



State and Private Forestry Fact Sheet

Georgia 2023



Investment in State's Cooperative Programs

Program	FY 2022 Final
Community Forestry and Open Space	\$0
Cooperative Lands - Forest Health Management	\$958,963
Forest Legacy	\$1,845,000
Forest Stewardship	\$406,567
Landscape Scale Restoration	\$181,431
State Fire Assistance	\$1,684,120
Urban and Community Forestry	\$881,268
Volunteer Fire Assistance	\$371,145
Total	\$6,328,494

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

The cooperative programs are administered and implemented through a partnership among the Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC), the USDA Forest Service, and many other private and government entities. These programs promote the health and productivity of forestlands and rural economies. Emphasis focuses on forest sustainability and the production of commodity and amenity values such as wildlife, water quality, and environmental services.

Program Goals

- 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 forestland value and sustainability, and do so in a voluntary and non-regulatory manner.

Key Issues

- According to the Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment, Georgia has 11,768 communities at risk of wildland fire of which 5,066, or 43%, are rated at high or very high risk from wildfires. Twenty-five percent of Georgia's landscape, or 9 million acres, is categorized as Wildland Urban Interface (WUI). In FY22, there were 71 homes lost or heavily damaged by wildfire in Georgia with another 2,081 saved by direct suppression actions by the GFC.
- The GFC continued to take an active leadership role in southeast U.S. water resource issues including working closely with multiple partners such as the US Endowment for Forests and Communities, the Southeastern Partnership for Forests and Water, the Longleaf Alliance (LLA), the Savannah River Clean Water Fund (SRCWF), the University of GA (UGA), and many others to make the connection between water resources, such as drinking water, and healthy working forests.
- Each year, Georgia's timberlands grow 46% more wood than is utilized. Over supply of stumpage, particularly pine saw timber, highlights the need for new markets for forest products from private lands. Momentum and support are gaining to compensate private forest landowners for carbon and ecosystem services. Reforestation is an important initiative moving forward as FIA data showed general tree planting declines during the last decade.
- With the continuing change in demographics in the southeast, GFC recognizes the need for increased outreach efforts targeting forest landowners and more general audiences. Efforts continue to increase use of social media and traditional media to distribute messages for water quality and working forests, forest health issues, urban forestry and reforestation needs.

Forest Facts and Accomplishments

Selected Facts	Value	FY 2022 Accomplishments	Value
Population	10,711,908	Landowners Receiving Educational or Technical Assistance	130,399
Acres of Forest Land	24,402,035	Acres Covered by New or Revised Forest Stewardship Plans	46,755
Acres of Nonindustrial Private Forest Land	17,038,330	Acres in Important Forest Resource Areas Covered by New or Revised Stewardship Plans	28,443
Number of NIPF Landowners	142,336	Volunteer Fire Departments Assisted	25
Acres of Federal Land Under State Fire Protection	0	State Fire Communities Assisted	15
Acres of Private Land Under State Fire Protection	22,622,063	Coop Forest Health Acres Protected	6,350
Number of Rural Fire Departments	470	Forest Legacy Project Acquisitions	0
Cities and Towns	535	Communities Provided Urban Forestry Program Assistance	270
Forest Based Employment	55,418	Population Living in Communities Provided Urban Forestry Program Assistance	7,603,169
Economic Impact of Forestry (by rank)	1	Urban Forestry Volunteer Assistance	49,531
State Forestry Budget (All Sources)	72,301,154		

Program Highlights

Cooperative Fire Protection

There were 2,769 wildfires that burned over 20,064 acres of private forestland during FY22. State Fire Assistance provided for the safety of Georgia's citizens by assuring they were protected from the threat of wildfires. Wildland fire suppression, leadership, and prescribed fire training were delivered using both virtual and organized group strategies which increased the level of training opportunities from the previous year. GFC enforcement personnel investigated 79 wildfires resulting in 1 criminal arrest made. The GFC serviced 4,073 requests and installed 22,906 miles of pre-suppression firebreaks during the year. There were 1,409,157 total acres that received prescribed burning during the year, with the GFC providing direct assistance on 116,802 acres. The GFC conducted five (5) Prescribed Fire Manager Certification training sessions with 181 participants in attendance. We have initiated Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP) in 143 counties and have completed 141 CWPPs to date. There continues to be 114 Firewise, USA national recognitions for GA in FY22. All obtained re-certification in FY22. The Federal Excess Personal Property Program assists Georgia in acquiring and placing fire equipment in rural communities throughout the state. Through the Federal DOD Firefighter Program, in FY22 the GFC acquired 78 individual pieces of equipment to support both GFC, local counties, and fire and emergency service agencies with a combined asset value of over \$1.6 million. In addition, the GFC administers Volunteer Fire Assistance Program funds to support the fire prevention and protection efforts of rural community fire departments. Through national and regional coordination, the GFC was able to provide National Wildland fire response by filling 113 individual personnel resource orders on 12 out of state wildfire incidents.

