

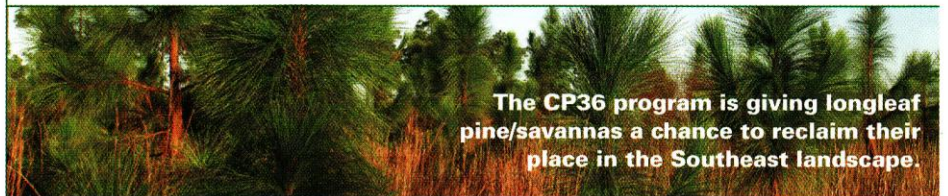
CP36 Funding

for Native Warm-Season Grass and Longleaf Pine in Georgia

by Fred Circle
Owner, FDC Enterprises and QVM Certified Applicator

Longleaf pine forests and grassland savannas once covered an estimated 92 million acres of America's Southeast. Today, that number is less than 3 percent and continues to drop at the estimated rate of 100,000 acres per year. With those acres have gone the wildlife habitat they provided, and the hunting and other outdoor recreation profits that follow.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has developed CP36 to protect and restore these lands before they disappear. FDC Enterprises along with other Quality Vegetation Management™ (QVM) Certified Applicators and the BASF team have developed a program to help landowners get the job done.



The CP36 program is giving longleaf pine/savannas a chance to reclaim their place in the Southeast landscape.

The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) has always been a lifesaver for wildlife. The program encourages landowners to protect habitat and restore areas once overtaken by agriculture. Many forest landowners benefit from extra income derived from hunting leases and opening their land for other outdoor recreational pursuits. However, the practice will be less lucrative as grasslands diminish and wildlife is forced to move on to greener pastures.

One of the best ways forest landowners can attract wildlife for hunting and other outdoor recreation is to maintain acres of native warm-season grasses in row spaces. The grasses provide additional nesting cover, seeds that serve as forage for game species, and easy movement for small animals. Properly managed, native warm-season grasses will not interfere with pine productivity and can even bring in additional profit.

But native warm-season grass plantings require weed management and careful installation, costing both time and money with few guarantees of success. NRCS offices in the Southeast have found a new way to fund those plantings, and BASF is helping build a road map for native warm-season grass restoration that comes with a guarantee.

■ Get With The Program

The CP36 program, a sub-program of the CRP, specifically encourages restoration of the longleaf pine/savanna landscape that was once a common sight in Georgia and throughout the Southeast.

CP36 supports restoration of 66,000 acres of longleaf pine forests, mixed with native warm-season grass, in 116 counties throughout the state. More than 200,000 additional acres could become eligible in the Southeast, including 36,000 acres in Louisiana, 21,500 in Mississippi and more than 50,000 acres in the Carolinas.

Much like the traditional CRP, participating landowners receive a one-time signing and practice payment for agreeing to manage their lands according to an NRCS plan for 10 to 15 years.

The state Farm Service Agency (FSA) also provides an additional cost-share



of up to 50 percent for restoring and maintaining the grasslands of the Southeast.

■ Who Is Eligible? Land eligible for CP36 designation must be located in the historic range of longleaf pine and must have been used as cropland in four of the preceding six years.

In addition to meeting the basic CRP program requirements, the CP36 program requires:

- Protecting plantings from domestic grazing
- Using registered chemicals and state-approved application practices in restoration
- Completing periodic scheduled management as laid out by NRCS
- Controlling all noxious and invasive weeds

■ How Does CP36 Work?

The NRCS works

with landowners to develop a plan for restoration. The process includes a careful evaluation of the appropriateness of combination planting, and the specific steps required to complete the project. Once the plan is in place, the landowner can get to work on the restoration itself.

Plans typically allow time for fields to lay fallow, scalping of tree plantings and band-spraying with herbicides for grass control, all of which occur before planting. Landowners who choose a **Quality Vegetation Management™ (QVM) Certified Applicator** to complete weed control in CP36 areas are eligible for an additional three-year guarantee on BASF forestry products against new invasions. Seedlings are then planted, fire breaks established, and herbicide sprayed to beat back the competition.

The landowner is responsible for ensuring treatments and plantings are accomplished. QVM Certified Applicators, such as FDC Enterprises, can maximize the success of native warm-season grass plantings within longleaf pine stands through effective weed control. BASF products like **Journey® herbicide** allow treatment of noxious and invasive weeds while avoiding damage to longleaf pine stands.

■ How Can I Be Sure CP36 Works For Me?

The technical requirements of the CP36 program include specific instructions to

control tall fescue, Bermudagrass, bahiagrass and cogongrass. Journey may not be the first product that comes to mind for forest landowners, but it often is a highly cost-effective way to control these and other invasive grasses.

For landowners, the key to success is having the right partners to implement the CP36 requirements. Effective treatments by applicators that will stand behind their work can mean the difference between profitable land and just breaking even.

While the plan for each site is determined individually, major steps may include:

Step 1: Site inspection by NRCS and plan development and approval

Step 2: Site preparation for longleaf plantings using **Chopper® GEN2™ herbicide**

Step 3: Planting longleaf pine seedlings

Step 4: Pre-plant application of Journey for grasses and **Overdrive® herbicide** for invasive thistles and other weeds

Step 5: Planting native warm-season grasses

Native warm-season grasses are established in a 6- to 8-foot band in the middle of each planted row of longleaf pine.

Talk to your local NRCS agent to determine if this program is right for you. For more information, including a map of the eligible Georgia counties, visit www.ga.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/crp.html.

To connect with a QVM Certified Applicator or Advisor, visit www.vmanswers.com.



About the Author:

Fred Circle owns and operates FDC Enterprises, and is a QVM Certified Applicator. FDC has restored more than 80,000 acres of native warm-season grass plantings through the CRP program.



A mixture of grasses and pines provide the best habitat for wildlife.