



State and Private Forestry Fact Sheet Florida 2022



Investment in State's Cooperative Programs

Program	FY 2021 Final
Community Forestry and Open Space	\$0
Cooperative Lands - Forest Health Management	\$387,421
Forest Legacy	\$6,600,000
Forest Stewardship	\$157,666
Landscape Scale Restoration	\$10,000
State Fire Assistance	\$1,488,924
Urban and Community Forestry	\$1,106,584
Volunteer Fire Assistance	\$445,326
Total	\$10,195,921

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

Program Goals

- Cooperative programs are administered and implemented through a partnership between the Florida Forest Service (FFS), the USDA Forest Service and many other private and government entities. These programs promote the health and productivity of forestlands and rural economies. Programs emphasize forest sustainability and the production of commodity and amenity values such as wildlife, water quality, and environmental services.
- The overarching goal is to maintain and improve the health of rural and urban forests and related economies as well as to protect the forests and citizens of the state. These programs maximize cost effectiveness through the use of partnerships in program delivery, increase forestland value and sustainability, and do so in a voluntary and non-regulatory manner.

Key Issues

- Florida continues to recover from the unprecedented timber damage caused by Hurricane Michael in October 2018. Due to the severity of damage, FFS crews provided immediate response and are still providing hurricane recovery operations. Over 2.8 million acres of forest were impacted, equating to 1.29 billion dollars in damaged resources and impacting approximately 16,000 private forest landowners. Forest recovery will take years.
- The Timber Recovery Block Grant in partnership with Florida Division of Emergency Management and FFS continued to provide critical funding to forest landowners devastated by Hurricane Michael. To date, FFS Foresters have provided landowner certification for 2,908 eligible applications and over \$169 million dollars have been provided to impacted landowners committed to reforestation.
- The population of Florida continues to have sustained growth. This influx of new residents and subsequent new developments has continued to increase wildland urban interface areas in the state. The increased use of the Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment and the Community Assessor tool and their data shows how the understanding of wildfire potential and the need for mitigation has become more mainstream.
- Prescribed fire in Florida is still a very robust management tool with an average of 2.3 million acres burned each year. Florida has also been providing additional state dollars for prescribed fire enhancements.
- Two items that will affect wildfire activity this upcoming year are the impacted areas of Hurricane Michael and the forecasted onset of La Niña conditions across the state. The amount of vegetation that was brought down after the storm and the amount of the state that was impacted will provide increased fuel for potential wildfires. Much of the increased fuel loading is from large fuels that limit accessibility and the effectiveness of our medium dozers.

- Florida's forests are continually threatened by the introduction and spread of invasive insects, pathogens, and non-native plants. The FFS works closely with partner agencies and organizations to detect new problematic non-native species, monitor their occurrence and impacts, develop and implement management methods, and communicate with the public about these issues.
- Florida's forests overall are sustainable across species and timber products with a statewide sustainability index (ratio of net timber growth to removals) of 2.07, after excluding 10 counties impacted by Hurricane Michael. However, in some counties, especially for pine pulpwood, the sustainability index is below 1.0 (more pulpwood being removed than produced) due to high levels of industrial timber demand for pine pulpwood.
- Annual reforestation acres are about one half of what they were 25 years ago. There is a critical need for increased reforestation, especially incentives for private landowners, as competition from other land uses such as agriculture and urban development continue to impact Florida's forest's continued sustainability.
- A changing forest landowner base challenges FFS in providing the most effective outreach. Efficiency gains in landowner assistance include an innovative social media-based engagement tool, web-based outreach and education activities, the Florida Land Steward website, Land Management Calendar, and a Forest Stewardship & Landscape Scale Management Plan template. These accomplishments are the result of a continued strong partnership between the FFS, USFS, NRCS, FSA, FWC, Tree Farm, UF, NFWF, NWTF
- Rapid urbanization, increased climatic fluctuations and powerful storms have led to decreased urban tree canopy and an increased risk of flooding in many communities. Florida's cities can better manage and restore their urban tree canopy by linking trees to existing programs for community resiliency and by developing an urban forest management plan. Urban Forestry Emergency Plans address potential disaster situations to help communities prepare for and recover from these canopy-altering events.
- FFS partnered with PlanIT Geo, a trees and technology firm, to provide a tree canopy change analysis to 32 communities within the Hurricane Michael impact area. The results of this analysis will help these communities quantify the trees that were lost during Hurricane Michael and focus replanting efforts in places that will have the most beneficial impact and promote the long-term revitalization of the community forest.
- Trees provide key ecosystem services in their communities and urban tree programs advance the concept of sustainability. Trees are an essential resource helping cities become more livable by mitigating urban heat islands, keeping surface water free from pollutants and sediment and providing human health benefits to residents. Urban forest management is critical to restoring and protecting forest systems to maintain tree canopy and water quality.

