



Forest land ownership risks



Property lines



All about vultures



Cross-laminated timber



Stumpage report



Area specialists



Timber Tales

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What landowners need to know about forest land ownership

External risks of forestland ownership

This is the third article in a series of articles designed to educate forest landowners about some of the basic principles involved with owning and investing in forestland. The motivation to begin this series comes from conversations with forest landowners and investors. I realize that some of the principles may be simple and straightforward, while some principles may be extremely complex and may require more explanation. I would like the topics in this series to be timely, relevant and dynamic, so I would appreciate your feedback. Please send feedback on the articles and suggestions for future articles to rhutchins@agcenter.lsu.edu.

By Robbie Hutchins

One of the major external risks associated with forestland ownership is market risk. The recent unexpected decision of Georgia Pacific to close their communication paper division, wood yard, and pulp mill and consequently discontinue accepting pine and hardwood roundwood deliveries at the GP Port Hudson facility will affect mill workers, loggers, forest

landowners and foresters across a large geographic area for a long time. This closure is a close-to-home example of market risk for those of us in Louisiana. For forest landowners with property in the affected area, the only local market for their pine and hardwood pulpwood literally disappeared overnight. Unfortunately, there is nothing landowners and investors

Continued on Page 2

Cross-laminated timber an emerging sector in forestry world

By Dr. Richard Vlosky
and Mason T. LeBlanc

Mass timber has been produced and used in many forms over the past decade. Examples are glulam beams, laminated veneer lumber and parallel strand lumber. More recently, new entrants have been developed and are being adopted into the North American engineered wood product building materials family of products. Newer structural panel products, such as nail-laminated timber, dowel-laminated timber, mass plywood panels and cross-laminated timber, have experienced years of product testing and manufacturing learning curves with increasing production.

Continued on Page 3

could have done to minimize the effects of this decision on their investment. Thankfully, this degree of catastrophic sudden market disruption is very uncommon.

However, risk involves more than the potential complete closure of markets. Investors and landowners sometimes forget that timber is a commodity, and as a commodity its price fluctuates daily depending on supply and demand. Contrary to some investor presentations, stumpage prices do not increase each year in a straight line. Future increases in stumpage prices are not guaranteed, and there is a possibility that prices will not be at some previously predicted level when a tract is ready to harvest. Market risks and risks to profitability resulting from pricing pressure often go hand in hand. Risks related to pricing pressure that often result in lower-than-average stumpage prices can be impactful to forest landowners who own small acreages and landowners whose holdings are concentrated in a single geographic area.

Another one of the major external risks of forestland ownership and investment is the risk of losing standing timber from natural factors, which often cause catastrophic losses of timber and other property in a concentrated geographic area. Natural factors can also temporarily disrupt markets by causing mill closures or transportation issues, and they can also cause downward pricing pressure because of the large amount of salvaged timber forced into the supply chain in a short period of time. A host of weather-related events that could damage tracts of timber, such as hurricanes, tornadoes, ice storms and floods, are examples of natural factors. Insects and diseases that cause widespread timber losses are also substantial natural risks. The



A cherrybark oak (Quercus pagoda) forest in Northwest Louisiana. Photo by Michael Blazier, LSU AgCenter.

southern pine beetle, the emerald ash borer and the gypsy moth are prominent examples of destructive insects. Examples of diseases include oak wilt, chestnut blight and Dutch elm disease. Fire, whether started naturally or by man, can also damage or destroy large tracts of timber and cause widespread property damage.

The final type of external risk factor we will discuss is political risk, which is associated with political decisions or disruptions that result in financial or market losses. For forest landowners and investors, political risk most often materializes when local, state or federal agencies attempt to increase their jurisdiction and scope of their regulatory authority or make government regulations more restrictive. However, political risk is not limited to bureaucratic agencies. Political risk can also include the

risks that new legislation or tariffs can negatively affect operations or markets. Government shutdown is another type of political risk that could affect forest landowners or investors. Thankfully, political risk is extremely low in the United States compared to other countries.

In this series of articles, I have attempted to explain some of the primary risks involved in owning and investing in forestland and ways to help minimize those risks. Even though there may be risks involved, owning and investing in forestland is a great way to diversify your investment portfolio while enjoying the all benefits of the American dream of land ownership.

