

THE OZARK HIGHLANDS PINE-OAK WOODLAND RESTORATION PARTNERSHIP

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ABSTRACT.—A partnership of more than 20 state, federal, and nongovernmental organizations has been formed to pursue and promote restoration of Shortleaf Pine-Oak Woodland ecosystems throughout the Ozark Highlands. This paper provides a brief overview of the partnership, its goals and strategies, partner organizations, and current activities.

INTRODUCTION

Shortleaf pine and shortleaf pine-oak woodlands once covered millions of acres in the Ozark Highlands and Boston Mountains of southern Missouri and northern Arkansas. Wholesale logging around the turn of the century and subsequent fire suppression has significantly reduced the acreage and quality of this ecosystem throughout the region. The Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategies in both Missouri and Arkansas recognize this ecosystem and the numerous species it supports as a target for restoration efforts. Significant interest and activity surrounds shortleaf pine-oak woodland restoration throughout the region on state, federal and private lands.

Obstacles to successful region-wide restoration of this system are many. Principle among these obstacles is a lack of manpower and dollars to adequately carry out the management, including thinning, commercial harvest and prescribed fire. In addition, creating markets and management techniques that allow harvest and utilization of small or sub-standard trees in the restoration process is also a challenge. Other challenges include inventory and monitoring, and the development of educational materials.

PARTNERSHIP GOALS AND STRATEGIES

The Ozark Highlands Shortleaf Pine-Oak Woodland Restoration Partnership is a consortium of state, federal, and nongovernmental organizations dedicated to the region-wide restoration of shortleaf pine-oak woodlands.

The goal of this partnership is to promote the development of a network of restored shortleaf pine-oak woodlands throughout the Ozarks at scales suitable to support populations of the numerous species it supports.

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Principle strategies include:

1. Identify and map potential restoration sites throughout the region
2. Seek grants to support restoration activities
3. Develop sustainable harvest techniques that allow economically viable thinning and commercial harvest
4. Promote markets for small-diameter and substandard materials resulting from restoration activities
5. Promote markets for commercial pine sawlogs
6. Develop standard monitoring protocols, especially for target wildlife species
7. Develop and disseminate educational materials
8. Share information among partners

INITIAL PROJECT PARTNERS

The partnership is currently composed of 24 state, federal, and nongovernmental organizations. The cumulative knowledge and experience of the partners has established a foundation upon which the restoration of these valuable ecosystems can proceed.

Missouri

Missouri Chapter – The Nature Conservancy
Missouri Audubon
Pioneer Forest
Mark Twain National Forest
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Ozark National Scenic Riverways
Missouri Department of Natural Resources
Missouri Department of Conservation
Eastern Ozark Forest Consortium
Missouri Chapter National Wild Turkey Federation
American Bird Conservancy

Arkansas

Arkansas Chapter – The Nature Conservancy

Arkansas Audubon

Ozark National Forest

USDA Southern Research Station

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Natural Resource Conservation Service

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Buffalo National Scenic Riverways

Arkansas State Parks

Arkansas Game and Fish Commission

Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission

Arkansas Chapter Quail Unlimited

Arkansas Chapter National Wild Turkey Federation

In addition to providing the land base, these partners will provide individual commitment to restoring pine oak woodlands and associated habitats through ongoing annual programs tied to comprehensive long range management plans. These partners will also provide the tools and technical experience essential for success. In summary, partners and plans are in place to make this project a success while making the most efficient use of funding.

CURRENT AND FUTURE ACTIVITIES

Thirty-four pine-oak woodland restoration sites, encompassing more than 230,000 acres, were identified by the partnership at its first meeting (Fig. 1). A dozen sites were included in a grant request to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation for 2006 restoration activities on more than 6500 acres. The partnership was awarded a \$100,000 grant in August 2006. In addition to initiating management, the funds will be used to create an informational brochure and to host field tours.

The partnership is having its second annual meeting in conjunction with this symposium. We plan to pursue additional grants to continue restoration activities. We also hope to fund an economic analysis of restoration benefits and a field demonstration of various alternative harvest techniques.

If you are interested in participating in the Ozark Highlands Pine-Oak Restoration Partnership, please contact the author (TN).

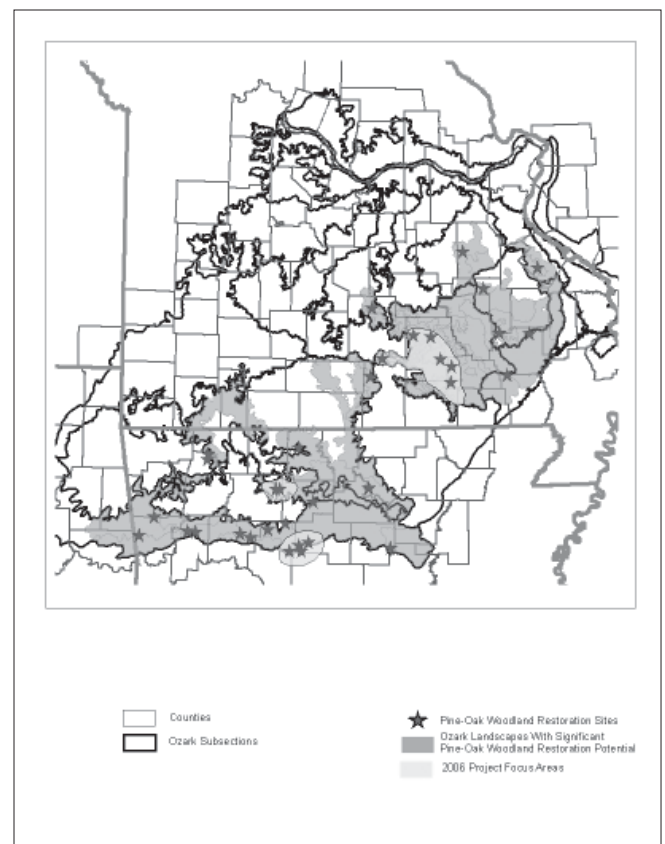


Figure 1.—Ozark highlands pine-oak woodland restoration sites.