



State and Private Forestry Fact Sheet

Arkansas 2021



Investment in State's Cooperative Programs

Program	FY 2020 Final
Community Forestry and Open Space	\$0
Cooperative Lands - Forest Health Management	\$383,077
Forest Legacy	\$2,485,000
Forest Stewardship	\$198,108
Landscape Scale Restoration	\$175,000
State Fire Assistance	\$1,391,525
Urban and Community Forestry	\$270,000
Volunteer Fire Assistance	\$377,951
Total	\$5,280,661

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

The Arkansas Department of Agriculture – Forestry Division (formerly the Arkansas Forestry Commission, hereafter, The Division) administers the state's cooperative forestry programs. The Division has 60 work centers that operate in all 75 counties of the state. Division employees provide assistance across the state's 19 million acres of forests. The Division facilitates forest management decisions for non-industrial private landowners. According to timber harvest removals data, Arkansas is nationally ranked as number nine in total wood fiber production, valued at over \$6.5 billion. However, as a percentage of the state total GDP, Arkansas's state economy is the third most forestry-dependent economy in the nation.

Program Goals

- The cooperative programs are administered and implemented through a partnership between the State of Arkansas, the USDA Forest Service and many other private and government entities. These programs promote the health and productivity of forestlands and rural communities.
- The overarching goal is to maintain or improve the health, ecological viability, and economic productivity of urban and rural forests, as well as to protect the forests and citizens of the state. State implemented forestry programs leverage cost efficiencies through the use of partnerships in program delivery, increase forestland value and resiliency, and do so in a voluntary and non-regulatory manner.

Key Issues

- Land use changes and development continue to complicate forest management considerations. Maintaining healthy watersheds is a priority to protect drinking water quality.
- Growing urbanization removes forests. An opportunity exists to provide education and outreach about the benefits of urban forests.
- The demographic of the non-industrial forest landowner is changing and requires new approaches to encourage forest management.
- Decreasing timber markets has resulted in an aging timber resource and a lack of utilization of small diameter trees. In addition, forests are increasingly susceptible to health and fire concerns due to the unbalanced growth vs removal ratios.

Forest Facts and Accomplishments

Selected Facts	Value	FY 2020 Accomplishments	Value
Population	2,915,918	Landowners Receiving Educational or Technical Assistance	2,871
Acres of Forest Land	18,926,298	Acres Covered by New or Revised Forest Stewardship Plans	33,453
Acres of Nonindustrial Private Forest Land	10,983,000	Acres in Important Forest Resource Areas Covered by New or Revised Stewardship Plans	19,559
Number of NIPF Landowners	345,000	Volunteer Fire Departments Assisted	155
Acres of Federal Land Under State Fire Protection	3,171,500	State Fire Communities Assisted	282
Acres of Private Land Under State Fire Protection	15,247,900	Coop Forest Health Acres Protected	1,500
Number of Rural Fire Departments	611	Forest Legacy Project Acquisitions	926
Cities and Towns	502	Communities Provided Urban Forestry Program Assistance	53
Forest Based Employment	29,095	Population Living in Communities Provided Urban Forestry Program Assistance	1,111,479
Economic Impact of Forestry (by rank)	3	Urban Forestry Volunteer Assistance	28,000
State Forestry Budget (All Sources)	28,317,293		

Program Highlights

Cooperative Fire Protection

The annual trainings that the Division normally participates in, like the Arkansas River Valley Wildland Fire Academy and Prescribed Fire as a Management Tool, were canceled due to the COVID 19 Pandemic. However, training continued to be accomplished within the Division. Trainings like Basic Fire, Chainsaw, and Dozer were conducted in house while adhering to CDC social distancing guidelines. This allowed us to meet the immediate needs of Division personnel and protect the health of students and instructors.

The Division owns 13 fixed wing aircraft that are centrally located at the Malvern Municipal Airport. Eleven aircraft are single engine airplanes which are used primarily for fire detection. These aircraft are also used for forestry related surveys such as insect/disease infestation and storm damage. Two Division aircraft are twin engine aircraft that are used primarily for an Air Attack platform that flies with the Single Engine Air Tankers. With the help of grant funds digital radios were purchased and have been programmed and installed in each aircraft.

The Division's training instructors conducted 67 eight-hour Wildland Fire Suppression Training classes for 1,138 firefighters representing 459 fire departments.