—Robbie Hutchins is an associate area agent specializing in forestry for the AgCenter in the Central Region.

Continued from Page 1

Cross-laminated timber is a large-scale, prefabricated, solid engineered wood panel. Lightweight yet very strong and with superior acoustic, fire, seismic and thermal performance, cross-laminated timber is also fast and easy to install. It also generates almost no waste onsite. Cross-laminated timber offers design flexibility and few environmental impacts. For these reasons, cross-laminated timber is proving to be a highly advantageous alternative to conventional materials, like concrete, masonry or steel, especially in multifamily and commercial construction.

A cross-laminated timber panel consists of several layers of kiln-dried dimension lumber stacked in alternating directions, bonded with structural adhesives, and pressed to form a solid, straight, rectangular panel. Cross-laminated timber panels consist of an odd number of layers (usually three to seven layers) and may be sanded or prefinished before shipping. While at the mill, cross-laminated timber panels are cut to size, including door and window openings, with state-of-the-art computer numerical controlled routers capable of making complex cuts with high precision. Finished cross-laminated timber panels are exceptionally stiff, strong and stable, handling load transfer on all sides.

Cross-laminated timber manufacturing and use in multistory buildings and other structures is a well-established and fast-growing industry in Europe, but adoption of this building technology has just begun to emerge in the U.S. and Canada. In 2017 and early 2018, 13 new mills were proposed, including new mills in the U.S. and New Zealand. Of those, seven are under construction and will be online by 2020. In 2016, the global



Cross-laminated timber construction.

output of cross-laminated timber was estimated to be 1 million cubic meters and is forecast to reach 3 million cubic meters by 2025.

Because of its 20-year history in Europe, there are abundant examples of the potential for building with cross-laminated timber. In Europe there are currently more than 600 cross-laminated timber structures and dozens of manufacturing facilities. In Europe there have been 18 all-timber buildings of seven to 14 stories built, with nine buildings using timber and conventional materials from seven to 20 stories. There have also been nine proposed buildings from eight to 35 stories. Most of these buildings are in the United Kingdom and France. The North American market alone is said to have the potential of 2 to 6 million cubic meters.

The U.S. cross-laminated timber industry started in Oregon and Washington using Douglas-fir dimension lumber as raw material. Both states recently approved

statewide building codes that include tall timber buildings. Cross-laminated timber manufactured in North America must meet stringent product standards and be certified to the standard for performance-rated cross-laminated timber set by APA – The Engineered Wood Association, the ANSI/APA PRG 320-2012 standard. Cross-laminated timber manufactured outside of North America may not meet these performance standards for wood construction.

The potential markets for cross-laminated timber in the U.S. are enormous if architects, builders, contractors, engineers and building owners accept the product as a substitute for steel and concrete construction. Recent studies about properties of southern yellow pine cross-laminated timber have proven to surpass standards, but knowledge of the material in the South is still low. The southern U.S. has ample southern yellow pine resources to meet the potential market for cross-laminated timber, as there are many sawmills in the region that have significantly increased production. Overall, research, development and successful examples will continue to convince stakeholders and influencers as well as the public of the soundness and the possibilities of using cross-laminated timber in the U.S. and, particularly, in the South.

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Crossing the Border: Property Lines

By Whitney Wallace

A major but sometimes overlooked aspect of owning property is finding, marking and maintaining boundary lines. We all have heard the saying “good fences make good neighbors,” but physical fences may not be feasible when it comes to timber, road access and more. Whether it’s for your protection or for the safety of others, properly marked boundary lines are important. We will discuss some of the different types of lines and how they can affect you.

Reasons for marking property lines:

Trespassing – Someone who crosses your property unknowingly or without your permission is considered trespassing. It is a violation of Louisiana law for anyone to trespass on the property of another without authorization or consent unless otherwise provided by law. Even though the burden of proof is placed on the trespasser, it is always better

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to mark your lines because you will have a much better case if someone crosses your property.

Timber harvesting – Anytime you are considering harvesting timber on your property, it is imperative to have clear property lines. The last thing any landowner wants is being accused of taking someone else’s timber due to negligence.

