

His Pine Stand Reflects A Belief In The Land And Lifetime Of Effort



RALPH W. PICKETT

After saying that Pickett had "one of the finest stands of pine timber in North Carolina," Sullivan added, "His is an amazing story of success."

Extension forestry specialists at NGSU say people like Pickett will largely determine the future of the forest products industry in North Carolina. While several companies own large tracts in the state, about 85 percent of the state's woodland is still in the hands of private owners.

Duplin County Agricultural Extension Agent Snodie Wilson said although his county has the highest gross agricultural income in the state, the majority of the land in the county is still forested. Most of this land is producing far below its potential, Wilson added.

Pickett also spoke as fond-

ly of bears living in his woods as if they were family pets.

Pickett has lived off his woodland at the same time he has been improving it. He purchased an old truck early in life and started "pulp-wooding," always cutting diseased, crooked and overcrowded trees first. He has harvested larger trees for sawtimber or for poles and pilings. And all the time, his woodland has been increasing in value.

Pickett sold about a third of his original acreage many years ago. He also cleared 250 acres, which his son uses to grow corn and soybeans. That's okay with the father, for he had much rather be a tree farmer than a crop farmer.

Among the lessons that Pickett says he has learned from nearly a half-century in the woods are these:

"There's more in the man than in the land."

"There is no sorry land. Land is good, better and best. All it needs is tutoring."

Pickett is still robust and not about to retire. "Sitting around bores me," he declared. And of his accomplishment, he said, "The Lord has been good to me."

The spotlight was focused on Pickett last December at the Governor's Conference on Retention of Prime Farm and Forest Land at North Carolina State University. William G. Sullivan, a farmer and conference speaker from Mount Olive, singled Pickett out as "a good example of what hard work and determination can do."

poison, an old bog that was too wet to grow anything but a bramble of briars. Little grew on it of commercial value.

Pickett has turned his thicket into a prized forest with hard work and sound forestry management practices.

One of his first goals was to improve the drainage and in the early days he did this with his own muscles, a shovel and a broadax.

"I'd go in the woods early in the morning and never think about the time until the sun started setting. That's how determined I was to make something out of this place," he said.

Pickett was later able to hire ditching done with a backhoe and now his forest is crisscrossed with about nine miles of ditches that keep his pines out of standing water and serve as firelanes.

Along with ditches, Pickett has used fire as a forestry management tool. The value of fire was demonstrated to him accidentally when wild-fire once burned for 31 days on his land. The burned area came back full of pines.

Now, Pickett uses "controlled burping" on a regular basis to reduce undesirable hardwoods and "to release" his pines. "You use a slow, creeping fire," he explained, "and it's like giving the pines a shot of fertilizer."

Along with stimulating his pines, Pickett said controlled burning also aids wildlife. "A lot of tender, young vegetation comes in after a fire," he explained. "Deer don't bother crops around

here because they can find plenty to eat in the woods. And we've got rabbits, squirrels, raccoons.

Seventy-three-year-old Ralph W. Pickett of Beaulaville can easily show people what he has done with his life.

Among other things, he has grown a forest. It has taken him 48 years.

Pickett's forest covers 1,500 acres in the Cedar Forks Community of Duplin County, and it is filled with magnificent stands of longleaf, pond and loblolly pines.

Some people call it one of the finest, privately-owned tracts of woodland in North Carolina.

Pickett's life in the woods began at the age of 25. It was on Nov. 2, 1934, to be exact, during the Great Depression.

Pickett took all the money he had — \$100 — and used it as down payment on 2,325 acres owned by Goldsboro Lumber Co. The total purchase price was \$1,600 or less than 69 cents an acre.

"Times were hard," he recalls, "and no one could understand why I would buy woodland on credit."

Local folks described Pickett's purchase in various ways — Pickett's thicket, a

enable you to keep accurate records of treatment and crop yield for each area.

When sampling, avoid small areas — such as burned wood piles, wet spots, severely eroded spots, old building sites, fence rows, corner or end-turn areas, fertilizer bands and old lime piles. A good sample should be a composite of individual cores — each taken up to seven inches deep in at least 10 locations within an area having these three uniform characteristics: the soil is the same in color, slope, texture, surface and internal drainage and past erosion; the past treatment has been the same, and the plant material has been the same over the past few years.

Be sure to use a clean plastic bucket or container to collect the individual cores that will make up the total soil sample, especially if micronutrients are to be determined. Metal containers, such as galvanized buckets, will contaminate the soil sample with elements such as zinc and copper and give misleading results. Never expose the sample to tools, containers or floor surfaces that may contaminate it with chemical or fertilizer elements.

You should collect the samples three to six months before the crop is to be planted. This will give you ample time to get the soil test back from the laboratory and enable you to plan your lime and fertilizer application before the busy planting season begins.

Soils should not be sampled when they are too wet since it is difficult to mix the sample cores. One rule to remember is that if the soil is too wet to plow, it is too wet to collect soil samples.

