



State and Private Forestry Fact Sheet

South Carolina 2022



Investment in State's Cooperative Programs

| Program | FY 2021 Final |
|--|--------------------|
| Community Forestry and Open Space | \$0 |
| Cooperative Lands - Forest Health Management | \$372,909 |
| Forest Legacy | \$50,000 |
| Forest Stewardship | \$196,684 |
| Landscape Scale Restoration | \$245,595 |
| State Fire Assistance | \$1,306,984 |
| Urban and Community Forestry | \$495,775 |
| Volunteer Fire Assistance | \$244,532 |
| Total | \$2,912,479 |

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

Program Goals

- The cooperative programs are administered and implemented through a partnership among the State of South Carolina, the USDA Forest Service and many other private and government entities. These programs protect and promote the health and productivity of forestlands and rural economies, giving particular emphasis to timber and other forest products, wildlife, water resources, rural economies, and conservation practices.
- The overarching goal is to maintain and improve the health of urban and rural 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 timber volume, increase forestland value, and improve sustainability, and they do so in a voluntary and non-regulatory manner. The programs are a significant aid to retaining working forests.

Key Issues

- The State continues to focus on two key initiatives: protecting South Carolina forest resources and further developing the awareness of the contributions these resources make to the economy and quality of life for SC citizens.
- Other key issues include invasive species, natural resource sustainability, population growth and urbanization, changing landowner goals, endangered and threatened species, physical/social/mental health benefits, urban canopy cover, forest parcelization/fragmentation, and scenic resources/outdoor recreation.
- Wildland fire emergency response capacity declined in recent years due to funding cuts. With the improving economy and funding, more firefighters have been added and additional new equipment (enclosed cab tractors, transports, firetracks and engines) has been purchased. A major initiative was launched in 2013 to replace all open cab tractors and restore numbers of firefighters to a sufficient level for an average fire season. Seventy-one percent of tractors have been replaced.

Forest Facts and Accomplishments

| Selected Facts | Value | FY 2021 Accomplishments | Value |
|---|--------------|--|--------------|
| Population | 4,625,364 | Landowners Receiving Educational or Technical Assistance | 2,239 |
| Acres of Forest Land | 12,857,041 | Acres Covered by New or Revised Forest Stewardship Plans | 10,683 |
| Acres of Nonindustrial Private Forest Land | 9,712,000 | Acres in Important Forest Resource Areas Covered by New or Revised Stewardship Plans | 5,127 |
| Number of NIPF Landowners | 301,000 | Volunteer Fire Departments Assisted | 300 |
| Acres of Federal Land Under State Fire Protection | 926,000 | State Fire Communities Assisted | 162 |
| Acres of Private Land Under State Fire Protection | 12,730,912 | Coop Forest Health Acres Protected | 20 |
| Number of Rural Fire Departments | 468 | Forest Legacy Project Acquisitions | 0 |
| Cities and Towns | 269 | Communities Provided Urban Forestry Program Assistance | 80 |
| Forest Based Employment | 47,047 | Population Living in Communities Provided Urban Forestry Program Assistance | 3,150,738 |
| Economic Impact of Forestry (by rank) | 3 | Urban Forestry Volunteer Assistance | 19,920 |
| State Forestry Budget (All Sources) | 38,755,805 | | |