The Federal Excess Personnel Property and DOD Fire Fighter Program assisted Arkansas fire departments by acquiring and placing 72 pieces of firefighting equipment into service with a total original acquisition cost of \$4,295,446.00. There were 17 interest-free loans approved for volunteer fire departments to purchase firefighting equipment totaling \$200,310.10. The Volunteer Fire Assistance grant was also used to award 84 Wildfire Suppression Kits to rural volunteer fire departments at a value of \$3,200 each.

Arkansas continues to be one of the top national participants in the Firewise USA program with 96 recognized sites throughout the state.

Forest Health Protection

No southern pine beetle (SPB) activity was detected by either ground or aerial surveys in 2020, and zero SPB were captured in Arkansas during the SPB Prediction Trapping Survey.

The Southern Pine Beetle Prevention Program continues to provide thinning incentives to landowners for reducing risk to pine bark beetles.

In Arkansas, Forest Health Protection funding is used to monitor landscape-scale forest disturbances such as pine needle diseases and defoliators. Affected landowners are consulted when damaging pests are found.

Forest Inventory & Analysis

Statewide forest inventory data is regularly used as a source to justify economic development and as a gauge to forest health.

Field data from Forest Inventory & Analysis recently indicated that annual gross growth of softwood and hardwood greatly exceeds annual removals. The growth to drain (harvest and mortality) ratio for softwoods is 1.6, with 11 million more tons of growth over drain. In the same way, the growth to drain ratio for hardwoods is 2.5, with 9.6 million more tons of growth over removal. This trend can be viewed as an opportunity for the utilization of timber and biomass in new markets.

Forest Legacy

The Division acquired eight tracts totaling 925.43 acres for the amount of \$3,567,729. The Division completely expended the \$1,370,000 FY 2019 Hot Springs Forest Legacy Grant. The remainder is non-federal cost share for FY 2021 and FY 2022 Forest Legacy Grants. The Hot Springs Forest currently consists of 1,262.66 acres and is in West Central Arkansas. Hot Springs Forest is managed by The Division along with the Poison Springs State Forest.

Arkansas submitted two fee simple project proposals for the FY 2022 funding request cycle: the Maumelle Water Excellence Phase 2 (4,987 acres); and the Hot Springs Forest (966 acres).

Forest Stewardship

The Division works with a diverse group of partners and professionals to conserve, protect, and enhance Arkansas's forests through the Forest Stewardship Program. The program functions as a gateway for private landowners to access professional assistance managing their property to fulfill their management objective. Enrolled landowners receive a Forest Stewardship management plan which serves as a roadmap for the landowner to achieve the desired outcome for their property.

The Division worked with consulting foresters to write and implement 202 Forest Stewardship Plans on 33,453 acres. Of that acreage, 19,559 acres were priority acres based on Arkansas's Forest Action Plan. There are 321,187 acres of Arkansas forestland currently covered by the Arkansas Forest Stewardship Program, with 183,906 of these acres considered to be in important forest resource areas. A total of 2,309 landowners received assistance through the Stewardship Program. Division also actively participates in a tree improvement cooperative to improve loblolly and shortleaf pine and select oak.

Landowner Assistance

The Division, in partnership with federal and state governments and private organizations, continued to provide landowner training and assistance, and facilitated implementation of landowner's management plans to ensure forest sustainability. The Division is a key partner in a special initiative funded by the U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities that focuses on improving forest management by connecting African American landowners to organized networks of forestry support including federal and state government programs, businesses, and nonprofit conservation, legal, and community development organizations. The program helps landowners solve and prevent problems of insecure land tenure caused by heirs' property and inadequate estate planning. Insecure title is a major barrier to forestry support programs and forest management.

Urban and Community Forestry

The Division provides educational, technical and/or financial assistance to Arkansas communities and cities with a combined population of 2,904,000. Volunteers provided over 33,000 hours of service in community forestry programs. Three urban forestry grants were awarded for community improvement projects; Audubon Arkansas, the Fayetteville Public Library, and the University of Arkansas Ft. Smith received grants totaling \$27,975, which was met with a 50/50 match by the recipients. Projects included the a public education effort to support the sound forest management of the Fouche Creek Preserve; an expansion project for the city library which includes over 230,000 square feet of outdoor classroom space,

the planting of over 100 native trees, paved trails, healthy forest signage, permeable pavement, engineered soil, and a multi-year tree maintenance contract with a local arborist; and an expansion of the campus arboretum, the construction of a gravel bed nursery for growing out bare root stock to a more appropriate planting size, and the creation of educational brochures and signage to engage the public.

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