Marking lines should begin with a written description recorded at the courthouse in the parish where the property is located. Descriptions

can vary in detail depending on the survey and the timeframe in which it was taken. The American Forest Foundation recommends getting a proper description that includes certain aspects, such as line direction, distance of each line section and a description of the corner at each turn. In this article, we will assume the lines and corners have been marked by a licensed surveyor.

Now that you are out on your property, the first step is to locate a known corner or monument. The corner is the intersection of two lines where a change in direction occurs. Corners can be marked with an array of objects. Examples could include metal pipes, rebar, points in a road, living trees or even an old fence. It is worth mentioning that sometimes old or existing fences may be mistakenly thought of as a property line. It is always best to refer to the deed for such language.

Continued on Page 6

Louisiana Stumpage Report

Fourth Quarter 2019

Product Class	Price per ton	% Change from Prior Quarter
Pine sawtimber	24	0
Pine chip-n-saw	19	-5
Pine pulpwood	8	-11
Oak sawtimber	45	+5
Hardwood sawtimber – mixed grade	37	+3
Hardwood pulpwood	11	-21

This document is intended for use by forestry stakeholders of Louisiana. The source of these prices is proprietary in nature; prices are rounded per agreements to disseminate them to the public.



Vultures: They may look a bit shabby, but they've got hearts

Black vulture.

By Dr. Ashley M. Long

As introduced in the last two issues of *Timber Tales*, we've developed a new natural history series that compares Louisiana wildlife with their animated counterparts. Given the key role that animals have played in American animation since the early 1900s, it may be hard to pick your favorite character, television show or movie. For many, "The Jungle Book" stands out as a particularly magical experience with big personalities, great storytelling and a catalog of memorable songs — just try not to sing "The Bare Necessities" as you read this article!

Released in 1967, "The Jungle Book" follows 10-year-old Mowgli as he travels from his adoptive home among wolves to a nearby village where it's thought he may

be safe from Shere Kahn, a man-eating Bengal tiger who will surely kill the boy and all who try to protect him. Mowgli is accompanied on his journey by a no-nonsense panther, Bagherra, and a fun-loving sloth bear, Baloo. Along the way the trio faces off with a hungry Indian python named Kaa, marches with the jungle's raucous elephant patrol and spars with King Louie the orangutan (voiced by New Orleans native Louis Prima) and his mischievous monkey troop. In a scene that is my personal favorite, they receive a serenade, as well as help, from a quartet of shaggy vultures.

Named Buzzie, Flaps, Ziggy and Dizzy, the vulture characters have (almost) featherless heads, bare legs and hooked raptor beaks. We meet the crew as they perch among the branches of a dead tree and

infamously discuss what they're going to do next ("Now don't start that again!"). After singing a rousing rendition of "That's What Friends Are For," the vultures help Mowgli fend off an attack by Shere Kahn and eventually see Mowgli, Bagherra and Baloo on their way.

Buzzie, Flaps, Ziggy and Dizzy most closely resemble a species called the white-rumped vulture, one of nine Old World vultures native to India. They are described as a medium-sized vulture with a wingspan of around 7 feet and mostly black or dark brown plumage aside from their white-colored rump, neck-ruff and underwing coverts. Their preferred habitat is open fields and wooded lots, but they will also frequent rubbish dumps near towns and cities, as their diet consists almost

Continued on Page 7

If unsure, it might be best to have the property surveyed. A written description is vital for a landowner so that you know what to look for as you approach your next turn. Never rely on an unofficial source, such as a realtor or nosey neighbor.

Once all the corners are found, then a boundary line can be marked. These can be easily painted or marked with an axe on trees along the line or on posts that are set along the line to mark the line location. Axe marks are usually two parallel markings facing the property's boundary line. If you are using paint for line marking, either a good latex-based or oil-based paint can be used.

Once you've selected your color (use a single color to mark your boundaries), you're ready to mark the boundary lines. Always paint the side of the tree facing the boundary line. Common custom is to paint a bar along the tree that is about 3 inches wide at 4½ feet from the base of the tree.

