



# State and Private Forestry Fact Sheet

## Alabama 2021



### Investment in State's Cooperative Programs

Program	FY 2020 Final
Community Forestry and Open Space	\$0
Cooperative Lands - Forest Health Management	\$499,077
Forest Legacy	\$20,000
Forest Stewardship	\$195,883
Landscape Scale Restoration	\$55,000
State Fire Assistance	\$1,260,599
Urban and Community Forestry	\$240,000
Volunteer Fire Assistance	\$378,391
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$2,648,950</b>

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

### Program Goals

- The Alabama Forestry Commission (AFC) is committed to protecting and sustaining the state's forest resources using professionally applied stewardship principles and education. The AFC utilizes cooperative programs to maximize cost effectiveness through the use of partnerships in program delivery to increase forestland value and sustainability and does so in a voluntary and non-regulatory manner.
- The cooperative programs are administered and implemented through a partnership between the State of Alabama, the USDA Forest Service, Auburn University, Alabama A&M University, Tuskegee University, the Alabama Forestry Association 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 and benefits.

### Key Issues

- Several years of budget reductions have reduced the AFC's wildfire response capacity to critical thresholds. At current staffing levels, each 2 person initial attack fire crew is responsible for protection on 275,000 acres. This area of responsibility is 70% greater than the next southern state in staffing and more than 100% greater than the average across the South.
- Even with a historically robust forest industry, FIA data shows the average annual rate of growth-to-removals for all species is 1.56:1 for the period 2001- 2017. An increase in markets will increase the need for more certified wood in the state. The Alabama Forestry Commission has hired an employee to focus on expanding markets for Alabama forest products.
- Fragmentation and parcelization has led to smaller tracts of forestland. Reaching more landowners with assistance specifically designed to meet their individual needs is a key to growing the number of acres under multiple benefit forest management in the state.
- Better technology has improved river and stream channel delineation, increasing the number of miles that the AFC tries to protect from 77,242 miles to 132,419 miles – almost doubling what we thought existed. Through education, site assessment, and complaint resolution, the AFC and forest industry can make a strong case that silvicultural operations with properly implemented BMPs do not degrade water quality in the state.
- It is imperative to maintain a strong forestry water quality program through the use of forestry BMPs. Through education, site assessment, and complaint resolution, the AFC and forest industry can make a strong case that silvicultural operations maintain and/or improve water quality in the state.
- Prescribed burning is important to Alabama's fire-adapted ecosystems. A total of 29,593,000 acres (91.7% of Alabama's total land area) are subject to wildfire threat.

- Invasions, including new species of non-native plants, pathogens and animals into forests continue to spread. These non-native invasive species, some of which are new to Alabama, increasingly erode forest productivity, hinder forest use and management activities, and degrade diversity and wildlife habitat.
- Under certain circumstances, forest insects and diseases have a significant impact on forest health and productivity through the effects of excessive defoliation, progressive decline, significant decay, root damage, stem dieback, species alteration, or outright mortality.
- Despite the rather mild climate, Alabama is prone to numerous adverse weather events such as hurricanes, tornadoes, ice storms, and droughts. In 2019 we had a significant tornado outbreak in March that the AFC was heavily involved in emergency response. We also had a severe drought that led to an active Fall fire season.

## Forest Facts and Accomplishments

Selected Facts	Value	FY 2020 Accomplishments	Value
Population	4,779,736	Landowners Receiving Educational or Technical Assistance	32,908
Acres of Forest Land	23,093,931	Acres Covered by New or Revised Forest Stewardship Plans	36,718
Acres of Nonindustrial Private Forest Land	17,765,000	Acres in Important Forest Resource Areas Covered by New or Revised Stewardship Plans	15,894
Number of NIPF Landowners	412,000	Volunteer Fire Departments Assisted	975
Acres of Federal Land Under State Fire Protection	687,000	State Fire Communities Assisted	0
Acres of Private Land Under State Fire Protection	27,720,994	Coop Forest Health Acres Protected	1,040
Number of Rural Fire Departments	986	Forest Legacy Project Acquisitions	0
Cities and Towns	460	Communities Provided Urban Forestry Program Assistance	107
Forest Based Employment	40,837	Population Living in Communities Provided Urban Forestry Program Assistance	2,151,592
Economic Impact of Forestry (by rank)	2	Urban Forestry Volunteer Assistance	52,674
State Forestry Budget (All Sources)	21,728,209		

## Program Highlights

### **Community Forestry and Open Space**

No report for this category.

### **Conservation Education**

Due to COVID our education activities were severely curtailed.

### **Economic Action**

The AFC contributes to forest products marketing and economic development in a significant number of ways. The AFC is critically involved with the USDA Forest Service's Forest Inventory & Analysis (FIA) program. FIA provides vital statistical data pertaining to Alabama's forest resources. Consultants, forest industry representative, and economic development practitioners utilize FIA data to make important decisions with regards to where to locate new wood products mills and where to make expansions to existing mills, and often they receive this data from AFC personnel. The AFC's involvement with the FIA program consists of forest resource data collection by field crews and the fulfillment of forest resource data requests by the FIA Coordinator.

The FIA program also conducts the Timber Products Output (TPO) studies to estimate industrial and non-industrial uses of roundwood across the United States. Primary wood-using mills are sampled, by state, to estimate roundwood usage. Historically, the TPO study was a periodic 100 percent canvass of all primary mills and has moved to an annual sample design Nationwide. The AFC conducts this survey annually and was tasked with the collection of data from 46 primary wood using mills in 2020.

Another way the AFC contributes to the marketing of Alabama's forest resources is by the annual development of their "Forest Resource Report." This report contains valuable economic status indicators of the forest industry and forest resources in Alabama for the previous year. The "Forest Resource Report 2019" was completed in May and is available on the AFC website.

