, increasing diversity and stimulating germination, while reducing fuel loadings. Researchers showed that low intensity frequent burns can bring richness by creating open space and reducing competition, promoting the recruitment from the local species pool. Moreover, immediately following the burn, soil

pH increases, as well availability of carbon, nitrogen and elemental nutrients to the near-surface soils. These favorable conditions start to decline after six months post burn and plummet after 12 months. A well-timed prescribed burn during the end of dormant season can improve the nutrient availability during the growing season for both over and understory.

In summary, silvicultural management activities increase habitat heterogeneity by improving the light environment, increasing the resource availability and fertility, and influencing understory abundance and diversity. These changes mimic natural disturbance processes by creating diverse microhabitats, allowing species with different requirements to thrive. Adopting ecosystem informed practices can help forest managers to achieve sustainable forest management's goals.

Zoonotic Diseases: Get the Facts

West Nile Virus (WNV) is a mosquito-borne disease caused by a virus in the Flaviviridae family.

Transmission and Diagnosis

- The first documented case of WNV in the U.S. was in 1999.
- Transmission to humans typically occurs after a bite from an infected mosquito. Though much less common, WNV may also be transmitted to humans through contact with other infected animals, their blood, or other tissues, and can pass between humans via blood transfusions or breast milk.
- WNV requires laboratory testing to confirm a diagnosis. There are multiple tests available to clinicians; most require blood or cerebrospinal fluid.
- WNV antibodies can usually be detected for three to eight days after the onset of illness, but can persist for 30 to 90 days or longer.
- There is no vaccine or treatment for WNV in humans.

Impacts to People

- Most people infected with WNV do not have symptoms and are unaware they are infected.
- Around 20% of people with WNV develop flu-like symptoms, such as fever, muscle pain, headache, fatigue, nausea and vomiting, that disappear within days without treatment. However, some people experience symptoms for weeks or months following infection.
- Less than 1% of people infected with WNV develop West Nile Neuroinvasive Disease, which includes brain swelling, meningitis and altered levels of consciousness. This condition is life threatening and requires urgent medical attention.

Impacts to Animals

- WNV primarily affects birds, which serve as reservoirs for the disease and produce high enough levels of the virus to infect mosquitos.
- WNV can also infect horses, alligators, racoons and fox squirrels, among others, but these animals are unlikely to serve as a source of infection for other hosts.
- Neurological signs of WNV in birds include loss of coordination, head tilt, tremors, weakness, apparent blindness and lethargy. Some birds die of infection, while others show no clinical signs of WNV. Juveniles are more susceptible to life-threatening infections than adults, and WNV has caused population declines in some species.
- Most mammals do not show clinical signs of WNV, but horses can develop flu-like symptoms, such as fever or vomiting, or neurological signs as described for birds. There is a WNV vaccine for horses.

Prevention

- Wear bug spray when outdoors, especially during warmer months and following rain. Reapply as directed.
- Wear pants and long sleeves in locations with a lot of mosquitos. Cover strollers and baby carriers with mosquito netting.
- Remove standing water to eliminate mosquito breeding sites from around your home.
- Install and maintain window or door screens.
- Use air conditioning during summer months, if possible.

More Information

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Louisiana Department of Health
Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries

Louisiana Stumpage Report

Fourth Quarter 2022

The stumpage prices below are the statewide averages and are intended to demonstrate the general trends in the market. The current value of timber can differ greatly across parishes, species, tree quality, market access and other factors. Forest landowners considering a timber sale are encouraged to contact a consulting forester for assistance. Average stumpage prices for the six major products for the fourth quarter of 2022 were reported as follows:

Average stumpage prices*(\$/ton) Q4/2022

	Q4/2022	Q3/2022	Q4/2021	Q4/Q3 % Change	Q4/Q4 % Change
Pine Sawtimber	26.90	25.77	26.05	4.38	3.26
Oak Sawtimber	43.99	42.67	44.25	3.09	-0.59
Mixed Hardwood Sawtimber	33.67	33.69	35.73	-0.06	-5.77
Pine Chip-n-Saw	20.93	16.93	19.88	23.63	5.28
Pine Pulpwood	8.36	7.72	9.09	8.29	-8.03
Hardwood Pulpwood	9.65	7.57	9.48	27.48	1.79

