

Florida Forest Resource Fact Sheet 2025

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Investment in State's Cooperative Programs

Program	FY 2024 Final
Cooperative Fire Protection	$2,236,795
Cooperative Forestry	$1,617,926
Forest Health Management	$525,155
Forest Legacy and Community Forest Programs	$0
Total	**$4,379,876**

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

Key Issues

- Florida continues to recover from timber damage caused by Hurricane Michael in 2018, Hurricane Ian in 2022, Hurricane Idalia in 2023 and Hurricanes Debby, Helene, and Milton in 2024. Due to the severity of the damage, FFS is providing hurricane recovery operations in each of our four regions through increased wildfire mitigation activities. Wildfire suppression in these areas has proven to be very difficult, resulting in longer suppression times due to downed and damaged timber.
- Prescribed fire in Florida is still a very robust management tool, with an average of 2.1 million acres burned yearly. Florida has also been providing additional state dollars for prescribed fire enhancements.
- The population of Florida continues to have sustained growth. This influx of an estimated 1,000 new residents per day and subsequent new developments has continued to increase wildland-urban interface areas in the state. The increased use of the Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment and the Community Assessor tool and their data shows how the understanding of wildfire potential and the need for mitigation has become more mainstream.
- Several sawmills across the state have closed or curtailed production in 2024. Outlets for wood impacted by Hurricanes Helene and Milton are now further away, increasing costs and further decreasing revenues for landowners in the impact area.
- Florida's forests overall are sustainable across species and timber products, with a statewide sustainability index (ratio of net timber growth to removals) of 1.62. However, in some counties, especially for pine pulpwood and/or sawtimber, the sustainability index is below 1.0 (more wood being removed than produced) due to hurricane damage, high levels of industrial timber demand, and land conversions, especially in northeast Florida.
- Annual reforestation acres are about one-half of what they were 25 years ago. There is a critical need for increased reforestation, especially incentives for private landowners, as competition from other land uses such as agriculture and urban development continues to impact Florida forests continued sustainability. Compounding impacts from hurricanes also affect reforestation capacity for several years post-storm.
- Florida's forests are continually threatened by the introduction and spread of invasive insects, pathogens, and non-native plants. The spread of these invasives are exacerbated by recent hurricane incidences. The FFS works closely with partner agencies and organizations to detect new problematic non-native species, monitor their occurrence and impacts, develop and implement management methods, and communicate with the public about these issues.
- Rapid urbanization and recent powerful storms have led to decreased urban tree canopy and an increased risk of flooding in many communities. Florida's cities can better manage and restore their urban tree canopy by linking trees to existing programs for community resiliency and by developing an urban forest management plan. Urban Forestry Emergency Plans address potential disaster situations to help communities prepare for and recover from these canopy altering events.

Forest Facts and Accomplishments

Selected Facts	Value
Population	21,538,187
Acres of Forest Land	16,952,518
Acres of Nonindustrial Private Forest Land	6,544,367
Number of NIPF Landowners	70,436
Acres of Federal Land Under State Fire Protection	0
Acres of Private Land Under State Fire Protection	19,784,811
Number of Rural Fire Departments	525
Cities and Towns	412
Forest Based Employment	124,104
Economic Impact of Forestry (by rank)	3
State Forestry Budget (All Sources)	130,456,395

FY 2024 Accomplishments	Value
Landowners Receiving Educational or Technical Assistance	7,784
Total Acres of all New or Revised Forest Stewardship Plans	192,492
Acres of New or Revised Stewardship Plans within Federal Investment Areas	41,884
Volunteer Fire Departments Assisted	0
State Fire Communities Assisted	140
Forest Health Non-Federal Acres Protected	7,500
Forest Legacy Project Acquisitions	3,642
Communities Provided Urban Forestry Program Assistance	419
Population of Communities Receiving Urban Forestry Program Assistance	21,380,245
Labor Value of Urban Forestry Volunteer Assistance	0

Program Highlights

Economic and Public Benefits of Trees — Urban and Community Forestry

Florida's Urban and Community Forestry Programs offer support to non-profits, individuals, and communities through outreach, instruction, and technical assistance. Technical assistance is provided on a range of topics, including tree planting, tree care, inventories, canopy assessments, staff education and urban forest management planning. Thirty-five CFA foresters help residents and municipalities across Florida by encouraging stewardship, promoting practices for storm resiliency, and educating residents about the value of our urban forests.

