

Project Portfolio

Operation Oak



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Grant Source: USDA NRCS

BACKGROUND

Oak stands throughout the Southeast are aging and being replaced by light-seeded hardwoods such as maple and sweetgum. In the Midwest thousands of acres of woodlands were converted to agriculture during the 1800's. The loss of oak in the forest and along riparian corridors has an adverse impact on the wildlife species that depend on the acorns as a primary food source, on water quality and riparian habitat and on the local economy (timber sales). Currently, the majority of hardwoods come from natural regeneration rather than tree planting. However, the professional forester community is concerned about the loss of genetic quality in the remaining hardwood forests. Many believe that trees that are currently being managed for future timber harvest do not have the same desirable traits for straightness and vigor and that past forest harvest practices of continually taking the "best" trees may have resulted in loss of genetic quality. Water quality and riparian corridor restoration has also become one of the most important habitat enhancement activities.

LOCATION

Southeast/Midwest Regions - United States

ISSUES BEING ADDRESS

Hardwoods benefit wildlife in many ways. The mast of oak trees is well known for its value to wildlife. However, acorn production can be minimal in oak stands that are less than 20 years old, and peak acorn production normally occurs in stands that are between 40 and 100 years old. For the landowner wanting to return pastures or agricultural cropland back to hardwood forest to benefit wildlife, this is a long time to wait. By using select oaks that will produce acorns in a shorter time, these oak stands established under the Operation Oak program will help supply the needed food source to wildlife in a much quicker time.

Restoring riparian habitat by planting quality hardwoods will also have a tremendous impact on wildlife and water quality. Restoring

hardwoods along streams and other low-lying areas will benefit wildlife not only by providing additional food, but also by providing important travel corridors and cover areas.

OBJECTIVES

To significantly improve and expand the Operation Oak habitat program by planting 163,000 native oak seedlings on private land throughout the Southeast/Midwest region of the United States.

PARTNERS

NWTF
Natural Resources Conservation Service

TIMEFRAME

Project Start Date: September 2008
Project End Date: March 2010

NWTF PROJECT STAFF

Project Manager: Greg Boozer
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TOTAL GRANT AMOUNT

\$ 286,202