Another important component of the section is workforce development. Workforce assets and needs throughout the forestry supply chain have become critically important for the viability of the industry. The AFC section is engaged with current state-wide workforce development initiatives, such as AlabamaWorks as well as ForestryWorks.

### **Forest Health Protection**

With pines as a main source for timber production in Alabama, aerial and ground surveys were conducted in the state to detect bark beetle infestations. The periodic, but severe drought in late 2019 caused sporadic pine mortality from Ips engraver beetle infestations during the early months of 2020. By late spring, however, these infestations subsided. Despite the summer months and the previous drought, the number of southern pine beetle infestations was low in 2020. With the combined aerial-surveyed and ground-detected spots, there were only 99 southern pine beetle infestations reported infesting 3,670 trees.

Other pests, however, became the focus in Alabama. The non-native hemlock woolly adelgid was confirmed for the first time in the state. In June 2020, this invasive pest was reported in DeKalb County. Another invasive species was also a concern. Alabama continued to implement mitigation tactics for the federally listed invasive plant, cogongrass. In partnership with other agencies and organizations, the Alabama Forestry Commission (AFC) treated 239 cogongrass spots by herbicide application that controlled 30.8625 acres in Covington County. Other technical assistance and responsibility accomplishments that AFC completed in 2020 were 1,111 forest health stand management recommendations encompassing 65,7555.53 acres and 90 public education activities with 2,258 attendees.

Cataclysmic occurrences such as hurricanes, tornadoes, inundation, hailstorm, frost damage, excessive rain, and high temperatures not only influenced the health of the state's forests but also affect landowners' conservation and management decisions. In summary, there were 2,440 forested acres damaged in Baldwin County by Hurricane Sally with 79,175 tons of timber destroyed at a value of \$1,564,160. A total of 10 significant weather events occurred during fiscal year 2020.

### **Forest Legacy**

The Alabama Forestry Commission, Forever Wild Land Trust, and the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources collaborated efforts and finalized the Little River State Forest Annex Project in December of 2020. The purchase of approximately, 2,885 acres of forestland was added to the existing state forest. The agency partners continued to work collectively on pursuing similar projects for the benefit of conserving forest lands in the state. Efforts have been initiated to acquire the Red Hills property in Monroe County where the goal is to protect the habitat of the red hills salamander, a federally threatened species in Alabama. A second project was also started where negotiations were conducted to acquire the Belcher Tract near Birmingham, AL. Adjoining Oak Mountain State Park, the agency partners were concerned about protecting 2000 acres of forestland from the threat of urbanization.

### **Forest Stewardship**

Landowners in Alabama were recognized for their accomplishments in managing their property for multiple-use and long-term sustainability by certifying them under three programs: Tree Farm, Stewardship Forest, and TREASURE Forest. There were 157 new landowners added to the three recognized programs: 53 Tree Farm landowners, 76 Stewardship Forest landowners, and 28 TREASURE Forest landowners.

The Alabama Forestry Commission (AFC) provided professional assistance in stewardship to landowners across the state by providing management plans and stand management recommendations. Agency employees completed 2,180 stand management recommendations for landowners in 2020. There were also 14 stand management plans and 187 Stewardship management plans completed this year. Other accomplishments were related to education and outreach activities. In collaboration with other agencies, the AFC hosted 12 landowner tours across the state to provide information on proper management and good stewardship of the land. Another collaboration occurred with the AFC and the Alabama Forest

Foundation to reach out to landowners who were involved with the Woodscamp program. Landowners requested assistance through the Woodscamp website and then received subsequent support from natural resource professionals.

The Stewardship program has initiated a modernization process to improve grant reporting and program delivery. The USDA Forest Service granted funds to several states affected by Hurricane Michael for a Stewardship Program that would financially assist landowners with damaged or destroyed forestlands. In Alabama, forest landowners in Houston County were most affected by the storm, thus receiving higher priority for financial assistance.

### **Landscape Scale Restoration**

Covered in other sections.

### **Urban and Community Forestry**

The Urban and Community Forestry (U&CF) provides technical and financial assistance through the Alabama Forestry Commission to local governments and other organizations within Alabama who are planning urban forestry programs or managing urban forests. In FY 2019, the last full year count for this report, the number of Tree City USA communities rose to 86, the highest number of approved applicants since 2013. Tree Campus USA numbers remained at 13 individual campuses, and both Tree Line USA applicants continued to participate in the program. More than 40,000 seedlings were distributed to the public and more than 45 cities in 24 counties were assisted with Arbor Week events. AFC employees logged 147 urban forestry technical assists throughout the state during the period. Both the Alabama Urban Forestry Association annual meeting and the Tree Board Academy were supported in FY 20. The Urban Forest Strike Team was also utilized for several incidents across the southeast during the reporting period.

Landscape Scale Restoration Grant activities continued during FY 20, working within COVID-19 restrictions. A survey was added to the "Trees and the Law" grant and the workshop was delayed until virus constraints allow larger meetings, and the tree canopy and urban forest management in edge communities was modified to extend the dates. Hurricane Michael supplemental grant activities are well under way in Houston County.

The Urban and Community Forestry section administered 3 annual Federal Urban & Community Forestry grants totaling \$646,820 and are partnering on 4 multi-state Community Forestry grants worth \$571,000. The section also increased Arbor Day Foundation program participation to 86 Communities; 13 Universities; 1 Healthcare Campus; and 2 Utilities.

Following Hurricane Michael, a supplemental grant allowed the AFC to partner with the city of Dothan to help in storm recovery.

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