Economic Action

Georgia's forest industry contributed \$41.3 billion in revenue output up 5.9% from 2020 and 143,936 jobs with compensation of \$9.6 billion. Maintaining the forest industry's status as one of the top economic drivers in the state is critical, particularly for rural communities. Georgia's forest industry would not exist without the state's highly productive and sustainable forests. The state's forests have excess utilization capacity for existing industry expansion or for new forest industries. New markets and demand for this large excess wood supply will help forest owners keep their forests as forests and not convert them to non-forest uses. GFC Forest Utilization and Marketing department provides forest resource analyses for existing industries seeking to expand operations, new industrial prospects, forest owners, business consultants, and state and local economic developers. U&M staff provided assistance to 18 projects.

Establishing New Forest Products and Values Highlight

GFC champions market growth of all forest industry sectors through existing and new product research,

development and technology transfer that may lead to new income streams for forest owners including sequestered carbon and other ecosystem service valuations, forest planning and financial analyses. U&M staff provided 352 forest planning and financial analyses assists using Simulator for Managed Stands growth and yield modeling to help educators and forest owners on improving economic outcomes from various forest management scenarios. Staff selected and facilitated a Technical Advisory Committee that drafted the protocol for the addition of sustainable building products to the GA Carbon Registry. Staff provided 120 technical advice reports on carbon sequestration, carbon markets, GA's Carbon Sequestration Registry and other ecosystem services that may lead to new values realized from forests. Staff presented relevant information about mass timber applications and carbon markets at nine conferences and forest landowner events. Staff collaborated with numerous NGO's, state, regional and national organizations to advance the development of a new forest product in GA, cross-laminated timber. Staff participated in numerous technical conferences on timber supply forecasting, mass timber, forest industry logistics, and financial analyses and delivered this information through outreach/education efforts to customers, company prospects, and the general public. Staff maintains, monitors and collects growth data on (2) nine-year-old, biomass reforestation demonstration plots, located on the Bartram and Dixon state forests, which may result in new forest biomass silvicultural prescriptions and potentially new income streams from forest biomass. Staff continued research on four, multi-year and multi-state projects including construction sector wood usage, forestry sector economic impact modeling, urban forest wood utilization and projections on timber harvest and wood supplies.

Forest Health Protection

In 2022, GFC foresters incorporated insect, disease or invasive species advice in 659 management cases involving 20,002 acres. Each Stewardship and Tree Farm plan written in GA incorporates advice to landowners concerning forest health issues. Statewide, forest health personnel provided training to 56,000 GA citizens during 35 training sessions. Annually, prediction traps are set statewide to provide early detection of destructive forest insects and provide information to produce an active response to the threat. Diligent efforts are made to detect the following destructive forest insects in GA: southern pine beetle, ips engraver beetle, emerald ash borer, spongy moth, redbay ambrosia beetle, walnut twig borer, Asian longhorned beetle and any new first introduction pest that is found in the United States. In 2022, 11 southern pine beetle infestations were detected with a total loss of 23 acres of mature pine timber. Aerial forest health surveys returned to pre-Covid pandemic levels, with 6,351 miles flown and visual observations on 13,614,358 acres. Annual early detection/rapid response surveys were also conducted to identify non-native forest pests entering the US through international commerce. Two European spongy moths were caught in 2022, one at the campground on Jekyll Island and one near the Port of Savannah. The Invasive Plant Control Program continued, assisting landowners with control of targeted invasive plant species. In 2022, 24 contracts were completed on 1,205 acres. One hundred and forty two new cogongrass infestation sites were reported and treated by the GFC during 2022. Seventy-two Georgia counties now have identified cogongrass infestations involving 1,745 sites on 420 acres. Only 198 infestations remain active in GA and all active spots have been treated with herbicides at least once.

