



# State and Private Forestry Fact Sheet North Carolina 2024



## Investment in State's Cooperative Programs

Program	FY 2023 Estimate
Community Forests and Open Space	\$0
Cooperative Lands - Forest Health Management	\$5,205,645
Forest Legacy	\$50,000
Forest Stewardship	\$221,674
Landscape Scale Restoration	\$259,526
State Fire Assistance	\$1,580,276
Urban and Community Forestry	\$753,672
Volunteer Fire Assistance	\$565,554
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$8,636,347</b>

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

The N.C. Forest Service continues to protect, manage and promote forest resources for the citizens of North Carolina through the use of proactive measures that include creating fire adapted communities and restoring fire adapted ecosystems; reducing the risk of wildfire; identifying, managing and reducing threats to forest and ecosystem health; enhancing the benefits and sustainable management of urban forests; conserving working forestland; and, sustaining the economic, environmental and social benefits of North Carolina's forests.

## Program Goals

- The cooperative programs are administered and implemented through a partnership between the State of North Carolina, the USDA Forest Service as well as many other private and government entities. These programs promote the health and productivity of forestlands and rural economies. Emphasis focuses on timber and other forest products, wildlife, water resources, rural economies and conservation practices.
- 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 in program delivery and increase forestland value and sustainability through partnerships, doing so in a voluntary and nonregulatory manner. Emphasis focuses on timber and other forest products, wildlife, water resources, rural economies and conservation practices.

## Key Issues

- Promotion of the expansion of forest products markets both domestically and internationally. A key component of this effort is timely forest inventory and analysis (FIA) data. This effort should be maintained at current levels or enhanced to provide the most current information. Another key component is the education of landowners to the numerous benefits of forest certification.
- Providing technical assistance to a changing woodland owner demographic to keep working forests working.
- Continued development of ecosystem markets in collaboration with state agencies and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), as well as federal partners such as the Department of Defense.
- The N.C. Forest Service and our military partners have a mutually beneficial relationship. The agency's goals of "keeping working forests working" and forest conservation closely align with efforts to maintain our military's training capacity. To reach these goals, both groups must continue to effectively reach out to private woodland owners.
- Population growth, land use change and development patterns continue to complicate land management and natural resource conservation efforts.

- Continued outreach to an urbanizing and growing population about the multiple benefits that forests provide to North Carolina is needed.
- Providing technical assistance, education and outreach to communities to enhance the benefits and sustainable management of urban forests.
- With 13.5 million acres, North Carolina leads the nation in wildland urban interface (WUI). Many of the thousands of communities across the state face WUI hazards. Efforts to prevent and mitigate hazards and raise awareness are ongoing and need to be continued.
- Continued development and use of technology in the planning, response and reporting of wildfire risk and the impacts to timber, air, water and wildlife resources.
- Fleet management continues to be an agency priority and is critical to maintaining successful delivery of programs and services in North Carolina.

**Forest Facts and Accomplishments**

<b>Selected Facts</b>	<b>Value</b>	<b>FY 2023 Accomplishments</b>	<b>Value</b>
Population	10,439,388	Landowners Receiving Educational or Technical Assistance	23,971
Acres of Forest Land	18,700,424	Acres Covered by New or Revised Forest Stewardship Plans	45,214
Acres of Nonindustrial Private Forest Land	12,258,717	Acres in Important Forest Resource Areas Covered by New or Revised Stewardship Plans	20,692
Number of NIPF Landowners	199,775	Volunteer Fire Departments Assisted	240
Acres of Federal Land Under State Fire Protection	2,081,700	State Fire Communities Assisted	3,140
Acres of Private Land Under State Fire Protection	15,454,700	Coop Forest Health Acres Protected	62,084
Number of Rural Fire Departments	1,325	Forest Legacy Project Acquisitions	1,250
Cities and Towns	553	Communities Provided Urban Forestry Program Assistance	108
Forest Based Employment	72,200	Population Living in Communities Provided Urban Forestry Program Assistance	4,654,241
Economic Impact of Forestry (by rank)	1	Urban Forestry Volunteer Assistance	19,586
State Forestry Budget (All Sources)	83,642,582		

**Program Highlights**

**Cooperative Fire Protection**

Firewise USA® continues to be a strong program in North Carolina with 37 active communities in the state. The Firewise USA® program also receives promotional assistance through four Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Councils across Western North Carolina, which receive grant money through the U.S. Forest Service to promote mitigation activities in North Carolina. N.C. Forest Service wildfire mitigation staff have given presentations to more than 138 different groups comprised of private homeowners, the public and other fire service officials. Highlights include various presentations on Firewise USA®, community wildfire protection planning and wildfire risk reduction. In 2023, seven assessments have been completed using the Community Assessor for the South (CAftS).

