



State and Private Forestry Fact Sheet Arkansas 2025



Investment in State's Cooperative Programs

Program	FY 2024 Final
Community Forests and Open Space	\$0
Cooperative Lands - Forest Health Management	\$203,027
Forest Legacy	\$0
Forest Stewardship	\$181,068
Landscape Scale Restoration	\$0
State Fire Assistance	\$1,240,768
Urban and Community Forestry	\$300,000
Volunteer Fire Assistance	\$398,201
Total	\$2,323,064

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 Forestry Division) administers the state's cooperative forestry programs. The Forestry Division has 62 offices and work centers that operate in all 75 counties of the state. Employees provide assistance across the state's 19 million acres of forests. The Forestry Division informs forest management decisions for non-industrial private landowners. Of the southern states, Arkansas has the most forestry-dependent economy with 4.0 percent of the state's GDP relying on forest industries. By the latest estimates, forestry contributes over \$7.27 billion dollars to the state's economy.

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.
- An example of the state's cooperative programs being put in action; the State of Arkansas maintains mutual agreements with local resources to protect forests from wildfires, giving direct assistance by providing equipment, experienced personnel, and training for local fire departments to utilize as needed.

Key Issues

- Land use changes and conversion to non-forest condition are prevailing threats to Arkansas's forest and continue to complicate forest management considerations.
- Expanding urbanization removes forests. An opportunity exists to provide education and outreach about the benefits of urban forests.
- Maintaining healthy watersheds is a priority to protect drinking water quality.
- The demographic of the non-industrial forest landowner is changing and requires new approaches to encourage active forest management.
- Arkansas's forests are increasingly susceptible to health and fire concerns due to the unbalanced growth vs removal ratios. Decreasing timber markets and labor shortages has resulted in an aging timber resource and a lack of utilization of small diameter trees.
- Forest Certification is becoming a more important consideration for forest landowners within the state.

Forest Facts and Accomplishments

Selected Facts	Value	FY 2024 Accomplishments	Value
Population	3,011,524	Landowners Receiving Educational or Technical Assistance	1,097
Acres of Forest Land	18,866,902	Acres Covered by New or Revised Forest Stewardship Plans	27,045
Acres of Nonindustrial Private Forest Land	10,642,005	Acres in Important Forest Resource Areas Covered by New or Revised Stewardship Plans	3,913
Number of NIPF Landowners	108,608	Volunteer Fire Departments Assisted	165
Acres of Federal Land Under State Fire Protection	3,171,500	State Fire Communities Assisted	173
Acres of Private Land Under State Fire Protection	15,247,900	Coop Forest Health Acres Protected	1,500
Number of Rural Fire Departments	974	Forest Legacy Project Acquisitions	1,965
Cities and Towns	501	Communities Provided Urban Forestry Program Assistance	59
Forest Based Employment	26,376	Population Living in Communities Provided Urban Forestry Program Assistance	1,275,968
Economic Impact of Forestry (by rank)	2	Urban Forestry Volunteer Assistance	13,297
State Forestry Budget (All Sources)	36,416,737		

Program Highlights**Cooperative Fire Protection**

The Forestry Division participates in several trainings throughout the year. The two biggest being the Arkansas River Valley Wildfire Training Academy, which is hosted with several Federal Partners and Oklahoma Forestry Service, and Prescribed Fire as a Management Tool, which is hosted with partners through the Arkansas Prescribed Fire Council. The division also hosts several in house trainings like, chainsaw, dozer operation and maintenance, and Basic Fire. The Division also sent students to the Tennessee/Kentucky Wildland fire Academy, L580, and the Regional Heavy Equipment Operates course. The Division operates 13 fixed wing aircraft that are centrally located at the Malvern Municipal Airport. Eleven single engine aircraft are used primarily for fire detection and forestry related surveys such as insect/disease infestation and storm damage. Two twin engine aircraft 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 84 eight-hour Wildland Fire Suppression Training classes for 1,720 firefighters representing 673 fire departments. The Federal Excess Personnel Property and DOD Fire Fighter Program assisted Arkansas fire departments by acquiring and placing 153 pieces of firefighting equipment into service with a total original acquisition cost over \$2.8M. There were 15 interest-free loans approved for volunteer fire departments to purchase firefighting equipment totaling \$167K. The Volunteer Fire Assistance grant was also used to award 88 Wildfire Suppression Kits to rural volunteer fire departments at a value of \$3,542.70 each. This Grant was also used to award 8 Refurbishment Grants with a total over \$63K to refurbish Federal Excess Personal Property and DOD Fire Fighter Property that was assigned to rural volunteer fire departments.