Forest Inventory & Analysis

During FY 2022, Georgia's FIA Foresters collected data on a total of 973 plots. Of these, 86 plots were National Forest Intensification Plots (mostly in the mountainous northern region of Georgia) with downed woody debris data collection added. Downed woody debris collection is added to all plots in and surrounding the National Forest to build fuel models and also for total carbon counts (which includes dead and down vegetation). Forty-eight of the plots were P2-Plus Plots that have added crown variables to each tree, downed woody debris on each subplot, and vegetative profiles collected on each subplot. We also completed 27 Utilization Plots (aka Felled Tree Study). These plots require our foresters to measure cut trees on active logging sites to provide up to date taper/volume equations and get an estimate of what is utilized and what is left on site during logging operations. A percentage of the completed plots were checked for accuracy and the average accuracy for Georgia's FIA foresters was an excellent 97.85% for the fiscal year. We had 10 FIA Foresters working full time doing FIA Plots for most of FY 22 (full staffing is 11 foresters based on current funding).

Forest Legacy

Georgia was awarded funding for the 3000 Acre Suwannee River Headwaters project that will protect working forests and buffer the headwaters of the Suwannee River, near its origin in the Okefenokee Swamp. In addition, Georgia applied for the 8384 Acre Dugdown Mountain Corridor Project that will protect working forests and the headway of the Ridge & Valley Region of Georgia.

Forest Stewardship

GFC continued the incentive program for plan writers as a mechanism to get GFC employees to produce additional management plans at a reduced cost over conventional contracting. The cumulative enrollment for active landowners is 2100 plans covering 725,912 acres in GA. There are 328,294 acres of these plans in "Federal Investment Areas". In FY22, 154 plans covering 46,755 acres were written. The GA program has continued to develop partnerships with conservation organizations, like the National Tree Farm System, to broaden outreach efforts. New partnerships to reach under-served groups, like HEIRS property owners, are being developed with groups, such as the McIntosh Seed, Coastal Regional Commission, and the HEIRS Law Center. This effort delivers focused technical info delivery to landowners who have been challenged with clear title issues. GFC sponsored a series of workshops that will continue into 2023 FY. Through these efforts, GFC has reached over 3500 "Underserved Landowners". Through the Certified Steward designation, the FSP continues to recognize landowners with 14 new Stewards nominated in FY22. New partnerships are being developed to broaden outreach by hosting several landowner seminars. These partnerships include SE GA Altamaha Partnership, the Feral Swine Initiative, the West Central GA Landowner Initiative, and the Chattahoochee Fall Partnership. GFC, through the FSP, is also supporting the Shortleaf Pine Initiative by providing cost share in NW GA counties and additional funding to produce shortleaf pine seedlings. The Landscape Management Plan was implemented to support Stewardship and certify 48 new Tree Farm certifications in FY22. Stewardship also developed a virtual training series covering forestry topics that reached just under 12,000 viewers. Stewardship also partnered with the NWTf and sponsored the SEED Subsidy Program. 98 landowners participated and enhanced 250 acres of turkey habitat.

Landowner Assistance

In FY22, GFC foresters completed a total of 8,208 cases/site visits covering 422,837 acres. Verbal advice was given during most visits and followed up with a written plan to the landowner and other documentation such as maps, pamphlets, directories, etc. Over half of the cases and acres served were associated with the planning and certifying practices for incentive programs, such as EFRP, CRP, SPB, EQIP, IPSC and CSP.

The following is a breakdown of the cases completed:

General Advice: 1,365 cases, 101,253 acres
 BMP Assurance Exam: 70 cases
 BMP Firebreak Inspection: 872 cases, 579 miles
 BMP Survey Site Visits: 20 cases
 EFRP: 96 cases, 8,803 acres
 CRP: 1,610 cases, 53,833 acres
 SPB: 400 cases, 28,718 acres
 EQIP: 2,425 cases, 168,371 acres
 IPSC: 53 cases, 1,714 acres
 Tree Farm: 32 cases, 7,486 acres
 SGL Cost Share: 45 cases, 3,745 acres
 CSP: 24 cases, 3,830 acres
 State Lands Cases: 20
 FSP completed/renewed: 133 cases, 41,783 acres
 FSP certified: 11 cases, 3,603 acres
 Cogongrass site visits: 860
 One Tree Planted Cost Share: 32 cases, 1,339 acres

Totals: 8,208 cases, 422,837 acres, 579 miles

Landscape Scale Restoration

During FFY22, GFC's Water Quality Program continued to participate as the lead state for a multi-state 2019 LSR Grant which also included TX, SC, and AR. This grant project aimed at working with various partners across the SE United States to help educate people on the important link between healthy well managed forests and healthy water supplies. In GA specifically, education and outreach efforts have been made in three main watersheds that are currently seen as at risk for future forest loss due to increasing population and over-development. Those watersheds include the Upper Oconee River Watershed in NE GA, the Lower Savannah River Watershed in SE GA, and the Middle Chattahoochee River Watershed in west-central GA. GA completed the annual report for that 2019 LSR grant after gathering information from

all the states involved. GA plans to participate in another 2022 LSR Grant project continuing similar work in the southeast with the same multi-state partners, and SC will be the lead state for that 2022 LSR Grant.

