

# WOODS 'N WATER™

FEBRUARY 2023

45TH YEAR 7TH ISSUE

**\$3.99**

**Spring  
Gobbler  
Preview**


**Anglers Reel  
in Records**

**Real  
Estate  
Listings**

**Fishing  
Reports**







**THE KOHLER CHRONICLES:**

Advice & Anecdotes from a Third-Generation Land Broker

by Jon Kohler, JD  
Broker / Partner

**JON KOHLER & ASSOCIATES**

# Taking Root

God created this world, but he gave mankind dominion over it.

When it comes to harvesting timber and putting this natural resource to use, this is one area those of us in North Florida and South Georgia know a lot about, both good and bad.

When I look at land, the very first thing I do is look at the timber for clues on how this land was cared for in the past. I would love to have seen unbroken stands of virgin cypress, hardwood and pine.

It's been estimated that at one time there were 90 million acres of longleaf and wiregrass stretching across the coastal plain. I've seen old pictures of Taylor, Madison and Wakulla counties in Florida, and it's hard to imagine the size of the trees that once grew there – and really not that long ago.

Today, the largest remaining contiguous tract of virgin longleaf left in the world is on Greenwood Plantation, just west of Thomasville, Georgia. We had

the honor of brokering its sale and really got to know this 1,200-acre natural cathedral. Thankfully, we sold it to one of America's leading conservationists who happened to also own the heavily researched Wade Tract, which was the second largest virgin longleaf forest.

Putting aside the conquistadors' vain search for gold, the most important resource from the "New World" was actually its timber. That's just not as sexy to talk about in history books.

What few know is early on the live oak was the most desired species! It's hard to imagine that live oaks, which have zero commercial value today, were viewed as the most valuable tree.

Today, less than one-half of 1% of the virgin hardwood forests east of the Mississippi are left. Some of it is in properties in North Florida we've worked on. There, the live oaks grow straight as any saw log and look nothing like the sprawling quintessential backdrop of today's South.



"AS WITH SO MANY OF THE GREAT GOD-GIVEN THINGS OF THIS WORLD, tending to our forests starts with individuals who have passion and a desire to make things better," said Jon Kohler (pictured above and right).



The live oak is one of nature's hardest woods, making it ideal for shipbuilding, which was paramount during colonial times. It was a strategic military asset our forefathers revered. In fact, one of the first acts of conservation performed by our fledgling country was to allocate \$200,000 to purchase reserves of live oaks along the South Carolina and Georgia coastlines.

In 1799, John Jay, one of our Founding Fathers and first Chief Justice, convinced Congress that ship timbers and masts would become scarce unless measures were taken to prevent waste and preserve existing supplies. Congress then authorized President John Adams, our country's second president, \$200,000 for the project. That's \$4,825,967 in today's dollars!

To America, its first major export, timber – which was used for ship masts, staves, clapboards and shingles – was hugely valuable. I never realized it had so much strategic importance until learning that Britain, during colonial rule, tried to lay claim to all white pine on American soil for its Royal Navy – an early point of contention between colonists and the crown.

That would be one of Britain's first

mistakes – taking soft northern white pine for its ships. Meanwhile, the Americans used live oak and longleaf pine and built one of the most successful and famous battleships in the history of the world: the U.S.S. Constitution. Nicknamed "Old Ironsides," cannonballs bounced off her sides. She is the world's oldest ship still afloat. Essentially, in her heyday during the War of 1812, she was like the first nuclear aircraft carrier, helping to secure American interests worldwide. She's still floating in Boston Harbor, and as a young boy, I toured it. The secret of "Old Ironsides" came from Southern live oak and longleaf pine – and we in the South had the only source of it.

It's a growing consciousness of conservation that things of value are worth saving. Conservation organizations, such as The Boone & Crockett Club, began to form. At the heart of this movement is the desire to protect, pre-

(Continued on page 10)

**TURNER'S FEED & SEED**  
Your Authorized FRM Dealer!

**STIHL® SALES & SERVICE**

**Fresh Spring Seeds & Plants**  
Seed Potatoes

**eXmark DEALER**  
Service & Repair

1114 S. Jefferson St. • Perry, FL  
850-584-2068

Find us on: [facebook.](https://www.facebook.com/turnersfeedandseed)

**BORDCO DEADHEAD**

850-759-2326  
[BordCoDeadhead.com](http://BordCoDeadhead.com)

- Deadhead Pecky & Clear Cypress
- Deadhead Heart Pine
- Large Slabs, Mantles and Countertops
- Super Wide Lumber
- 96-Inch Sawmill and Surfacers Service
- and So Much More!



# 'I look at it like a blank canvas'

(Continued from page 8)

serve and thoughtfully utilize our American forests. What better way to care for and pay homage to the land God has given mankind dominion over?

That wildlife belongs to all citizens is a singularly American concept. In the South, we take that one step further with our great admiration for our own land and our drive to preserve and improve upon its heritage.

While forestry today has the same goals as yesteryear, the profession has a much-updated look. There are many, many more trees now than at our country's founding.

They just aren't as large or as old. American ingenuity and technology allow for an even greater ability to meet those seemingly incongruent goals of utilizing forests for livelihood while keeping them intact for future generations to explore and enjoy.

Our own Cole Schwab is a third-generation forester based out of Taylor County. Cole's family business, M.A. Rigoni, has provided forestry services to landowners since 1960. In that time, Cole and his family have seen forestry tools change from hand saws and chain saws to whole tree chippers.