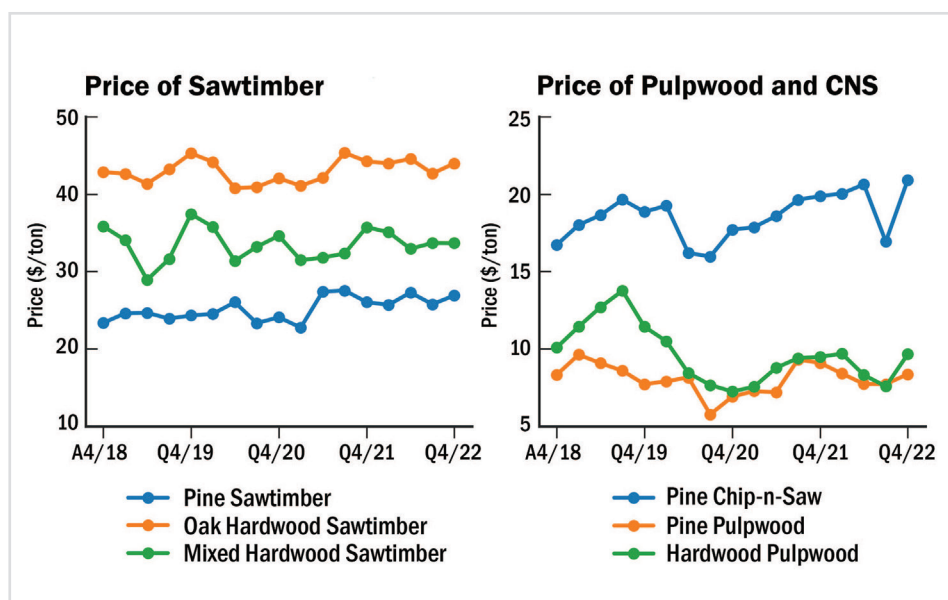
Compiled by Jinggang Guo.

*Oak sawtimber includes both red oak and white oak species. The sawtimber and pulpwood price data included in this newsletter are published with permission from TimberMart-South Athens, Georgia. Contact TimberMart-South via email at tmart@timbermart-south.com.
— This document is intended for use by forestry stakeholders of Louisiana. The source of these prices is proprietary in nature.

Market trends

Due to the seasonality, five major timber prices went up in the fourth quarter of 2022. Sawtimber prices increased from \$25.77/ton to \$26.90/ton. Oak sawtimber prices increased by 3.09%, ending at \$43.99/ton. Mixed hardwood sawtimber prices remained relatively the same compared to the previous quarter and ended the quarter at \$33.67/ton. Pine chip-n-saw prices trended upward with a 23% increase and reached \$20.93 per ton. The hardwood pulpwood price saw the biggest increase by 27% to an average of \$9.65/ton. The pine pulpwood price had a moderate increase of 9.1% from \$7.72/ton to \$8.36/ton.

Since the beginning of 2022, mortgage rates continued to climb, which had a negative impact on the



housing market. This in turn led to a decline in the lumber market. The two-by-four lumber prices returned to the pre-pandemic level in late 2022. In 2023, the weak demand for lumber is likely to continue to hamper the timber demand as the

lumber industry is a major consumer of timber. With the economic uncertainty and oversupply issue, state-level timber prices are expected to remain flat or trend downward in early 2023.

Planning for Success with Herbicide Use

By Valerie West

There are two kinds of spraying jobs requiring herbicide that most landowners will encounter over time. The first kind is the smaller scale, do-it-yourself situation that may arise for spot treatments of food plots, invasive weeds or selective tree removal. The second kind is the larger scale situation that requires you to hire a contractor when site preparation or release treatments are needed. No matter what the scale and scope of the project, there are things that a landowner should, and in some cases, must do to be properly prepared and covered in the case of liability.