The FFS has recently completed a statewide urban tree canopy assessment, providing urban tree canopy information to all incorporated communities (485) within the state at no cost to the community. This information has been shared extensively through webinars and partnerships such as the Florida Urban Forestry Council.

Grant funding has supported a program for local community urban forestry education, invasive species removal, riparian planting, and tree preservation during construction projects. A total of 56 applications were received for this program statewide and the requests eclipsed available funding.

One hundred sixty communities participated in the TREE CITY USA program provided through the Arbor Day Foundation. The FFS continues to partner with the Arbor Day Foundation and local utilities to offer trees to residents through the Energy-Saving Trees program. The trees planted through Energy- Saving Trees have positively impacted our communities, and over 27,900 trees have been planted around Florida homes to date. Energy-Saving Trees is a valuable program that needs continued support.

FFS Andrews Nursery

Andrews Nursery implemented a new inventory system and incorporated the ability to place seedling orders online with real-time remaining inventory, giving customers more options to purchase seedlings and more certainty the order will be fulfilled. Andrews Nursery has also replaced four containerized fields with the modern T-rail system, with a fifth replacement underway, increasing the planting capacity at the nursery without increasing the footprint. A second sowing line was also added last year, which has increased efficiency by reducing planting time from eight weeks down to 16 days.

Fire Adapted Communities

The FFS embraces the development of fire adapted communities (FACs) throughout the state that can withstand the otherwise devastating effects of wildfire impacts on communities in the wildland/urban interface (WUI). The concepts of FAC align well with existing local efforts, including the Local Mitigation Strategy, Community Wildfire Protection Plans and Action Plans, and Firewise Communities. The FFS held a training session on the development of Community Wildfire Protection Plans for our Wildfire Mitigation Specialists. The increased use of data from the Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment and the Community Assessor tool is an example of how these concepts are being used to make communities more fire adapted. The FFS also actively partners with our federal cooperators, fire departments, and other local stakeholders to successfully implement wildfire mitigation efforts, such as annual cleanup days, fireline installation and maintenance, and prescribed fire assistance on private, state and federal lands.

Florida Forest Sustainability Report

The State of Florida recognizes the importance of sustainable forest management and the FFS is tracking a statewide sustainability index of Florida's forests. The revised 2021 Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) data indicate that Florida's forests, overall, are sustainable across species and timber products with a statewide sustainability index of 1.62. This indicates 62 percent more timber growth compared with timber removals.

Florida's BMPs

Silviculture Best Management Practices (BMPs) are forest land management guidelines designed as the minimum standards necessary for protecting and maintaining water quality and wetland ecosystems during forestry activities. Silviculture BMPs were first established in Florida in the mid-1970's and were adopted into Florida Administrative Code in February 2004 (Chapter 5I-6). Currently, there are nearly 5.6 million acres enrolled in the Silviculture BMP program, just under 2.7 million acres on privately-owned lands and 2.9 million acres on publicly owned lands.

Forestry Wildlife Best Management Practices for State Imperiled Species (WBMPs) were adopted into Florida Administrative Code in October 2014 (Chapter 5I-8). Applicants who properly implement WBMPs are not required to obtain a permit authorizing the incidental take of their enrolled State Imperiled Species during normal, ongoing forestry operations, nor are they subject to any fines or penalties associated with an incidental take. Currently there are over 3.7 million acres enrolled in the Wildlife BMP program, over 2.4 million acres on privately-owned lands and nearly 1.3 million acres on publicly owned lands.
Technical assistance for BMPs was provided by the state BMP Program Manager and FFS' three Regional CFA Coordinators. During 2024, FFS provided 207 technical assists on 21,096 acres through BMP site assessments, courtesy checks, and implementation surveys. BMP training is another important aspect of Florida's BMP and WBMP programs and is presented via formal educational classes reaching Florida Master Loggers, consulting foresters, private and public land managers, forest landowners and other natural resource professionals. During 2024, FFS staff conducted 25 presentations on forestry BMPs, reaching 1,233 people.

Forest Inventory and Analysis

The FFS partners with the USDA Forest Service, Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) Program, the only nation-wide forest inventory system. The FFS based FIA crews collect inventory plot and other on-the-ground information, and then FFS works jointly with the USDA Forest Service on data review and validation before FIA data is posted online. The FIA program is widely recognized by the forest products industry and environmental groups alike as "the source" for data driven timber and forest vegetation information.