Marketing and Technical Assistance

GFC U&M staff markets and promotes the state's forest resources through print and online media and public speaking venues; forest industry surveys and economic impact reports; and by cultivating new customers at domestic and international trade shows. Staff initiated the 2021 Timber Product Output Survey in cooperation with the project lead, USFS SRS, completing 48 surveys of primary wood-using industries. Technical advice and marketing services totaled 712 including disseminating domestic and international trade leads to potential buyers and exporters, cultivated via memberships with the SFPA, AHEC and other economic development and industry partners. Formal presentations were provided to 18 groups. Staff attended/displayed marketing exhibits at 3 domestic trade shows. The Department had two vacancies due to the mid-year retirement of the Chief of the SUM Department, Risher Willard and the transfer of a Staff Forester to another department.

Urban and Community Forestry

In FY22, GA had 142 Tree City USA communities, 24 Tree Campus USA schools and 2 Tree Line USA utilities. GFC provided community forestry technical assistance to governments and tree advocacy groups representing over 7.6 million GA residents. Funds from the USDA U&CF Assistance program were used to contract with the GA Tree Council (GTC) to utilize two circuit-rider arborists. Approximately 405 educational programs, community events, meetings or trainings were conducted by U&CF staff and circuit rider arborists. Through partnerships, U&CF staff were able to conduct 4 Certified Arborist Review classes, training 102 individuals to become Certified Arborists. The Statewide Arbor Day was held in the City of Newnan. GFC provided over 1200 trees for residents to recover canopy lost from a past tornado event. U&CF funding was used to provide 7,000 seedlings to 36 Keep Georgia Beautiful affiliates for distribution at their "Bring One for the Chipper" and 2,200 seedlings to 17 affiliates for Arbor Day events. In addition, U&CF funding was used to support the GTC which conducted three quarterly programs, a College Canopy Conference, and an Annual Conference. U&CF funding was used to support the Georgia Arborist Association in leadership transition and used to hire a summer intern. U&CF Staff trained other staff to conduct tree risk assessments on all GFC owned property. GFC's Urban Forest Strike Team was deployed this year to the cities of Cochran and Pembroke. Grant assistance was provided to these communities through the GTC ReLeaf Program to replace canopy lost in the tornado. GFC also partnered with GTC to offer the Georgia ReLeaf grant program which will provide \$72,000 to fund 13 tree planting or tree giveaway projects across the state. Using funding from the USFS to assist with State FAP implementation, GFC is partnering with the Green Infrastructure Center to provide technical and data analysis assistance to at least 12 communities in southwest GA.

Water Quality

The GFC Water Quality program is funded partly through the EPA Section 319 grant. During the FFY2022 reporting period, the GFC conducted regular statewide BMP Assurance Monitoring of active or recently active forestry operations. GFC also provided education/advice/training/consultation on forestry BMPs. GFC staff completed a total of 121 site inspections and BMP Assurance Exams. GFC completed 34 BMP Survey Inspections to finish up the 2021 Forestry BMP Survey that included a total of 260 site inspections. A full analysis and report were completed by the GFC Water Quality Staff at the end of calendar year 2021. GFC staff participated in 142 public events for at least 2493 cumulative attendees including talks/presentations and meetings with various groups. GFC also provided content for online BMP education for the Master Timber Harvester Workshops and Continuing Logger Education which together reached a total of 485 people completing the courses. GFC staff performed 14 Field Demonstrations of BMPs for 165 participants. GFC staff also conducted at least 99 primary specific forestry BMP Advice Visits for at least 180 people on a total of at least 9078 acres. GFC foresters completed 259 Firebreak BMP Inspections on GFC installed firebreaks, recorded 50 one-to-one Logger Conferences, and hosted at least 20 one-to-one and/or group GFC Forester/Ranger Trainings including such topics as: Master Timber Harvester Training for all GFC foresters, separate BMP training for GFC's 5 management regions, specific training on mechanical site prep in wetlands for foresters, firebreak BMP training sessions for various GFC protection areas and management regions, and basic trainings on BMPs for new employees as part of our online GFC Fire Academy. During FFY2022, GFC distributed at least 396 copies of BMP brochures at 28 BMP events. Finally, GFC maintains a public website with various documents and information related to GFC, Forests, Forestry, Water Resources, BMPs, etc.

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