Forest Facts and Accomplishments

Selected Facts	Value	FY 2021 Accomplishments	Value
Population	18,801,310	Landowners Receiving Educational or Technical Assistance	5,658
Acres of Forest Land	16,970,464	Acres Covered by New or Revised Forest Stewardship Plans	13,518
Acres of Nonindustrial Private Forest Land	9,652,000	Acres in Important Forest Resource Areas Covered by New or Revised Stewardship Plans	5,479
Number of NIPF Landowners	509,000	Volunteer Fire Departments Assisted	60
Acres of Federal Land Under State Fire Protection	0	State Fire Communities Assisted	143
Acres of Private Land Under State Fire Protection	21,214,675	Coop Forest Health Acres Protected	11,000
Number of Rural Fire Departments	525	Forest Legacy Project Acquisitions	3,814
Cities and Towns	411	Communities Provided Urban Forestry Program Assistance	219
Forest Based Employment	124,104	Population Living in Communities Provided Urban Forestry Program Assistance	14,488,057
Economic Impact of Forestry (by rank)	3	Urban Forestry Volunteer Assistance	93,555
State Forestry Budget (All Sources)	105,399,053		

Program Highlights

Cooperative Fire Protection

State Fire Assistance continues to fund and support firefighting resources throughout Florida, including the development of Community Wildfire Protection Plans. The Federal Excess Personal Property and Firefighter Property Programs assist Florida in acquiring and placing fire equipment in rural communities throughout the state. This past year we acquired two firetrucks (valued at \$325,123), three cargo trucks and three pick-up trucks (\$361,605), three trailers (\$42,194), one small boat (\$52,549) and miscellaneous items such as shop tools, generators, compressors, storage lockers, power hand tools and metal (valued at \$837,293). In addition, the FFS administers Volunteer Fire Assistance Program funds to support the fire prevention and protection efforts of rural community fire departments which, this past year, assisted 45 volunteer fire departments with purchasing personal protective equipment (PPE) and other equipment valued at over \$376,937. Through our mitigation and prevention grants, we successfully reduced the hazardous fuel load on over 37,487 acres and delivered 228 programs covering Firewise, wildfire prevention and 294 direct door-to-door contacts on "Ready, Set, Go," and completed three new Community Wildfire Protection Plans. Our number of in-person programs and mitigation projects were severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and resulted in the cancellation of many of our programs. We were able to accomplish some remote presentations in the Fall.

Fire Adapted Communities

The FFS embraces the development of fire adapted communities (FACs) throughout the state that can withstand the otherwise devastating effects of wildfire impacts on communities in the wildland/urban interface (WUI). The concepts of FAC align well with existing local efforts, including the Local Mitigation Strategy, Community Wildfire Protection Plans and Action Plans, and Firewise Communities. The increased use of data from the Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment and the Community Assessor tool is an example of how these concepts are being used to make communities more fire adapted. The FFS also actively partners with our federal cooperators, fire departments, and other local stakeholders to successfully implement wildfire mitigation efforts, such as annual cleanup days, fireline installation and maintenance, and prescribed fire assistance on private, state and federal lands.