Test results are useful for several years after sampling. Sampling every three to five years usually provides an opportunity to determine fertility changes made with basic treatments and give a new bench mark for further improvement. However, the sandy soils of the Coastal Plains area will probably need to be tested every two or three years because of their low capacity for holding nutrients and most drastic effects of nitrogen which causes soil acidity to develop.

Practically all plants grow best in neutral to slightly acid soils. Many soils fall in this range naturally, but the use of acid-forming fertilizers (among them ammonium sulfate, ammonium nitrate and urea) can cause weak acids to build up. This calls for the use of lime to raise the ph or, when soils are alkaline, sulfur to lower it.

Soil ph is a measure of the relative acidity or alkalinity of a soil measured on a scale of 0 to 14. A ph of 7.0 is neutral, a ph of less than 7.0 is acidic, and a ph above 7.0 is alkaline. The ph unit is logarithmic, meaning that a ph of 5.0 is 10 times more acidic than a ph of 6.0, and 100 times more acidic than a ph of 7.0. That means that 10 lbs. of fertilizer applied to a soil with a ph of 6.0 is equivalent to 100 lbs. of fertilizer applied to a soil with a ph of

Magnolia Historic Society Formed

The Magnolia Historic Preservation Society has been formed to help preserve historic sites such as the Magnolia Depot. The Society's chairman is Randy Drew; vice chairperson, Marie Quarterman; and secretary-treasurer, Terry Pope.

Thus far the Society has planned a flea market to be held in the Magnolia gym on Dec. 4, and a talent show to be held in the Magnolia Auditorium on Dec. 18th. Further information on the flea market and talent show will be in the local newspapers and radio stations at a

later date.
The next scheduled meeting is Nov. 25 at 8 p.m. at the Magnolia Town Hall.

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Office Accepting Bids For Watershed Project

Bids for the second and major phase of the Limestone Creek watershed project will be received until 10 a.m. Dec. 9 at the Duplin County Soil and Water Conservation District office.

Major items of work will be 105,435 feet of channel restoration, 62,116 feet of channel excavation, 48 acres of clearing, laying 2,836 feet of 15-inch corrugated metal pipe inlets, digging 20 permanent sediment basins in the channel and planting 40 acres of permanent vegetation.

The cost is estimated between \$500,000 and \$1 million.

Invitations to bid were mailed to contractors last week, said Kenneth Futreal, Duplin County soil conservationist. Five requests for further information had been received by Wednesday. "It looks like we'll have a lot of interest among contractors for this project," Futreal said.

Only two bids were received on the first phase. Because at least three bidders are required on an initial bid call, the project was re-advertised. Only one bid was received for the second bid opening, Futreal said.

Phelps and White Construction Co. of Windsor submitted the bid of \$74,000 Oct. 20. The initial phase calls for 21,000 feet of channel restoration and installation of three sediment basins, which are deep spots in the channel to catch sediment running off fields.

When sediment in the basins reaches a specified depth, it is removed to prevent channel clogging.

When Phelps and White completes forms concerning bonds and they are verified by the state Soil Conservation Service office, the construction order can be issued, Futreal said.

"I hope that work can be started by Nov. 22," Futreal said.

Prospective Phase II bidders may visit the work site Nov. 16 and Nov. 30. They will assemble at 10 a.m. on each date at the SCS

office and be escorted on a tour of the area, which is on and near Limestone Creek north and west of Beaulaville.

Other inspection arrangements should be made with Calvin R. Mercer, chairman of the district and contracting officer for the Duplin County Board of Commissioners.

Futreal said 58 land owners have applied for long-term land treatment contracts for their farms in the watershed area. Land treatment is designed to prevent erosion of soil into the chan-

Application Forms For Ordering Tree Seedlings Available

Application forms for forest tree seedlings from state nurseries are now available on request from Director, N.C. Division of Forest Resources, P.O. Box 27687, Raleigh, NC 27611 or locally from offices of the county forest ranger or the soil conservation service. Applications will be filled in the same order they are received. Applications must be at the office of the Division of Forest Resources at least four weeks prior to shipment. Weather permitting, shipments should begin Dec. 1. Hardwood species are sold in units of 100 seedlings; others in units of 1,000. Genetically improved loblolly pine seedlings will be limited to a maximum of 100,000 per applicant. Order early.

This report was edited by the Duplin County AES.

Local Conservation News

By R. Wade Biddix, Soil Conservationist, USDA-Soil Conservation Service

I want to talk with you today about "soil Sampling" — a valuable management tool and the key to reliable soil test information.

Many of you are farmers and can readily recognize an area in your fields that is low in either lime or fertilizer. The plants in those areas are usually smaller, sickly and often discolored in various portions of the leaves. When these symptoms occur, it is too late to do anything about that particular crop. The damage has already been done and will need to be corrected before planting next year's crop.

You cannot tell how much

lime or fertilizer your fields will require next year by simply giving them a glance or two. Past experience with your fertilization programs may be of some help, but you need to be more scientific. A carefully selected soil sample, followed by a laboratory analysis, will be most helpful in obtaining high,

profitable yields from your land.

Before you begin collecting samples, you should outline your farm and field boundaries directly on an aerial photograph, which can be obtained from the ASCS office. Assign a permanent number to each field or management area. This will

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