

CLASSIC ARTICLE

INTRODUCTION TO H.H. CHAPMAN'S ARTICLE

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When I moved to the south in 1992, one of the first articles I read regarding the ecological role of fire in southern forests was H.H. Chapman's "Is the Longleaf Type a Climax?" from the 1932 volume of *Ecology*. Herman Haupt Chapman followed his short tenure as a forest assistant under Gifford Pinchot with a long career on the faculty in the Yale University School of Forestry. Unlike others who were voicing concerns regarding the attempts to stop periodic burning in the southern forests, Chapman's research was so respected that it gave him an effective voice for those opposed to fire exclusion in this region. Between 1909 and the early 1940s, he published over two dozen articles on southern forests and fire, with a special focus on the role of fire in the ecology of longleaf pine. His recommendation of burning on a three year rotation in Bulletin 16 of the Yale University School of Forestry linked the role of fire to hardwood control, control of brown spot disease, reduction of fuel loads and promotion of longleaf pine regeneration.

To me, the value of his 1932 article is the linkage of fire ecology to the concept of succession and climax forest communities. The comparison of longleaf pine, and the parameters that created the environmental equilibrium provided by recurring fire, with northern hardwood forest conditions is especially strong. While there have been many since then who have promoted fire as a management tool for longleaf pine, as well as scores of those who have researched the role of fire in longleaf pine ecology, none have had to work under the political and social pressures as Chapman. For his long-time efforts to promote fire in southern pine forests, Chapman has been called "father of controlled burning for silvicultural purposes."