Do it yourself


Many times, a landowner will find themselves staring at a store shelf full of chemicals trying to decide what they need to take care of a small-scale vegetation control problem. Rows of shiny bottles and jugs with fancy logos, catchy names and promises of what they might actually do when applied. Here are some tips to help you succeed:

1. If you are planning to use chemicals on your property to control vegetation on a fairly regular basis, go ahead and take a private pesticide applicator course and obtain a license. In Louisiana, these courses are held around the state in a collaborative effort between the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry and the LSU AgCenter. There is an

upfront cost to take the class and get the license, but the knowledge you receive will help you save so much more in chemical costs and possible liability issues. If you don't think that you will need this level of training, then follow the next three tips below.

- 2.** Call your area extension agents, share the problem with them, and they will help you find the right solution to control the vegetation issue.
- 3.** Read ALL of the label materials. This is important. The label on the container and all of the written materials that come with the chemical are not only important for safety but also liability issues. The label is the law. It will tell you where you can use

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A large tractor with a herbicide sprayer attachment is shown in a forest clearing, spraying a mist of herbicide over a field of tall grass and weeds. The background is a dense forest of tall trees.

Contractor facilitated ground application of herbicide. Photo courtesy of Alabama Cooperative Extension System.



Small scale herbicide application with a backpack sprayer. Photo: Wikimedia Commons.

the chemical, what precautions you need to take for your safety and the safety of others, if the chemical will work for the plant or plants you are attempting to control and much more important information. Read the label before purchasing to make sure it is the right product and that you have the right equipment to safely apply it.

4. Proper storage and disposal of chemicals is very important. You will be unlikely to use all of the chemical in the container on very small projects and may not even finish using all the chemical mix in your applicator. Follow the label instructions for storage and disposal. Leaving chemicals in a sprayer can ruin the sprayer over time. Putting the concentrated chemical in storage where temperature extremes are not controlled will cause problems.

By following the label and asking for advice, you should be able to have a successful do-it-yourself solution to your problem.


Hire a contractor

There are going to be times when the project may be too large or too complex for a do-it-yourself approach. This is the time to look for a contractor. The following important points were provided by contract applicators based on their interactions with landowners over the years. Some of these points relate to any herbicide operation while others are forest landowner based:

1. Treated acres on a map matter, total ownership does not. This is because you are not treating the entire acre in many cases but rather a percentage. You will get a report after the application that will show where the work was done and a detailed explanation to go with it.

2. Your contractor is not responsible for helping you go through the details to get cost share program support for your property. If you have a cost share agreement then you need to be the one who makes sure that everything is approved before starting, such as notifying the government agency that you have a contractor for the application and receiving approval to proceed. Failure to do so may result in the landowner being responsible for the entire bill.
3. If you hire a contractor, they should be communicating with you using phone calls, text messages or email prior to the application. If they are not, then you need to find out why and what is going on. Good communication expedites contracting and invoicing for all parties.
4. Watch for invasive species on your properties. The earlier they are detected, the easier they are to control.
5. If you lack forestry knowledge and experience, hire a forester or consultant to help you with your planning and contract administration.
6. The most important treatment for establishing a pine plantation is first year grass and weed control.
7. Thinning plans should include considerations for ground applications of herbicide and fertilizer and allow enough room for equipment operation and application efficiency.
8. Maintain access to your property. Keep roads and trails in good condition through water bars, seeding sloped areas, replacing culverts and repairing damage as it occurs.
9. Do you lock your gate? If you do, then make sure the contractor can get in to do the work. This will help avoid delays and cut locks. The timing of herbicide is very important to reforestation success. Delays due to access issues can result in stand level impacts throughout the entire rotation.
10. Communicate with everyone who may be impacted. Tell hunting clubs what is going to happen, delay food plot planting and make sure stands don't block access for ground equipment. Maintain a good working relationship with any oil or gas operations on the property, and notify them so that well pads can be protected as needed or contractors can gain access to well pad areas for chemical loading.

