



State and Private Forestry Fact Sheet

Arkansas 2022



Investment in State's Cooperative Programs

Program	FY 2021 Final
Community Forestry and Open Space	\$0
Cooperative Lands - Forest Health Management	\$363,601
Forest Legacy	\$2,050,000
Forest Stewardship	\$183,748
Landscape Scale Restoration	\$60,000
State Fire Assistance	\$1,375,085
Urban and Community Forestry	\$283,197
Volunteer Fire Assistance	\$396,826
Total	\$4,712,457

NOTE: This funding is for all entities within the state, not just the State Forester's office.

The Arkansas Department of Agriculture – Forestry Division (formerly the Arkansas Forestry Commission, hereafter, The Forestry Division) administers the state's cooperative forestry programs. The Forestry Division has 60 work centers that operate in all 75 counties of the state. Employees provide assistance across the state's 19 million acres of forests. The Forestry Division facilitates forest management decisions for non-industrial private landowners. According to timber harvest removals data, Arkansas is consistently ranked as a top ten state for total wood fiber production, valued at over \$6.5 billion. However, as a percentage of the state total GDP, Arkansas's state economy is the third most forestry-dependent economy in the nation.

Program Goals

- The cooperative programs are administered and implemented through a partnership between the State of Arkansas, the USDA Forest Service and many other private and government entities. These programs promote the health and productivity of forestlands and rural communities.
- The overarching goal is to maintain or improve the health, ecological viability, and economic productivity of urban and rural forests, as well as to protect the forests and citizens of the state. State implemented forestry programs leverage cost efficiencies through the use of partnerships in program delivery, increase forestland value and resiliency, and do so in a voluntary and non-regulatory manner.

Key Issues

- Land use changes and conversion to non-forest condition continue to complicate forest management considerations. Maintaining healthy watersheds is a priority to protect drinking water quality.
- Growing urbanization removes forests. An opportunity exists to provide education and outreach about the benefits of urban forests.
- The demographic of the non-industrial forest landowner is changing and requires new approaches to encourage active forest management.
- Decreasing timber markets has resulted in an aging timber resource and a lack of utilization of small diameter trees. In addition, forests are increasingly susceptible to health and fire concerns due to the unbalanced growth vs removal ratios.

Forest Facts and Accomplishments

Selected Facts	Value	FY 2021 Accomplishments	Value
Population	2,915,918	Landowners Receiving Educational or Technical Assistance	2,972
Acres of Forest Land	18,926,298	Acres Covered by New or Revised Forest Stewardship Plans	22,210
Acres of Nonindustrial Private Forest Land	10,983,000	Acres in Important Forest Resource Areas Covered by New or Revised Stewardship Plans	9,638
Number of NIPF Landowners	345,000	Volunteer Fire Departments Assisted	153
Acres of Federal Land Under State Fire Protection	3,171,500	State Fire Communities Assisted	347
Acres of Private Land Under State Fire Protection	15,247,900	Coop Forest Health Acres Protected	1,500
Number of Rural Fire Departments	611	Forest Legacy Project Acquisitions	580
Cities and Towns	502	Communities Provided Urban Forestry Program Assistance	53
Forest Based Employment	27,702	Population Living in Communities Provided Urban Forestry Program Assistance	1,145,256
Economic Impact of Forestry (by rank)	3	Urban Forestry Volunteer Assistance	10,000
State Forestry Budget (All Sources)	28,317,293		

Program Highlights

Cooperative Fire Protection

The annual trainings that the Forestry Division normally participates in, like the Arkansas River Valley Wildland Fire Academy and Prescribed Fire as a Management Tool, were held virtually due to the COVID 19 Pandemic. Training continued to be accomplished within the Division. Trainings like Basic Fire, Chainsaw, and Dozer were conducted in house while adhering to CDC social distancing guidelines. This allowed us to meet the immediate needs of Division personnel and protect the health of students and instructors. The Division owns 13 fixed wing aircraft that are centrally located at the Malvern Municipal Airport. Eleven aircraft are single engine airplanes which are used primarily for fire detection. These aircraft are also used for forestry related surveys such as insect/disease infestation and storm damage. Two Division aircraft are twin engine aircraft that are used primarily for an Air Attack platform that flies with the Single Engine Air Tankers. With the help of grant funds digital radios were purchased and have been programmed and installed in each aircraft. The Division's training instructors conducted 84 eight-hour Wildland Fire Suppression Training classes for 1,295 firefighters representing 561 fire departments. The Federal Excess Personnel Property and DOD Fire Fighter Program assisted Arkansas fire departments by acquiring and placing 99 pieces of firefighting equipment into service with a total original acquisition cost of \$5,489,913.72. There were 9 interest-free loans approved for volunteer fire departments to purchase firefighting equipment totaling \$106,662.12. The Volunteer Fire Assistance grant was also used to award 96 Wildfire Suppression Kits to rural volunteer fire departments at a value of \$3,100 each. Arkansas continues to be one of the top national participants in the Firewise USA program with 74 recognized sites throughout the state.