If a tree is located directly in the path of the line, it is marked with a vertical bar on the side of the tree the line enters. Another marking is made on the opposite side of the tree where the line exits. This is called a fore and aft marking. Portions of the boundary line without trees or only small trees may need to have posts installed in the line to make the location more visible. When marking your line, the distance will fluctuate with the topography and thickness of undergrowth in the area. One guideline is making sure you can see from mark to mark within your vision line. Time and the environment will eventually wear any kind of markings down, so re-painting of marks is key to maintaining integrity of property line marking.



A marked boundary line. Photo by Michael Blazier, LSU AgCenter.

Remember to preserve lines quickly after a survey for the best benefit and least expense. This is just a short overview of property and boundary line management. Discuss any difficult issues that may affect your land with a professional forestry consultant, licensed surveyor or, possibly, a lawyer. Creating and

maintaining property lines will be an asset that can generate an increase in value to property owners. So, make a New Year's resolution to get out, walk more, see nature and check those boundary lines.

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exclusively of carrion. Similar to many raptors, the white-rumped vulture is considered monogamous and will typically stay with its chosen mate for life, which can be 10 to 20 years.

When “The Jungle Book” was filmed, the white-rumped vulture was one of the most abundant large birds of prey in the world. However, since the mid-20th century, the species has experienced severe population declines because of hunting, loss of large ungulate populations and increased removal of carcasses from the landscape, and poisoning from diclofenac, a veterinary drug given to livestock that causes renal failure in scavenging birds. The species is now considered critically endangered, and there are on-going efforts to conserve the white-rumped vulture, as well as other vulture species, in India and Southeast Asia.

Most of us will never see a white-rumped vulture in the wild, but we are lucky to have two species of vultures in Louisiana with similar characteristics, behavior and habitat requirements as their animated counterparts and their Southeast Asian cousin. These local vultures are the turkey vulture and the black vulture. The turkey vulture is a large, long-winged bird with blackish-brown plumage, a red unfeathered head and a hooked ivory bill. Black vultures are similar in appearance but have sooty black plumage, a bare black head and a black bill. Both turkey and black vultures are large, with wingspans generally between 4½ and 6 feet. The easiest way to tell the difference between turkey and black vultures in flight is to look at their wings. Turkey vultures typically fly with their wings set in a V shape and, from underneath, their flight feathers appear silver gray, giving them a two-toned appearance. Black vultures have broad wings with silvery patches



Turkey vulture.

on their wingtips and short tails that do not extend beyond their toes.

Turkey vultures are the most widely distributed vulture species in the world. Their breeding range extends from southern Canada to southernmost South America; however, in the U.S., black vultures are more numerous. Similar to the white-rumped vulture, turkey and black vultures are scavengers. However, turkey vultures have a better sense of smell, so black vultures often follow turkey vultures to fresh carrion. Unlike their musical animated counterparts, vultures lack a voice box (called a syrinx in birds), so they can't sing you a song when you're down on your luck. But they can hiss, grunt, stomp and make loud noises with their wings, which they'll do to deter potential predators and while feeding. Despite their appearance, vultures have no real incentive to harm humans and typically fly off when approached. As Buzzie laments, they may look a bit shabby, but they've got hearts ... or at least a healthy sense of fear.

In the U.S., turkey and black vultures prefer mixed farmland and forest, but they have adapted well to life with humans and can be found almost anywhere. Like Buzzie, Flaps, Ziggy

and Dizzy, both turkey vultures and black vultures are highly social and may roost in groups that range in size from a few birds to a few thousand birds. Their roosting habitat is usually large dead trees, but they will sometimes nest in caves or on rocky outcroppings. Depending on the size of the group, vultures can damage roost trees given their highly acidic feces. But their benefits certainly outweigh the costs. Just think of all rotting carcasses that would be lying around, especially along roadways, if we didn't have turkey and black vultures in Louisiana! In addition, vultures prevent the spread of disease by consuming and killing deadly bacteria as they digest food in their highly acidic stomachs. How cool is that!

Vultures are a fascinating and invaluable species anywhere they occur, and we hope this article has piqued your interest to learn more. Stay tuned for the next installment, and contact me at amlong@agcenter.lsu.edu if you have a specific request for a comparison between a cartoon character and its real-life counterpart!

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