Forest Health Protection

The Forestry Division monitors for landscape-scale forest disturbances such as bark beetles and pine needle diseases. From March to September of 2024, pine plantations across six counties in eastern Arkansas were sampled for the presence of brown spot needle blight (BSNB). This testing was conducted as a follow-up to the observed "pine decline" in 2023. There is statewide concern for the continued elevated presence of BSNB. In addition to BSNB, the Department investigated potential secondary factors affecting pine in southeast Arkansas, such as herbicidal drift from nearby agricultural land uses. In 2024 the Department participated in a monitoring effort to sample symptomatic pine stands throughout southeastern Arkansas. From March through September 2024, pine needles were analyzed for both BSNB and herbicidal drift, i.e., paraquat and dicamba. A total of 57 samples were taken from symptomatic loblolly pine trees across 23 locations, over the course of nine months and three rounds of visits. 29 of 57 samples (51%) tested positive for paraquat, 7 of 57 (12%) tested positive for dicamba, and 12 of 26 (46%)

tested positive for BSNB. The levels of detection on samples and visual surveys of the locations do not indicate that the herbicide caused any significant mortality in 2024, however, the presence of herbicide on these nontarget trees is a concern as it may contribute to tree stress.

No southern pine beetle (SPB) activity was detected by either ground or aerial surveys in 2024. The Southern Pine Beetle Prevention Program continues to provide cost share incentives to landowners and loggers for practices that reduce risk to pine bark beetles. Six counties across northern Arkansas were tested for the presence of Walnut Twig Beetle, the vectoring insect for Thousand Cankers Disease, a major mortality cause in several *Juglans* spp., especially Black Walnut. Trapping efforts yielded no positive ID for Walnut Twig Beetle.

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 12.5 million more tons of growth over drain. In the same way, the growth to drain ratio for hardwoods is 3.0, with 13.2 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

In 2024, the Forestry Division acquired four tracts for 65.97 acres in the Hot Springs Recharge Area to add to the Forest Legacy investments from previous years. The funding was from the Arkansas Natural and Cultural Resources Council, and the Forestry Division officially designated as Hot Springs State Forest (HSSF) in 2024 totals 3,294.62 acres. The HSSF was also established as a wildlife management area, managed by the Forestry Division and the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission. Two Forest Legacy pass through grant projects were purchased. The Maumelle Water Excellence Phase 2 (2,246 acres), in Perry and Pulaski Counties, was purchased by Central Arkansas Water. The White River Headwaters Preserve (765.895 acres), in Madison County, was purchased by the Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission.

Forest Stewardship

The Forestry 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 objectives. 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 Forest Stewardship Plans on 27,045 acres. Of that acreage, 3,913 acres were priority acres based on Arkansas's Forest Action Plan. There are 288,435 acres of Arkansas forestland currently covered by the Arkansas Forest Stewardship Program, with 107,135 of these acres considered to be in important forest resource areas. A total of 1,027 landowners received assistance through the Stewardship Program. The Division also actively participates in a tree improvement cooperative to improve loblolly and shortleaf pine and select oak.

Landowner Assistance

The Forestry Division, in partnership with federal and state governments and private organizations, continued to provide landowner training and assistance, and facilitated implementation of landowners' management plans to ensure forest sustainability. In 2024, the Forestry division assisted landowners on over 3,468 occasions, giving advice for over 276,123 acres. The Forestry Division is also a key partner on several efforts that focus on improving forest management by connecting landowners to organized networks of forestry support including federal and state government programs, consultants, and nonprofit organizations. Arkansas's "Keeping It in the Family" (KIITF) program helps to educate landowners on the benefits of actively managing their timberland and gives guidance to those with heirs property ownership barriers. It also focuses heavily with on-the-ground assistance for landowners, and connections to other forestry conservation efforts by encouraging enrollment in USFS programs such as the Forest Stewardship Program and Southern Pine Beetle Prevention Program, as well as NRCS' Environmental Quality Incentives Program and Conservation Stewardship Program.

Urban and Community Forestry

The Forestry Division provided Urban & Community Forestry-related educational, technical, and/or

financial assistance to Arkansas communities and cities with a combined 2024 population of 1,275,968. Arkansas's 51 Tree City USA communities and 5 Tree Campus Higher Education campuses reported planting 12,947 trees and spending \$9.6 million on urban forest management across the state during the year. Through Arkansas's Shade Trees on Playgrounds program, 50 shade trees were planted on 10 campuses statewide in 2024, with 3,500 students participating in tree celebration ceremonies and helping plant their trees. The 4th annual Free Tree Fridays campaign recognizing Arbor Day with bare root seedling giveaways distributed 13,400 seedlings to residents across the state during 27 events, many of which included volunteer assistance from partners such as members of local Arkansas Master Naturalist groups, municipal tree advisory boards, and community tree advocates. In spring of 2024, following a tornado outbreak in northern Arkansas, the state led a multistate urban strike team to assist communities in the northwest part of the state.

Contact Information



Arkansas Department of Agriculture, Forestry Division

Kyle Cunningham
State Forester
1 Natural Resources Drive
Little Rock, AR 72205
(501) 580-5479
kyle.cunningham@agriculture.arkansas.gov

US Forest Service Southern Region

Edward Hunter
*Deputy Regional Forester - State, Private, and
Tribal Forestry*
USDA Forest Service
1720 Peachtree Street, Suite 760S
Atlanta, GA 30309
404-660-7391
edward.hunter@usda.gov