"In my grandfather's early days,

they were dragging one to two trees out at a time – on a good day. Now, we're looking at 15 semi-loads per day to just break even," said Cole, JKA Sales Associate and timber buyer for M.A. Rigoni.

M.A. Rigoni was the first to bring whole tree chipping to our area, and this process has revolutionized how landowners can manage and utilize their property. Essentially, the whole tree chipping allows landowners to open up areas that were previously inaccessible, thereby creating more opportunities for recreation, enjoyment and finding value in the land.

A few years ago, Tall Timbers reported quail hunting as having a \$92.5 million economic impact on Thomas County, supporting nearly 800 jobs and \$41 million in labor. Tall Timber's analysis of Albany regional quail hunting properties shows an economic impact of over \$145 million.

You see, it's not just the landowner that benefits from changing technology and modernization in the forestry field. Yes, the landowner can thin his trees and sell them – and then reinvest in his land by burning, creating roads and building infrastructure. All of this impacts the surrounding economy.

"So many local folks are impacted

by the timber industry," Cole said. "It has a large reach that many don't realize. And, as far as land management goes, properly thinning and harvesting timber provides capital for conservation. It's really a wonderful conservation tool, too."

At Jon Kohler & Associates, the quail plantation and landowners we work with recognize the dual-purpose forests play in land investment.

Tim Shirah is a long-time friend and client of Jon Kohler & Associates. He is considered a visionary in the land management field. Tim has been revitalizing plantations in Georgia for over 30 years. He has personally brought back to life 12 properties, including such famed locations as Smoking Gun and Rio Piedra Plantations.

"When fortunate enough to start work on a new place, I look at it like a blank canvas and start sketching the final version in my mind," Tim said. "Then, right to the end, I'm always touching up that final picture. I'm doing whatever the land gives me."

Born and raised as a farmer, Tim comes from generations of family that made their income off the land. In a way, he always wanted to give back. Properly managed forestry techniques greatly assist him in achieving his dream.

On many of the 12 properties he has revitalized, he found that proper thinning is the first step in bolstering a piece of land. Doing so provides the right balance of cover, a first step for healthy and abundant wildlife. He then takes funds from the cut timber and uses it to improve the property in other ways, such as building quality roads and solid infrastructure.

"For every \$1 spent on a property, I will get \$2-3 back in investment," Tim said.

This return on investment is no surprise to us at Jon Kohler & Associates. It makes sense that carefully-cultivated

land provides a greater return. We've found, with our years of experience, that prescribed fire use alone has a significant impact on land values – as much as a \$1,200 per acre difference.

The key is careful, thoughtful cultivation. One area Tim will not cut is hardwoods.

"I did that once as part of a land acquisition deal," he said. "Afterward, the area looked like a bomb went off. By the following year, I couldn't even walk through it. Once a hardwood is cut, you'll never see it come back in your lifetime or the next."

Our own Walter Hatchett, Jon Kohler & Associates agent and timber specialist with over 30 years of land management experience himself, couldn't agree more.

"Cutting hardwoods on a recreational property can take it from a plus 10 to a negative 10. Be careful where you get advice. In land management, the long game is always the better bet," Walter said.

Jon Kohler & Associates specializes in advising landowners of high-quality recreational land. There's a science and an art to land management. Proper thinning and forestry practices are a large part of that – followed by predator balance and fire.

"On the canvas I create for my properties, timber and hardwoods are the base, the starting point, for the masterpiece I want to create," Tim said.

As with so many of the great God-given things of this world, tending to our forests starts with individuals who have passion and a desire to make things better. In the case of our Southern forests, it's the landowner, like Tim Shirah, that lead the way.

They, along with conscientious foresters like Cole and Walter, will help us serve our dual purpose of enjoying our forest and its fruitfulness.

## Help Wanted • Seeking Full-Time and Part-Time Members

Helping secure the future of our wildlife thru game management and protecting hundreds of thousands of acres in GA and FL.



### 46-YEAR ESTABLISHED BUSINESS SEEKS TEAM MEMBERS



If you like working outdoors from a Polaris Ranger viewing beautiful hunting habitat this opportunity may be ideal for you. We do predator control for timber companies, plantations and private land owners.

We remove coyotes, bobcats, raccoons, beavers and other nesting predators while striving to help land owners and plantations reach their full potential. We work outside in the south Georgia/Florida weather but if you think this is a job for you reach out today for more information.



- Help fawn recruitment
- Improve hunting habitats
- Helping game birds
- No experience required

Experienced Predator Trappers start at \$100/day and up to \$200/day

Email resume: wileycoyote101@hotmail.com or Call 229.472.0632

Proud supporter of these organizations:



## 100% FULL SERVICE PRO SHOP

BLACK RIFLE COFFEE COMPANY

BOWTECH



Three Rivers  
Outdoors & Archery



FEATURING BOWS BY:  
Bowtech, Athens, Elite,  
Obsession, & Many More!

ACCESSORIES FROM:  
CBE, Trufire, Spot Hogg, Etc.

We're a Licensed FFL Dealer

Open Tues-Fri: 10-7  
Sat: 9-5 • Sun: 10-4

17044 Ayers Rd.  
Brooksville • 352-467-8179

Stop in for a FREE Cup of Black Rifle Coffee (Exclusive Dealer)