Florida's FIA program dates back to 1934, when the first forest inventory information was collected in the state. In federal fiscal year 2024, Florida FIA crews collected information on 709 plots in 67 counties. The latest Florida forest inventory data posted on USDA Forest Service websites is for 2021. Maintaining full federal and state support for the rigorous core FIA program, including forest inventories, analyses and reports, is one of the top priorities for the FFS.

Forest Legacy

The FFS, through the Forest Legacy Program, realized several accomplishments during FY 2023. In June of 2023, FFS closed on Wolfe Creek Forest, Paddle Trail Tract, a 1,487-acre forest located in Santa Rosa County. The property, acquired in fee-simple, is now being managed by FFS as part of Blackwater River State Forest. The acquisition protects working forestlands containing creeks and areas ready for Longleaf pine restoration in lieu of conversion to residential development. The property additionally provides a natural buffer to Naval Air Station Whiting Field. In November of 2023, FFS closed on the first Forest Legacy Program conservation easement in Florida, Keystone Longleaf Preserve, located in Walton County. This 1,955-acre property is also the first joint Forest Legacy Program/ Rural and Family Lands Protection Program (RFLPP), an acquisition program also administered through the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, less-than-fee acquisition in the state (RFLPP project name known as Natural Bridge Creek). Perpetual conservation of this forestland will protect the rare karst swallet and other associated resource features that render the protection of this site as notable.
FFS worked with partners to resubmit Avalon Woodland Ravines – Phase 1 to the National Panel for FY2025 funding consideration. The proposed conservation easement consists of 5,495 acres located in Jefferson County.
Additionally, FFS worked with partners involved with a previous Forest Legacy Program-funded acquisition who would like to realize specific changes to land use onsite. FFS continues to administer the federally required processing of the associated requests, to include meeting with the State Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committee.

Geospatial Technology

The Florida Forest Service (FFS) leverages geospatial technology to efficiently manage Florida's 1.2 million acres of State Forests and optimize public recreational opportunities.
Modernizing GIS Infrastructure: FFS is committed to ongoing advancements in geospatial technology. The division has transitioned users from ArcMap to ArcGIS Pro and utilizes mobile GIS applications such as ArcGIS Field Maps, prioritizing dynamic functionalities within ArcGIS Online. This transition has been adopted by most users, demonstrating their commitment to enhanced efficiency and data management.
Supporting Disaster Response: In the wake of Hurricanes Helene and Milton, FFS swiftly deployed its GIS expertise to support timber damage assessments, as well as created an internal GIS application for analyzing storm response data. By effectively utilizing resources from multiple agencies, FFS provided accurate and timely spatial data crucial for post-disaster recovery efforts.
Comprehensive Data Management: FFS has initiated a project to catalog spatial data of Florida's cost-share reforestation programs. These data and associated web mapping tools will prove invaluable for the planning and administration of these programs in the future. FFS continues to maintain a robust spatial database for the Rural & Family Lands Program. This meticulous data management ensures transparency and facilitates informed decision-making for future land acquisition and conservation efforts.
Continual Education and Innovation: FFS is dedicated to enhancing its GIS knowledge and data management infrastructure. By hosting annual GIS trainings for program staff, FFS remains updated with the rapid evolution of GIS. This ongoing commitment to education aligns with FFS's innovative initiatives, such as the migration of the FFS data model to ArcGIS Online. This effort strengthens FFS's commitment to utilizing cutting-edge GIS technology for optimal forest management and public service.

Healthy Forests — Forest Health Protection

The routine annual SPB aerial survey was conducted over North Florida, from May through September 2024. In total, FFS pilots and field staff conducted 24 flights, logging 9,129 linear miles and covering an estimated 16,366,464 acres. Special attention was paid to checking areas where SPB had been active in 2022 and 2023. Any areas of suspicious pine mortality were investigated with ground checks. However, no confirmed SPB infestations were detected in the state during the 2024 season, consistent with the generally low numbers that were collected in the spring pheromone trapping survey.
The Southern Pine Beetle Assistance and Prevention Program, which is funded by the USFS Forest Health Protection Program,

accepted 75 applications from non-industrial private landowners in 2024 to provide cost-share assistance and incentive payments to conduct preventative forest management practices on 7,068 acres. The FFS Forest Health Section staff also recorded 2,016 activities in the form of survey observations, identifications, diagnoses, and management recommendations regarding forest-health-related incidents statewide. This included the documentation of six new county records, six new host records, and one new state record.
Grant funding has been utilized for the production of outreach videos for private forest landowners, collection of and analyzing relampago blight in 21 counties, development of an artificial intelligence tool to rapidly screen bark beetles, and development of a new field guide of common tree diseases in Florida.

