

A Seemingly Endless Sea of Longleaf Pine Stumps

(bolded words in text indicate key words and concepts)

Student Information:

It's hard to believe that in as little as 100 years ago, the South changed from an endless longleaf pine forest to a sea of stumps as far as the eye could see. However, by the early 1900's many areas of the South began to look much like this picture. Logging companies of that time cut nearly every tree in sight and wild pigs ate most young longleaf pine seedlings that would have made the next forest.

Teacher Information:

The drama of the longleaf ecosystem is a classic example of **over consumption** with little regard to **sustainability**-a scene that was played out in many forests across North America. In 1900, Dr. Carl Schneck, head of the Forestry Division of the U.S. Department of Agriculture preached that the "**virgin forests** in which the old and decrepit trees predominate is unproductive. . .consequently the virgin forests should fall and must fall." And fall they did. Little regard was given to conservation of the longleaf pine forest at the time. The idea was simply "**cut out and get out**".

This picture depicts the fate of many longleaf pine forests after the period of mass logging. With seed sources cut, cattlemen burning during a young longleaf pine's most vulnerable period, and feral pigs feasting unchecked on longleaf pine seedlings, large areas of the South became devoid of any trees.

Like the tree itself, the stumps of these cutout longleaf pines were extremely flammable--earning them the nickname of "**lightwood**" or "lighter wood" stumps (even a wet stump could be ignited). The reason for this flammability of these **stumps**, was due to a high concentration of **rosin**. Already across much of the longleaf pine range the tapping of living longleaf pine trees for rosin was a huge economic enterprise. To take advantage of the millions of acres of rosin rich stumps, methods were devised to distill stumps into rosin and spirits of turpentine products (called "**stump woodin**"). Smaller stumps were laboriously dug out by hand or mule and transported to a distillery by oxen drawn wagons. The grip of more stubborn stumps was loosened with dynamite. Slowly, over time, most of these stumps were removed. Today only a handful of companies make a living from stump wooding.

Key Words and Concepts: cut out and get out, lightwood, over consumption, rosin, stump, stump wooding, sustainable forestry, virgin forest.