Florida Forest Sustainability Report

The State of Florida recognizes the importance of sustainable forest management and the FFS is tracking a statewide sustainability index of Florida's forests. The revised 2017 Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) data indicate that Florida's forests, overall, are sustainable across species and timber products with a statewide sustainability index of 2.07, after excluding 10 counties impacted by Hurricane Michael in October 2018. This indicates twice as much timber growth compared with timber removals.

Florida's BMPs

Silviculture Best Management Practices (BMPs) are forest land management guidelines designed as the minimum standards necessary for protecting and maintaining water quality and wetland ecosystems during forestry activities. Silviculture BMPs were first established in Florida in the mid 1970's and were adopted into Florida Administrative Code in February 2004 (Rule 5I-6). Currently, there are over 5.6 million acres enrolled in the Silviculture BMP program that include 2.76 million privately-owned acres and 2.86 million publicly-owned acres.

Wildlife BMPs: Adopted in October 2014 as Rule 5I-8 of the Florida Administrative Code, the Forestry Wildlife Best Management Practices for State Imperiled Species (WBMPs) were established so that applicants who properly implement WBMPs will no longer be required to obtain a permit authorizing the incidental take of State Imperiled Species during normal, ongoing forestry operations. Also, they will not be subject to any fines or penalties associated with an incidental take. Currently there are nearly 3.7 million acres enrolled in the Wildlife BMP program, 2.43 million acres of which are on privately-owned lands and nearly 1.25 million acres on publicly-owned lands.

Technical assistance for BMPs is provided by the Forest Hydrology Section primarily through site assessments, courtesy checks, and implementation surveys. BMP Foresters provided 46 technical assistance visits to private landowners. BMP training is another important aspect of Florida's BMP and WBMP programs and is presented via formal educational classes reaching Florida Master Loggers, consulting foresters, private and public land managers and forest landowners. Forest Hydrology Section staff presented 18 classes reaching 744 people during the past year.

Forest Health Protection

The FFS Forest Health Section completed the third and final year of a trapping survey to monitor populations of Ips engraver beetles in the region impacted by Hurricane Michael in 2018. The results indicate that these stress-responding bark beetles are returning to near-background levels in most locations. The annual trapping and aerial surveys for southern pine beetle (SPB) activity were also conducted as usual, but for the second year in a row, no SPB activity was detected in Florida in 2021. A total of 29 aerial surveillance flights have been flown logging over 10,690 miles during 77 hours of flight time. Total area surveyed for bark beetle surveillance flights is estimated at 25,448,162 acres.

The Southern Pine Beetle Assistance and Prevention Program, which is funded by the USFS Forest Health Protection Program, accepted 140 applications from non-industrial private landowners in 2021 to provide cost-share assistance and incentive payments to conduct preventative forest management practices on 9,837 acres. In the past year, the FFS Forest Health Section provided at least 622 assists in the form of pest identifications, disease diagnoses, and management recommendations to a wide range of private and public recipients throughout Florida. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, a greater proportion of these assists were conducted remotely. When necessary, in-person field visits were conducted with appropriate PPE and limited personal contact.

Forest Inventory and Analysis

The FFS partners with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) Program, the only nation-wide forest inventory system. The FFS based FIA crews collect inventory plot and other on-the-ground information, and then FFS works jointly with the USFS on preparing Florida's forest reports. The FIA program is widely recognized by forest products industry and environmental groups alike as "the source" for data driven timber and forest vegetation information. Florida's FIA program dates back to 1934, when the first forest inventory information was collected in the state. In the federal fiscal year 2021, Florida FIA crews collected information on 617 plots in 67 counties. The latest Florida forest inventory data posted on USFS websites is for 2017. Maintaining full federal and state support for the rigorous core FIA program, including forest inventories, analyses and reports, is one of the top priorities for the FFS.