Program Highlights

Cooperative Fire Protection

State Fire Assistance (SFA) provides funding to support wildland firefighting operations throughout the state. Preparedness funds are used to supply Personal Protective Equipment, water handling equipment and supplies, training (wildland and leadership), air operations support, and upgraded communications equipment. The SC Forestry Commission's (SCFC) Computer Aided Dispatch System, consistently recognized as one of the best in the country, is also maintained with these funds. SFA mitigation funds in the amount of \$195,043 were used by the SCFC to provide assistance to 27 communities in the wildland urban interface. SFA mitigation funds in the amount of \$72,517 were used for fuel mitigation on 29 tracts for a total of 1,034 acres. Wildfire Hazard and Risk Assessments were completed for 18 communities. Over 235 Community Wildfire Protection Plans have been developed covering approximately 750 communities. Due to the COVID 19 pandemic, the Firewise Mobile Exhibit was not used for community events this year. The Volunteer Fire Assistance (VFA) program helps rural fire departments support their fire prevention and suppression efforts by building capacity to respond, especially in the wildland urban interface. VFA funds in the amount of \$289,967 were allocated to 75 fire departments. There are 796 Communities at Risk that VFA grants have helped protect. The Federal Excess Personal Property Program (FEPP) and Firefighter Property Program (FFP) programs are other ways the SCFC works with rural fire departments to increase their firefighting capacity by providing equipment and vehicles on loan from the USDA Forest Service. There are 751 pieces of equipment on loan to approximately 259 departments throughout the state, valued at \$24.57 million.

Economic Action

The impact of forest industry on South Carolina's economy has grown from \$17.4 billion in 2006 to \$21.2 billion in 2018. The industry sector using small-diameter wood remains strong, and the solid wood product industry is operating at full capacity with strong domestic markets. There are 89 primary and 800 secondary forest product mills in the state that support a total of 98,306 jobs.

The Forestry Commission administers a marketing program in support of our forest industry by offering market research, education and promotion. In 2021, international sales of SC forest products amounted to \$946 million in 121 countries.

South Carolina has an abundant resource with more standing wood inventory than ever recorded. The wood supply is balanced between hardwood and softwood forests as well as between natural pine and planted pine stands. However, wood supply projections point to a decline in small-diameter pine until tree planting increases. Projections of large-diameter pine inventory continue to increase creating an

opportunity for economic growth.

The SCFC owns two forest tree seedling nursery and tree improvement facilities in support of forest landowners and tree planting. The Tree Improvement Program, headquartered at Niederhof Forestry Center, includes 1.5 generation longleaf pine and 3rd generation loblolly pine seed orchards. Taylor Nursery is being operated under the management of ArborGen as part of a 10-year contract that includes the production and sale of forest tree seedlings. Up to 5 million pine and hardwood seedlings will be produced for South Carolina forest landowners at SCFC-approved pricing.

The Environmental Management program also falls within the Resource Development Division. Ongoing training programs have routinely resulted in 95+% compliance rates with state-approved Best Management Practices. BMP Foresters work with landowners and loggers to minimize impacts to water quality and site productivity.

Forest Health Protection

Southern pine beetle trapping was conducted in 32 counties; results indicated potential for outbreaks in Berkeley County. An ongoing outbreak of southern pine beetle was detected by the US Forest Service in the Francis Marion National Forest.

One hundred and forty two acres of forest susceptible to SPB were thinned pre-commercially and 3,170 acres of pines were planted at reduced densities to decrease susceptibility to SPB under the Southern Pine Beetle Prevention Program.

Oak wilt continued to be a problem in water oaks in Aiken, Barnwell and Lexington Counties. Conversations with landowners strongly suggest that the outbreak of oak wilt started after the 2014 ice storm as broken limbs allowed insect vectors carrying the fungal pathogen into the vascular tissue of the tree. This appears to have been exacerbated by wind events in the Barnwell area in the spring of 2021.

There are nine active cogongrass infestations in four counties (Anderson, Beaufort, Charleston, and Hampton) that are in the process of treatment and eradication.

Emerald ash borer continues to be found in the Upstate (Pickens, Greenville, Spartanburg, and Oconee counties) and we have advised several landowners, including the city of Greenville and the Conestee Nature Preserve, on best practices to mitigate infestation by emerald ash borer.

Asian longhorned beetle continues to infest Charleston County, but eradication efforts are underway and the prognosis for eradication is good. - Asian longhorned beetle has been successfully eradicated from Illinois, New Jersey, Canada, and large parts of New York, Ohio and Massachusetts. However, we can expect the eradication process to be of long duration, involving at least a decade of monitoring.