Forest Health Protection

The Forestry Division monitors for landscape-scale forest disturbances such as bark beetles and pine needle diseases. In 2021, an outbreak of needlecast fungal infections and Ips bark beetles was documented across the state; in response, survey data and recommendations were shared with land managers. No southern pine beetle (SPB) activity was detected by either ground or aerial surveys in 2021, and 53 SPB were captured in Arkansas during the SPB Prediction Trapping Survey. The Southern Pine Beetle Prevention Program continues to provide cost share incentives to landowners and loggers for practices that reduce risk to pine bark beetles.

Forest Inventory & Analysis

Statewide forest inventory data is regularly used as a source to justify economic development and as a gauge to forest health. Field data from Forest Inventory & Analysis recently indicated that annual gross growth of softwood and hardwood greatly exceeds annual removals. The growth to drain (harvest and

mortality) ratio for softwoods is 1.6, with 11.5 million more tons of growth over drain. In the same way, the growth to drain ratio for hardwoods is 2.5, with 10.5 million more tons of growth over removal. This trend can be viewed as an opportunity for the utilization of timber and biomass in new markets.

Forest Legacy

In 2021, the Forestry Division acquired 282.178 acres in the Hot Springs Recharge Area. This project area, which is matched in part by funding from the Arkansas Natural and Cultural Resources Council, now totals 2,040.3 acres and will become a new state forest managed by the Forestry Division. Arkansas submitted three fee-simple project proposals for the FY 2023 funding request cycle: the Maumelle Water Excellence Phase 2 (2,283 acres), the White River Headwaters Preserve (775 acres), and the Hot Springs Forest (713 acres).

Forest Stewardship

The Forestry Division works with a diverse group of partners and professionals to conserve, protect, and enhance Arkansas's forests through the Forest Stewardship Program. The program functions as a gateway for private landowners to access professional assistance managing their property to fulfill their management objective. Enrolled landowners receive a Forest Stewardship management plan which serves as a roadmap for the landowner to achieve the desired outcome for their property. The Division worked with consulting foresters to write and implement 143 Forest Stewardship Plans on 22,210 acres. Of that acreage, 9,638 acres were priority acres based on Arkansas's Forest Action Plan. There are 308,977 acres of Arkansas forestland currently covered by the Arkansas Forest Stewardship Program, with 117,419 of these acres considered to be in important forest resource areas. A total of 2,332 landowners received assistance through the Stewardship Program. Division also actively participates in a tree improvement cooperative to improve loblolly and shortleaf pine and select oak.

Landowner Assistance

The Forestry Division, in partnership with federal and state governments and private organizations, continued to provide landowner training and assistance, and facilitated implementation of landowner's management plans to ensure forest sustainability. The Forestry Division is a key partner on several equity projects that focus on improving forest management by connecting African American landowners to organized networks of forestry support including federal and state government programs, businesses, and nonprofit conservation, legal, and community development organizations. One such program is called "Keeping It in the Family." The program helps landowners solve and prevent problems of insecure land tenure caused by heirs' property and inadequate estate planning. Insecure title is a major barrier to forestry support programs and forest management.

Urban and Community Forestry

The Forestry Division provides educational, technical and/or financial assistance to Arkansas communities and cities with a combined population of 1,145,256. Five urban forestry grants were awarded for community improvement projects; the cities of Trumann, Conway, and Pine Bluff, the University of Arkansas at Little Rock Public Radio station, and Crooked Creek Conservation District were awarded grants totaling \$26,725, to be met with a 50/50 match by the recipients. Projects included a public radio campaign aimed at educating the public about the benefits of urban and community trees and promoting free seedling giveaways; highway interchange green space improvement; planting of trees in city parks; and a tree planting project utilizing student volunteers who were educated on tree planting, tree care, proper tree maintenance, and streambed restoration. A new hardwood seedling giveaway program called Free Tree Fridays distributed over 4,000 seedlings to residents across the state during 18 events in recognition of Arbor Day.

Contact Information



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