

Entry for Search for Excellence (max 1200 words):

Educational Objectives:

Master Wildlifer is a course designed for landowners, land managers, and wildlife enthusiasts who are interested in integrating wildlife considerations into their current land use and management activities. Practicing land managers will find the course invaluable in highlighting alternative management approaches for wildlife in forest and farm settings. The primary objectives of Master Wildlifer were to provide land owners with an improved understanding of wildlife management and to foster their ability to effectively manage wildlife populations on their properties. In order to meet the primary objectives educational materials were developed to cover wildlife biology, ecology, habitat management, and funding sources for implementation of management practices. The overall goal of the program was for participants to be able to develop and implement a quality wildlife management plan for the properties they manage.

Program Activities:

The 2018 Master Wildlifer program was a seven-week series held in Greenville, SC each Tuesday from 6-9pm. During each session a variety of topics were presented through the use of both PowerPoint and printed materials. Each session had an overall theme including: Incorporating Wildlife Practices into Managed Timberlands, Wildlife Management in Non-Commercial Timberlands, The Role of Disturbance in Wildlife Habitat Management, Wildlife Plantings: The Complete Story, Management of Aquatic Resources, Management of Predators and Destructive Wildlife, and Estate and Financial Considerations for the Forest Landowner. Sessions included a total of 23 presentations. Following classroom sessions, a field day was held to showcase many of the management practices discussed in the course. The field day allowed participants to see results of management practices first hand. Additionally, field day participants were able to discuss the implementation of showcased management practices with the instructors and the property owner. This allowed for a clear understanding of what is truly involved in implementation of practices including the property owner's actual experience with each practice at the location.

Program participants were also eligible to receive 6 hours of Pesticide Applicator Continuing Education Credits, as well as 21 hours Continuing Forester Education Credits.

Teaching Methods:

Master Wildlifer was delivered primarily in a classroom setting with an informal lecture style, whereby participants were encouraged to bring discussion into each presentation. Presenters developed power point presentations to lead their lecture. Participants were provided with a

notebook containing each presentation with notes pages. Notebooks also contained all supplemental reading materials supplied by presenters. Topics were covered thoroughly, and provided both theoretical and applied information derived from scientific investigations, case studies and real world experiences. Developers of the revived Master Wildlifer program carefully considered each topic and analyzed all potential options for presenters. Speakers were selected based on their subject area expertise and their ability communicate and transfer their knowledge to an audience. The final roster of speakers included:

Dr. Cory Heaton (Clemson University), TJ Savereno (Clemson Cooperative Extension), Susan Sullivan (SCDNR), Bernt Nelson (Clemson Cooperative Extension), Dr. Greg Yarrow (Clemson University), Mike Hook (SCDNR), Ryan Bean (Clemson Cooperative Extension), Mallory Dailey (Clemson Cooperative Extension), Marion Barnes (Clemson Cooperative Extension), Dr. Mike Marshall (Clemson University), Dr. Kyle Barrett (Clemson University), Noel Myers (USDA APHIS WS), Jay Butfiloski (SCDNR), Ken Wingate (Sweeny, Wingate and Barrow, P.A.), and Dr. Adam Kantrovich (Clemson University).

Speakers were invited to attend the field day along with the course participants. The field day consisted of an organized walking tour through an actively managed property. Stops along the walking tour were selected to showcase: differences in management activities, typical responses to management activities, best management practices, identification of plants with wildlife value, identification of non-native invasive species, and concepts/practices covered in the classroom sessions. Presenters discussed relevant topics at each stop along the tour. Participants were able to interject with their thoughts, comments, and questions throughout the tour.

Results, Impact, and Evaluation Method:

A total of 61 land owners/managers participated in the 2018 Master Wildlifer program. Following the course, participants were provided with a program evaluation survey. The evaluation survey was designed to gather information on program value, instructor effectiveness, economics, knowledge gained, acres managed, interest in advanced courses, demographics, and overall opinion and suggestions for the program. We received 37 evaluations back for a 60.7% return rate. The 37 respondents were responsible for management of 21,424 acres of land in SC. Based on survey response, 100% of participants reported their knowledge of wildlife management and ability to implement wildlife management practices improved as a result of this course. Participants were asked economical questions related to the amount of money they would save and/or earn with their management activities as a result of attending this course. Responses indicate participants stand to save \$65,000 - \$190,000 on their management activities and potentially increase earnings by \$28,000 - \$95,000 as a result of attending the 2018 Master Wildlifer program.

Abstract for “Search for Excellence” (max 350 words):

Master Wildlifer is a nationally recognized wildlife management educational outreach program originally developed by Dr. Greg Yarrow at Clemson University. The course utilized leading specialists and biologist from numerous organizations to provide advanced level wildlife management education. The course format ensured participants received the latest unbiased science based information, and provided a direct line for conversation between the participants and the experts. Initially the course was held before a live audience as well as being broadcast live to satellite host sites throughout the Southeastern US. Eventually the program was adapted to an online version. Reduced participation following the introduction of the online version led to Master Wildlifer not being offered in SC from 2012 through 2017. Other land grant universities developed their own Master Wildlifer programs during this period.

During the absence of Master Wildlifer many requests were received for this program to be revived, however staffing and budget restraints made this difficult. In late 2017, several Clemson Cooperative Extension agents came together to rebuild the program. A location in Greenville, SC was chosen and a schedule set for seven sessions to take place starting in January and finishing the end of February 2018. Specialists from several state and federal agencies were called upon to provide content. These partners included SC Department of Natural Resources, SC Forestry Commission, USDA APHIS WS, Clemson University, and Clemson Cooperative Extension.

The 2018 program met maximum registration with 61 participants. Program evaluations were provided to each participants at the completion of the final session. 60.7% of participants responded to evaluation surveys. Survey responses indicated 100% of participants gained knowledge from attending the program. Participants were responsible for the management of 21,424 acres in SC. Respondents indicated information presented during the program would allow them to greatly reduce costs associated with management activities on the properties they manage. Total reported savings were in the range of \$65,000 to \$190,000. Additionally, participants indicated they expected to increase income on the properties they manage by \$1,000 - \$10,000 with a total reported income increase of \$28,000 to \$95,000.