



State and Private Forestry Fact Sheet Alabama 2024



Investment in State's Cooperative Programs

Program	FY 2023 Estimate
Community Forestry and Open Space	\$0
Cooperative Lands - Forest Health Management	\$322,604
Forest Legacy	\$50,000
Forest Stewardship	\$181,960
Landscape Scale Restoration	\$0
State Fire Assistance	\$928,024
Urban and Community Forestry	\$492,209
Volunteer Fire Assistance	\$411,131
Total	\$2,385,928

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

- Even with a historically robust forest industry, FIA data shows the average annual rate of growth-to-removals ratio for all species continues to increase. The Alabama Forestry Commission has hired a full time economic development representative 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 significant portion of Alabama's land area is subject to a 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.

Forest Facts and Accomplishments

Selected Facts	Value	FY 2023 Accomplishments	Value
Population	5,024,279	Landowners Receiving Educational or Technical Assistance	6,733
Acres of Forest Land	23,064,350	Acres Covered by New or Revised Forest Stewardship Plans	41,530
Acres of Nonindustrial Private Forest Land	16,563,891	Acres in Important Forest Resource Areas Covered by New or Revised Stewardship Plans	15,844
Number of NIPF Landowners	139,863	Volunteer Fire Departments Assisted	980
Acres of Federal Land Under State Fire Protection	687,000	State Fire Communities Assisted	3
Acres of Private Land Under State Fire Protection	27,720,994	Coop Forest Health Acres Protected	1,300
Number of Rural Fire Departments	986	Forest Legacy Project Acquisitions	0
Cities and Towns	462	Communities Provided Urban Forestry Program Assistance	119
Forest Based Employment	40,837	Population Living in Communities Provided Urban Forestry Program Assistance	2,357,885
Economic Impact of Forestry (by rank)	2	Urban Forestry Volunteer Assistance	40,214
State Forestry Budget (All Sources)	21,728,209		

Program Highlights

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 is tasked with the collection of data from 48 primary wood using mills in 2023.

The primary way in which 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.

Forest Health Protection

Due to extensive drought conditions over the second half of 2023, an increase in pine beetle activity was seen across the state. AFC pilots detected 53 spots when conducting annual aerial surveys. The Alabama Forestry Commission (AFC) began flying for beetle spots on June 30 and completed the survey on September 6. In total, AFC pilots surveyed 47 out of 67 counties. Like the Ips engraver beetle infestations, the number of southern pine beetle (SPB) spots across the State of Alabama spiked for 2023. During the aerial surveys, 593 SPB spots were detected. This uptick in spots is attributed to the lingering drought conditions experienced during the latter half of the year. Most of the SPB spots were detected in the southwest and southeast regions. The other two regions had their fair share of SPB spots

as well. All the national forests, except for the Conecuh saw an increase in SPB spots.

Native beetle species were not the only pest to catch the attention of the AFC. In June of 2020 the non-native hemlock woolly adelgid (HWA) was confirmed for the first time in the state. The non-native pest was discovered in the northeast region of the state in Dekalb County which borders the state of Georgia. Late in 2023, the HWA was confirmed in Jackson County. The agency will continue to monitor the presence and spread of HWA in Dekalb and Jackson counties and evaluate reports of possible cases. The AFC also conducted technical assistance accomplishments under Cooperative Forest Health which totaled 336 stand management recommendations that amounted to 24,280 acres. The AFC also held 32 education and outreach events with a total of 683 attendees.

During 2023, the state of Alabama experienced only a few tornado outbreaks. The most significant day happened on January 12. An estimated 9 tornadoes caused damage to homes, businesses, and fatalities. Fortunately, the the area of timber damage was limited below 100 continuous acres, so no formal damage reporting was needed.

Forest Legacy

The program goal is to acquire land for sale across the state to increase Alabama's public forest lands and extend current areas. The goal is also to preserve forestland and make more areas useable to the public and work with partners to make this happen.

