

ORANGE WATER AND SEWER AUTHORITY
SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY MANAGEMENT PROGRAM
June 2017

PURPOSE: To provide information about OWASA's plans and efforts to sustainably manage about 2,600 acres of OWASA-owned forest land, most of which is in Orange County.

BACKGROUND: In accord with the Federal permit issued for the Cane Creek Reservoir, OWASA is required to implement the NC Wildlife Resources Commission's (WRC's) plan for managing the forest resources on our 490-acre Cane Creek Reservoir Mitigation Tract. The WRC prepared a forestry management plan for the tract in 2009. Our forestry management consulting expert, True North Forest Management Services, subsequently developed an approach and schedule for implementing the WRC plan, which was approved by the WRC and then by the OWASA Board on March 25, 2010.

STATUS: Active management of the forest resources on the Mitigation Tract began in Fall 2010. In October-November 2010, about 25 acres of that tract were clearcut, and about 25 acres of upland hardwood forest were thinned (lower quality trees were removed and the higher quality trees were left). The clearcut area was replanted in loblolly pines (on 10'x10' spacing) in February 2011. An access road and stream crossing were installed in 2013 to implement the WRC plan on the south side of the Mitigation Tract. In August-November 2014, approximately 34 acres of pine were clearcut over ten small areas; the largest clearcut area was 8 acres. In addition approximately 200 acres of forest were thinned, and the highest quality trees were left standing. In 2015, contractors reseeded the logging roads and decks to prevent erosion and maintain water quality (a logging deck is a cleared area where logs are temporarily stored before they are loaded on trucks and for logging equipment to turn around). In 2016, the areas clearcut in 2014 were replanted.

Some minor management work will continue on the property as needed. For example, a prescribed controlled burn during spring 2018 in the first Hardwood Improvement Cut that was completed in 2010. As was planned, natural hardwood regeneration has occurred beneath the overstory of this thinned stand near the entrance to the property, but it is a mix of many different hardwood and some pine species. The purpose of the understory burn is to promote the development and survival of more oak and hickory seedlings. The controlled burn will knock back the faster growing species such as yellow poplar, red maple, pine and sweetgum in favor of the more fire-resistant, slower growing oak and hickory seedlings. Without the prescribed burn, most of the existing oak and hickory seedlings will be crowded and shaded out by other species. Prescribed fire will help tip the scales in favor of oak and hickory seedlings establishing prominence in the understory. This management practice is done by others, including the NC Botanical Garden and Duke Forest.

Staff presented [information](#) on OWASA's lands to the Board of Directors in May 2017. In response to that discussion, staff will prepare a Community Engagement Plan by June 2018 for review by the Board of Directors to finalize forest management plans on other OWASA land and implement those plans after a community engagement process.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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<http://www.owasa.org/whatwedo/ForestManagementPlan.aspx>