Forest Legacy

The FFS, through the federal Forest Legacy Program (FLP), realized several accomplishments over the course of federal fiscal year (FY) 2021. The FFS simultaneously continued working with partners and staff to move numerous ongoing Legacy grant-awarded projects forward to successful completion while meeting the challenges of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic two years after it began.

In July 2021, FFS closed on Wolfe Creek Forest, Tupelo Timberlands Tract, a 1,700-acre property located in Santa Rosa County. The property is now being managed as part of Blackwater River State

Forest, managed by the Florida Forest Service. The acquisition protects working forestlands containing ephemeral ponds and areas ready for Longleaf pine restoration from conversion to residential development. The property additionally provides a natural buffer to Naval Air Station Whiting Field, the nation's busiest military facility. Furthermore, in September 2021, FFS closed on Gulf Coastal Longleaf Initiative ReDesign, a 2,115-acre property in Santa Rosa County. This acquisition is now being managed as part of Blackwater River State Forest, as it expanded the state forest's boundary further westward towards Big Coldwater Creek, which flows into the Blackwater River. FFS worked throughout the Summer 2021 with partners to submit two projects to Washington DC in October 2021 for the FLP FY 2023 funding request: Wolfe Creek Forest, Springwater Blueway Phase (4,270 acres, fee-simple), and Rainbow Lakes Forest, Sandhill Tract (5,602 acres, fee-simple).

In Spring 2021, FFS received an FLP FY 2021 acquisition grant award for the Wolfe Creek Forest, Tupelo Timberlands Tract, in the amount of \$3,750,000.00, and another acquisition grant award for Wakulla Caves Forest, Legacy Tract in the amount of \$2,600,000.00, as well as an administrative grant award for \$250K.

Forest Stewardship

The Florida Forest Stewardship outreach program continued to provide landowner education and outreach activities that traditionally take place in-person through webinars and other virtual meetings. The outreach program reached over 7,000 landowners through educational events and mailings including landowner workshops, webinars, land management e-mail newsletters, video meetings and Polycom conferences. The FFS and partners used these events to inform landowners about forest management practices and programs. Topics included vegetation management, storm preparation and recovery, forest carbon sequestration, and Tree Farm. Recorded webinars and web courses will offer landowners and the public the continued opportunity to learn about sound forest management into the future.

Geospatial Technology

2021 was a time of many transitions in geospatial technology for FFS. The FFS upgraded our dispatch and incident mapping system to Technosylva's fiResponse, which offers improved incident management, mapping, resource tracking, and decision support functionality. In mid/late 2020 FFS upgraded our timber management and inventory system to F4's SilvAssist, which offered an Android tablet-based solution backed by Esri cloud functionality to streamline the forest inventory process and enrich our data and reports. In 2021 we continued adjusting to the new inventory system as needed.

In addition to these upgrades, FFS is transitioning personnel from ArcMap to ArcGIS Pro and from Collector to Field Maps. The transition to ArcGIS Pro is voluntary for users at this time since Esri has extended its support for ArcMap for another few years. FFS is collaborating with Texas A&M Forest Service on a Landscape Scale Restoration (LSR) project to incorporate climate change forecast data into the Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment Portal (SouthWRAP) decision support system to help guide long-term mitigation planning.

FFS is also serving on the Technical Oversight Team for the Southeast FireMap tool under development by Tall Timbers Research Station, USDA, and USGS. This tool aims to map all detectable fires in the Southeastern US and produce a comprehensive dataset of fire occurrence on private and public lands.