The Federal Excess Personal Property program assists North Carolina fire departments in acquiring and placing fire equipment in rural communities throughout the state. The N.C. Forest Service also administers Volunteer Fire Assistance program funds to support the fire prevention and protection efforts of rural community fire departments that support firefighting resources throughout North Carolina, including the development of Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs). There are currently 899 approved CWPPs at the fire district level in the state. N.C. Forest Service wildfire mitigation staff continue to modernize documentation of CWPP data and create tools of engagement that better illustrate collective wildfire risk. Working with federal partners, the N.C. Forest Service Fire Environment program continues to be a leader in fire research, improving the safety of firefighters and the public through science-based applications.

### **Economic Action**

The N.C. Forest Service continues to provide support to North Carolina's \$35.3 billion forest products industry while also increasing efforts to attract new industry to the state. North Carolina's forest products manufacturing industry supports about 139,700 full-time and part-time jobs in the state with a payroll of \$8.3 billion through direct, indirect and induced effects. International markets play a vital role for the forest products industry, representing approximately \$1.74 billion in trade value. The forest sector in North Carolina contributes about \$184 million in state taxes and \$434.4 million to federal taxes. In 2021, the forest sector received \$42.3 million in federal subsidies on production and imports and 35.9 million in state subsidies on personal income taxes. In 2023, the Pactiv Evergreen pulp and paper mill in Canton, NC ceased operations, dealing a devastating blow to pulpwood and chip markets throughout the western region of the state.

### **Forest Health Protection**

The N.C. Forest Service is responsible for assisting forest landowners in detecting and providing management options to control destructive native and non-native forest insects and diseases impacting their property. In addition, N.C. Forest Service personnel assist with non-native, invasive plant control efforts on state lands and quantify and assist with management of abiotic forest health problems, including wind events and flooding. Services are provided to landowners at the county level, with N.C. Forest Service forest health staff providing training and technical expertise in identification, biology and control of forest insects and disease occurrences. Threats from emerging and established non-native, invasive insects, diseases and plants have increasingly challenged the Forest Health Branch. Balsam and hemlock woolly adelgid, beech bark disease, dogwood anthracnose, butternut canker, Phytophthora root rot and spongy moth have been established for many years. More recently, emerald ash borer, redbay ambrosia beetle/laurel wilt, thousand cankers disease and spotted lanternfly have emerged. Plants, including oriental bittersweet, Chinese privet, Japanese stiltgrass, autumn olive and alligator weed are severely impacting forest communities statewide. Several non-native, invasive pests found elsewhere in the U.S. - including Asian long-horned beetle and sudden oak death - are also capable of impacting the health of our forests in the future. In collaboration with other state and federal agencies and universities, forest health staff monitor the movement of these pests through trappings and surveys.

Notable occurrences include:

- 5.6 million acres, or 16% of North Carolina was covered using aerial surveillance.
- 39 counties trapped for southern pine beetle with low occurrences recorded.
- 41 traps distributed statewide for walnut twig beetle with no new expansion recorded.
- 71 counties confirmed with emerald ash borer with four counties confirmed in FY23.

### **Forest Legacy**

There are currently 10 projects involving 22 tracts in the North Carolina Forest Legacy program. The tracts include 17,624 acres. Of these acres, 6,220 acres are owned in fee, and 11,404 acres fall under a "working forest conservation easement." North Carolina's Forest Legacy Program closed on Balsam Range Phase 1b and Phase 2 totaling 1,250 acres. Cost for Phase 1b and 2 was \$5,427,000 which includes \$3,253,000 from the Forest Legacy Program. Forest Legacy funding in the amount of \$5 million for Dark Ridge has been received and will add 3,850 acres to North Carolina's "working forest conservation easement." Dark Ridge will expand the existing Forest Legacy project acreage along the Blue Ridge Parkway and increase protection of the viewshed for the Mountains to Sea Trail.

### **Forest Stewardship**

North Carolina has 209,054 acres in forestland currently covered by the North Carolina Forest Stewardship Program. Of this total, there are 76,428 acres within the federal investment area for Forest Stewardship as identified by the North Carolina Forest Action Plan. FY23 monitoring data indicates that 87.5% of these Forest Stewardship plans are being implemented. The Forest Stewardship program experienced its third year under Stewardship Modernization. North Carolina was the first state within USFS Region 8 to complete their monitoring for FY23.

In FY23, the Forest Stewardship Program added 204 new and revised Forest Stewardship plans, addressing multiple resource management objectives on 45,214 acres. According to the North Carolina Forest Action Plan, these stewardship plans addressed more than 20,692 acres within the federal investment areas for the Forest Stewardship Program.

The N.C. Forest Stewardship and N.C. Tree Farm programs continued to work together during FY23, sharing data and technical assistance that will ideally make the N.C. Tree Farm's third-party forest certification available to Forest Stewardship program participants. A secondary result is the leveraging of each program's strengths related to landowner assistance and outreach.

The N.C. Forest Stewardship program was awarded funding from the U.S. Forest Service through the 2022 State Forest Action Plan under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. A portion of these funds was awarded as subgrant to the N.C. Tree Farm Program to assist landowners with their third-party certification fees. Funding will be used by N.C. Tree Farm during the 23-24 state fiscal year.