Landowner Assistance

The FFS, County Foresters, and partners offer landowners assistance through technical guidance and management planning as well as enrolling them in federal and state financial forest management assistance programs. Multiple state and federal administered incentive programs, with unique objectives, were delivered to landowners during 2024.
County Foresters assisted in preparing 487 Management Plans on 46,200 acres. These plans include practice, EQIP, EFRP, (administered through USDA NRCS and FSA Offices), and general management plans. Consultants prepared a total of 71 Stewardship plans, and FFS prepared 52 Stewardship plans during 2024.
Landowners were provided 293 technical assists over a total of 513 work hours for the EQIP, CSP, and
CRP programs.
County Foresters assist with the Southern Pine Beetle Prevention Program (SPB) and the Forest Health Monitoring Program, a federal program administered by the state. Detailed information is found in the Forest Health section of this report.
FFS County Foresters have been working with NRCS and FSA on EFRP. Florida was impacted by Hurricane Idalia in early September 2023 and foresters have been assisting landowners with a state financial assistance program during 2024. There are 274 landowners participating in the program to reforest 21,498 acres damaged by the hurricane.
In 2024 the state was impacted by three hurricanes, Debby, Helene, and Milton. Since the hurricanes, FFS foresters have completed 696 EFRP assists.
FFS continues servicing a state-funded reforestation program to encourage tree planting across the state. In the 2023-2024 planting season, 157 landowners planted 13,198 acres. During the 2024-2025 enrollment period, 157 landowners have been awarded funding to assist in planting 10,882 acres.
Overall, FFS County Foresters provided over 10,000 landowner assists for state and federal programs.

Private Working Forest Lands — Forest Stewardship

The Florida Forest Stewardship outreach program continued to provide landowner assistance and education activities that took place through in-person visits, workshops, newsletters, emails, and webinars. The FFS and our partners organized events that have reached 1,433 landowners who collectively own over 160,000 acres. These events inform landowners about forest management and assistance programs. Topics included forest & wildlife management practices, restoration practices, storm preparation and recovery, forest carbon sequestration, policy, and Tree Farm Certification. Recorded webinars and web courses will offer landowners and the public the continued opportunity to learn about forest management into the future. The program network consists of over 7,000 landowners and professionals. In addition, the FFS partnered with The Florida Tree Farm Program and the Florida Women Landowners Association to assist in engaging landowners that have not previously been involved in forest management education, planning, or cost-share programs.
Utilizing grant funding, the FFS has entered into agreements with private forestry consultants to prepare Forest Stewardship Plans on 71 properties covering 30,864 acres. Additionally, an agreement with the University of Florida is providing expanded outreach and education through field tours, webinars, and newsletter and electronic updates began during this year. Funding was also used for staffing to increase capacity for processing and delivering agency nursery seedlings to both public and private landowners.

RESTORE

The multi-state awarded RESTORE proposal to enhance private forest lands within important watersheds in the northern Gulf of Mexico has been executed. During 2024, the FFS has partnered with the University of Florida extension Land Steward Program to provide outreach to landowners in the project area for the 2025 year.

Wildland Fire — Cooperative Fire Protection

State Fire Assistance continues to fund and support firefighting resources throughout Florida, including developing Community Wildfire Protection Plans. The Federal Excess Personal Property and Firefighter Property Programs assist Florida in acquiring and placing fire equipment in rural communities throughout the state. Cross-Boundary funds are used to support operations within ten miles of a National Forest in Florida. Funding has supported prescribed fire and mechanical fuel reduction projects in this buffer for between 30,000 and 80,000 acres annually, protecting on average 6,000 homes. Cross-boundary funds have been used to partially fund employee salaries, equipment repair costs, burn fuel, personal protective equipment (PPE), as well as burning and mulching tools for projects in this buffer.
Through our mitigation and prevention grants, we successfully reduced the hazardous fuel load on over 6,701 acres, adding protection to 2,942 structures, and delivered 581 programs covering Firewise wildfire prevention, resulting in over 1,285,000 contacts and 350 direct door-to-door contacts on "Ready, Set, Go,".
Grant funding has been utilized to update technical capabilities at our Withlacoochee Training Center. Grant funding has also resupplied the Florida Interagency Hand Crew cache with line packs, EMT gear, portable radios, and tablet keyboards. Funds were also used to outfit each of FFS's 15 field units and four regional mitigation teams with a Stihl 500i chainsaw and extra saw supplies, increasing the agency's all-hazard response capabilities.

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