Landowner Assistance

The FFS and its partners offer landowners assistance through technical guidance and management planning as well as helping them to enroll in federal and state financial assistance programs for forest management. A variety of state-administered incentive programs have been delivered to landowners during the past year. Over 9,837 acres are being treated with funding from the Southern Pine Beetle Prevention Program. Two hundred seventy-one landowners were provided technical assistance on 19,816 acres enrolled in the EQIP and CRP programs of the NRCS and FSA. County foresters prepared 249 plans for private landowners covering 40,487 acres.

Partnership with the American Forest Foundation (AFF) continues with Florida's statewide Landscape Scale Forest Management Plan (LMP). FFS Foresters are utilizing this tool to provide efficiency in landowner engagement and private consultants will be provided training on this tool in early 2022.

FFS launched a new state funded program to encourage carbon sequestration through tree planting

across the state. This first year, over 168 landowners applied for funding, and it is anticipated that over 6,500 acres will be planted by 94 landowners in early 2022.

Prescribed Burning Accomplishments on State Forests and Other Lands

During the 2020-2021 fiscal year, FFS was able to treat just over 203,000 acres of Florida State Forests and Babcock Ranch Preserve with prescribed fire; which is up slightly from the previous year despite COVID-19 impacting operations. During this reporting year, weather conditions provided many days with conditions favorable for prescribed fire which allowed FFS to issue prescribed fire authorizations for just over 2.2 million additional acres of managed lands in the state. Prescribed fire continues to be a safe way to apply a natural process, ensure ecosystem health, and reduce wildfire risk.

RESTORE

During this past year, FFS has conducted hydrological restoration on seven high priority basins on Tate's Hell State Forest. Work included installation of twenty-six low water crossings, twelve standard culverts, two culvert replacements and eighteen ditch blocks. Additionally, road surface stabilization was completed on 24 miles of primary roads. Site preparation and vegetative management was conducted on 830 acres in preparation for reforestation in early 2022. FFS staff also worked this year finalizing the budget for an awarded RESTORE proposal focusing on enhancing private forest lands within important watersheds in the northern Gulf of Mexico.

Shared Stewardship

The FFS signed onto the formal Shared Stewardship Memorandum of Understanding for the State of Florida in August 2020, along with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, USDA Forest Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Farm Service Agency.

Since 2017, the FFS has partnered with Apalachicola National Forest (ANF), under the umbrella of Shared Stewardship, through a Good Neighbor Agreement to assist with forest management activities on ANF. Over the past year, FFS was able to hire 2 full time foresters to complete tasks on ANF under this agreement, which has help facilitate additional projects and complete field work. Further, FFS has sold 2 timber sales, which were delayed until this year as a result of Hurricane Michael. Over the next year, FFS expects to enter into a new supplemental agreement with ANF to add more timber sales/projects for FFS foresters to complete.

Urban and Community Forestry

Florida's Urban and Community Forestry Programs offer support to non-profits, individuals and communities through outreach, instruction and technical assistance. Technical assistance is provided on a range of topics including tree planting, tree care, inventories, canopy assessments, staff education and urban forest management planning. Thirty-eight CFA foresters help residents and municipalities across Florida by encouraging stewardship, promoting practices for storm resiliency and educating residents about the value of our urban forests. The FFS has been a primary partner on a regional project to develop an online refresher training program for the Urban Forest Strike Team – arborists who are specifically trained to provide assistance to communities following a disaster event that alters the local tree canopy. One section of this training is an independent course for community members and leaders to learn how to best prepare their community forest for the next storm. One hundred seventy - six communities participated in the TREE CITY USA program provided through the Arbor Day Foundation. The FFS continues to partner with the Arbor Day Foundation and local utilities to provide trees to residents through the Energy-Saving Trees program. The trees planted through Energy-Saving Trees have positively impacted our communities and over 24,400 trees have been planted around Florida homes to date. This is a valuable program with a need for continued support. FFS continued working with the Florida Urban Forestry Council, Florida Project Learning Tree, Community Greening, the University of Florida, and Florida International University to promote urban forestry and proper arboriculture practices around the state of Florida.

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