These tips are some of the main points of consideration for both do-it-yourself and hire-a-contractor situations. Seeking advice from local experts such as an extension agent or hiring a consulting forester can help a landowner make appropriate decisions for an effective herbicide application no matter how large or small the project.

A photograph of a rough-stemmed goldenrod (Solidago rugosa) in a field. The plant has a central stem with several clusters of small yellow flowers. To the left, there is another plant with large green leaves and a cluster of small brown flowers. The background is a field of tall grasses and other plants, with a line of trees in the distance.

Considerations in herbaceous plant establishment

Rough-stemmed goldenrod (*Solidago rugosa*) is a native herbaceous perennial that can be found in moist sites. It is attractive to birds, native bees, honeybees and other pollinator species. Photo from Wikimedia Commons.

Habitat needs for a variety of wildlife are generally comprised of some source of food, water and cover. How those essentials are arranged and their amount of seasonal availability can vary widely across properties depending on the management objectives. Herbaceous plant communities are vascular plants that do not develop consistent woody tissue above ground or simply, non-woody vegetation. These non-woody plant families consist of grasses, forbs, sedges and others. Herbaceous communities are incredibly beneficial to ground-nesting birds, wild turkeys, white-tailed deer, rodents and invertebrates.

Grasses and forbs are typically in high abundance after newly disturbed areas are formed and provide excellent food and cover. A common denominator in creating these openings is a decrease in overstory canopy that increases sunlight and space. A response following the disturbance will be in the form of native grasses that include foxtail (*Setaria* spp.), fall panicum (*Panicum* spp.), broomsedge bluestem (*Andropogon virginicus*), low panicum (*Dicanthelium* spp.) and many others depending on site indices, such as upland or bottomland. Native forbs include boneset (*Eupatorium* spp.), partridge pea (*Chamaecrista fasciculata*), croton (*Croton capitatus*), goldenrod (*Solidago* spp.) and many others. These areas of disturbances that have the ability to create herbaceous plant communities could be initiated along field edges, logging sets, roadsides and spots where basal area is greatly reduced.

Responses from the seedbank to disturbance and increased sunlight are not always straight forward and sometimes involve intensive



Originally from South America, vaseygrass (*Paspalum urvillei*) was introduced for forage. It occurs in pastures, new forest plantations, open forests and along streams and pond margins. Photo from Forest Starr and Kim Starr.

management. Negative responses would include an increase in non-native grasses and invasive woody encroachment from shrubs and trees following manipulation to a site. Examples of non-native grasses are bahiagrass (*Paspalum notatum*), vaseygrass (*Paspalum urvillei*), dallisgrass (*Paspalum dilatatum*), bermudagrass (*Cynodon dactylon*) and others. An example of site colonization from shrubs would be eastern baccharis (*Baccharis halimifolia*). When negative responses occur, a need for mitigation is necessary in order to improve the native species arrangement and abundance of your early successional opening. Fortunately, there are a multitude of habitat management practices to be incorporated to improve and maintain herbaceous plant communities.

Selective herbicide applications are a great place to start with management of your openings. Identification of the problematic species and then matching your management strategy to the appropriate selective herbicide can yield great improvements. Whether it's non-native grass removal while maintaining forbs or eliminating

woody encroachment, herbicides offer a broad-spectrum option to reach your vegetation management objectives.

Mechanical interference by way of disking is a proven approach. Soil disturbance throughout the growing season, with different moisture events, can continuously change your species composition to your desired arrangement. Mowing is another mechanical approach to reclaim sites or to prep before other methods are implemented, although mowing is the least recommended activity in this type of habitat management approach. Over time, mowing will create perennial plant communities that reduce forb coverage and restrict animal movement.

If you are considering creating some vegetative diversity across your property, early successional plant communities are a great way to accomplish that goal while providing critical wildlife habitat that has shown in research to be lacking in abundance.

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