Forest Legacy

South Carolina was one of the first states to participate in the Forest Legacy Program (FLP) and has been a national leader in acreage and funding. The FLP is unique in South Carolina in that it resides within the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR), specifically in the Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division. A TWS Certified Wildlife Biologist is the coordinator of the program. To date, the South Carolina Forest Legacy Program has completed 15 fee-simple acquisition projects (66,554 acres) and two conservation easements (12,080 acres). In total, 79,634 acres of working forest land and valuable wildlife habitat has been protected across the state. SCDNR's FY22 submission, the "Southern Coastal Biodiversity Initiative: Slater Tract" (3,827 acres in Jasper County) was reviewed by the National Ranking Committee in November 2020, but fell just below the funding level. However, due to uncertainties in the federal budget and projects above SC on the list, we are still awaiting the final decision whether the grant will be awarded. SCDNR's FY23 submission, the "Southern Coastal Biodiversity Initiative: Bigbee, Glover, and Duck Ponds Tracts" (1,842.4 acres in Jasper County), adds to the Slater Tract footprint. It was well-received by the National Ranking Committee in November 2021, but the list has not been released for the same reasons as FY22. The Great American Outdoors Act permanently funded the Forest Legacy Program and increased the overall amount available to states and territories. This was a huge success for the Program and has encouraged larger, more substantial conservation projects to be put forward for consideration nationwide. Once again, many multi-million dollar projects were put forward by states in the last funding cycle.

Forest Stewardship

A goal of the SC Forestry Commission is to conserve and manage working forest landscapes in our state to achieve multiple objectives. The SCFC continues to emphasize Forest Stewardship Plan development and landowner recognition programs, focusing efforts on priority areas identified in the state's Forest Action Plan. Private forestry consultants have historically played a very active role in producing Stewardship Plans for private landowners across the state, but decreased federal funding for the program over the last few years has eliminated our ability to partner with the private sector for consultant-written plans. Thus, the number of new and revised plans completed by consulting foresters has decreased significantly. However, recent additional state funding for Forest Stewardship employee salaries should reverse this trend in FY22 by allowing funds for consultant-written plans. The SCFC planned to provide these funds in FY21, but decided to wait until after the development of the SC Forest Stewardship Priority Parcel Viewer, which provides quick assessments of priority parcels that are eligible for consultant-written plan funds.

Currently 219,940 acres are enrolled in the Forest Stewardship Program in SC with 91,194 of these acres in Important Forest Resource Areas. Implementation monitoring indicates that approximately 96% of South Carolina's current Forest Stewardship Plans are being implemented. In addition to adhering to the standard implementation monitoring protocol for FY21, SCFC included additional evaluation of specific management outcomes that have resulted from the implementation of Forest Stewardship Plans. Results indicate that Forest Stewardship Plans are having a positive impact on these practices, resulting in more retention of working forests and increased timber production which generates more forestry jobs. Results also indicate that landowners with Forest Stewardship plans are significantly more likely to be engaged in active management.

Urban and Community Forestry

SC Forestry Commission Urban Foresters were able to provide technical and educational assistance to 67 communities, 19 non-profit organizations, 20 educational institutions, and 33 other entities during FY21. In July 2020, the SCFC received state appropriations for U&CF program salaries. The federal grant has been modified to reflect that federal appropriations will not be used for the funding of U&CF programs salaries. Federal funds will be utilized for operations, including a pass-through project to help build capacity in municipal and county U&CF programs. SCFC is partnering with Plan Green to provide a webinar series for planning commissioners called "The Certified Urban Forest Advocate Training Program" which provides information on how to include urban forestry in their decision-making processes. SCFC and GIC are collaborating with state, regional and local governments, and federal and state agencies to create a strategic green infrastructure network and plan for SC. Work continues on an LSR grant "Creating Resilient Coastal Forests" which involves mapping forest cover for several coastal counties and developing risk assessments and resiliency plans. The SCFC U&CF program is providing competitive matching subawards directly to communities to fund projects such as tree inventories, development of management plans, and other projects that will contribute to the management and protection of urban forests. Also, the SCFC U&CF program is partnering with the Green Infrastructure Center (GIC) to provide technical assistance to SC communities for mapping their urban canopy, plantable areas, and set urban canopy goals.

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