### ***Landowner Assistance***

Through the N.C. Forest Service Information, Education and Outreach program, rangers and foresters statewide provide valuable information to forest landowners and the public about N.C. Forest Service programs, services and forestry-related issues. Each year, N.C. Forest Service personnel participate in outreach events, engaging farmers, forest landowners and the public across the state. These events include landowner workshops, natural resource conferences, media interviews, newspaper and magazine articles, a variety of advertising opportunities, state and county fairs, as well as other community connections. In FY23, the number and frequency of outreach events were positively impacted as we came out of the COVID-19 pandemic. The N.C. Forest Service provided 53% more landowner assistance during FY23 compared to FY22. Funding from the USDA Agriculture Disaster Recovery Program – Woodland Recovery Assistance provided more opportunities for N.C. Forest Service and private sector natural resource professionals the opportunity for plan preparation services through the Foresters for Health Waters Cost Share Program. The Foresters for Healthy Waters program provided landowners with preharvest management plans, prepared by consulting foresters, to aid in better planning before a timber harvest. Better preplanning will provide for cleaner water and better habitat for threatened and endangered species within portions of the Tar-Pamlico River Basin.

### ***Prescribed Fire Education and Training***

In FY23, the Prescribed Fire Education program continued to focus on prescribed fire training to landowners, forging strong partnerships to support prescribed burning associations (PBAs). The success of past efforts is beginning to be highlighted by the exponential impact of the program. Our network of PBAs have grown to six statewide with growing interest. Of the four PBAs supported by the N.C. Forest Service, members reported more than 7,451 acres burned in 2023, a 388% increase over the last year (1,369 acres in 2022 and 196 acres in 2021). North Carolina hosted two Certified Burner courses with 106 attendees. Our Prescribed Fire Education specialists assisted 37 participants in 2023 with 11 individuals becoming N.C. Certified Burners. Turnbull Creek Educational State Forest hosted the inaugural F.L.A.M.E (Fire Learning and Mitigation Education) Week for landowners February 2023, with 448 individuals viewing virtual sessions that included prescribed fire planning, burning laws, fire behavior forecasting, wildfire risk and a fire focused Project Learning Tree (PLT) workshop for educators.

### ***Shared Stewardship***

The N.C. Forest Service continued to develop partnership opportunities related to a Shared Stewardship agreement with the USDA Forest Service and Natural Resources Conservation Service, the N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission signed September 2019. The agreement provides a framework for federal and state agencies to collaborate better, focus on accomplishing mutual goals, further common interests, and effectively respond to the increasing ecological challenges and natural resource concerns in North Carolina. Through this Shared Stewardship agreement, the N.C. Forest Service is committed to a collective effort that will produce results that exceed what any one agency or organization could accomplish alone.

### ***Urban and Community Forestry***

The Urban and Community Forestry program continued its charge to enhance the health and sustainable management of urban forests in North Carolina. This is accomplished through the delivery of grants, technical assistance, education opportunities and program support to municipalities organizations, agencies, industries and private landowners. In FY23, 13 U&CF grant projects totaling \$136,171 were awarded including eight canopy cover assessment projects, two Education/Training Projects and three tree inventory projects. These projects returned a total match of \$28,414. Financial support provided to the North Carolina Urban Forest Council resulted in the delivery of 16 urban and community forestry

educational, job training and outreach programs serving 814 attendees. A total of 762 technical urban forestry assists were provided to landowners and communities. N.C. Forest Service staff, including 25 staff who are International Society of Arboriculture Certified Arborists, provided technical assistance to 118 municipalities. Arbor Day Foundation recognitions included 75 Tree City USA communities, and 15 Tree Campus Higher Education colleges and universities, and four Tree Line USA utilities. Over 19,069 hours of volunteer service were recorded in achieving these designations.

### **Water Resources**

During FY23, the agency conducted 2,592 initial water quality compliance inspections on forestry operations and an additional 2,955 follow-up inspections. The latest BMP survey report was published and shared with targeted customers. The fifth cycle of the BMP survey was updated to include revised BMP recommendations within the 2021 edition of the BMP Manual and data collection began. The 2022 edition of the BMP Field Guide was printed and over 2,000 copies were distributed to the forestry community. The N.C. Forest Service continued to proactively support stream crossing BMPs by loaning portable bridges to loggers. Agency bridgemats were used on nine harvests for 11 crossings to access an estimated 259 acres of timber. Grant funding to deliver an assistance program for the rental or cost share of temporary bridges was received. Training for the year included co-instruction of 11 college level classes and seven associated field labs, covering a range of BMP topics. Additional technical outreach training consisted of presenting 11 workshops with an estimated attendance of over 750 individuals. A designed fishing trail and educational signage were installed along the margin of the Linville River restoration project on Gill State Forest. The N.C. Forest Service Water Quality program is funded through leveraged sourcing of state appropriations coupled with a vital annual allocation of USEPA-derived funds via the Nonpoint Source 319-Grant program, supplemented by occasional contributions from other grant awards.

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