During this fiscal year we worked hard with partners to begin acquiring land in the area classified as the Dugdown Mountain Corridor. The primary goal is to create a state forest in Northeast Alabama for people to enjoy and use for hunting and other recreational activities. We worked closely with the state of Georgia on this process, and plan to continue working with them preserving land in this designated corridor.

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 44 new landowners added to the three recognized programs: 30 Tree Farm landowners (8,958 acres), 36 Stewardship Forest landowners (11,490 Acres), and 17 TREASURE Forest landowners (7,302 acres).

The Alabama Forestry Commission (AFC) provided professional assistance in stewardship to landowners across the state by management plans and stand management recommendations. Agency employees completed 606 stand management recommendations for landowners in FY23. There were 161 Stewardship management plans completed this year. In collaboration with other agencies, the AFC hosted 31 landowner tours across the state to provide information on proper management and good stewardship of the land.

In 2023, AFC introduced 1 new Helene Mosley Award winners. The Helene Mosley Award is given to a Treasure Forest landowner who demonstrates the multiple use concepts of forest management, with a key emphasis on education. It is important to recognize landowners who are willing to share their experiences, wisdom, and stories on forest management, to students and landowners of all ages and backgrounds. The more landowners in Alabama who are willing to provide this service will only increase the awareness of proper forest management in this state.

Landowner Assistance

The Conservation Reserve Program consists of both general and continuous sign ups. The AFC completed 63 stand management recommendations and 204 compliance checks across 11,865 acres under the continuous signup in FY23. The AFC completed 165 stand management recommendations and 302 compliance checks across 20,150 acres under the general signup in FY23.

The Environmental Quality Incentive Program serviced 26 Beginning Farmers, 22 Disadvantaged Farmers, 7 Limited Resource Farmers, and 3 Veteran Farmers. There was a total of 30 Longleaf Pine applications, 1 U.S. Endowment Application, and 1 Strike Force application served during FY22. The accomplishments for FY23 consisted of 142 Site Visits, 167 Compliance Checks, 207 TNF/EQIP Needs Determination, 1 Stand Management Plan, 1 Stewardship Plan, 15 Status Reviews and Follow Ups, and 1 Drone Flights.

The Emergency Forest Restoration Program completed 18 Compliance Checks across 1,726 acres in FY23. A total of 69 Stand Management Recommendations was made across 7750 acres.

Urban and Community Forestry

The U&CF Program provides technical assistance to local governments and other organizations within Alabama that are planning, developing, and managing urban forests. In 2022, the number of communities celebrating recognition as Tree City USA communities rose to 92. There are also a dozen Tree Campus Higher Education institutions in the state, and two utilities in the Tree Line USA program. More than 53,000 seedlings of twelve species were distributed to the public and more than 81 cities in 45 counties were assisted with Arbor Week events. AFC employees logged 156 urban forestry technical assists, in addition to conducting 58 urban forestry educational programs throughout the state during the period. The U&CF Partnership Coordinator attended Your Town Alabama, an urban development and networking event.

The focus in U&CF for FY 2022 was on building and strengthening partnerships. Two new advocacy groups were developed late in the year, one in Jefferson County and one in the city of Decatur, with a focus on environmental justice, green equity, and long-term community improvement. Both groups have reached out to U&CF staff for technical assistance and collaborative input. Traditional partners like FFA, 4H, Cooperative Extension, county Conservation Districts, and both county and city Forestry Committees were also regularly engaging with the U&CF group to increase their urban forestry impact.

The program was supported by three Consolidated Payment Grants (2020, 2021, and 2022) totaling \$757,956 and the State partnered on four multi-state grants worth \$571,000. Alabama's portion of the Hurricane Michael supplemental grant, aimed at improving readiness and resilience for future storms, was finished during the reporting period. The Alabama Forestry Commission collaborated with the City of Dothan to complete 9,500 acres of tree inventory, 131 hours of arboricultural training provided to city employees, and 115 trees installed to improve the existing tree canopy.

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