State and Private Forestry Fact Sheet
Florida 2023

Investment in State’s Cooperative Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>FY 2022 Final</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community Forestry and Open Space</td>
<td>$0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cooperative Lands - Forest Health Management</td>
<td>$677,855</td>
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<tr>
<td>Forest Legacy</td>
<td>$0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Forest Stewardship</td>
<td>$162,490</td>
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<tr>
<td>Landscape Scale Restoration</td>
<td>$234,019</td>
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<tr>
<td>State Fire Assistance</td>
<td>$1,694,445</td>
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<tr>
<td>Urban and Community Forestry</td>
<td>$1,329,341</td>
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<tr>
<td>Volunteer Fire Assistance</td>
<td>$456,304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$4,554,454</strong></td>
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**NOTE:** This funding is for all entities within the state, not just the State Forester’s office.

Program Goals

- Cooperative programs are administered and implemented through a partnership between the Florida Forest Service (FFS), the USDA Forest Service and many other private and government entities. These programs promote the health and productivity of forestlands and rural economies. Programs emphasize forest sustainability and the production of commodity and amenity values such as wildlife, water quality, and environmental services.

- The overarching goal is to maintain and improve the health of rural and urban forests and related economies as well as to protect the forests and citizens of the state. These programs maximize cost effectiveness through the use of partnerships in program delivery, increase forestland value and sustainability, and do so in a voluntary and non-regulatory manner.

Key Issues

- Recruitment and retention of personnel in all program areas is an ongoing issue.
- Supply chain and production issues are affecting the ordering and timely delivery of wildland firefighting and land management equipment. Equipment replacement appropriations approved by the Florida Legislature are only authorized for one fiscal year, which makes paying for ordered equipment an issue when delivery time is delayed.
- Florida continues to recover from the unprecedented timber damage caused by Hurricane Michael in October 2018. Due to the severity of damage, FFS is still providing hurricane recovery operations. Over 2.8 million acres of forest were impacted, equating to 1.29 billion dollars in damaged resources, impacting approximately 16,000 private forest landowners. Wildfire suppression in this area has proven to be very difficult as shown by the over 29,000-acre wildfire this past year.
- The Timber Recovery Block Grant in partnership with Florida Division of Emergency Management and FFS continued to provide critical funding to forest landowners devastated by Hurricane Michael. To date, FFS Foresters have provided landowner certification for 2,908 eligible applications and over $199 million dollars have been provided to impacted landowners committed to reforestation.
- The population of Florida continues to have sustained growth. This influx of an annual estimate of 600 to 900 new residents 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.
- Prescribed fire in Florida is still a very robust management tool with an average of 2.2 million acres burned each year. Florida has also been providing additional state dollars for prescribed fire enhancements.
Two items that will affect wildfire activity this upcoming year are the impacted areas of Hurricane Michael, Ian and Nicole and the forecasted onset of La Niña conditions for the third year in a row across the state. The panhandle remains in drought conditions exacerbating the damage left by Hurricane Michael. The amount of vegetation that was brought down or damaged after the storms and the areas of the state that were impacted create increased fuel for potential wildfires.

Florida's forests are continually threatened by the introduction and spread of invasive insects, pathogens, and non-native plants. 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.

Florida's forests overall are sustainable across species and timber products with a statewide sustainability index (ratio of net timber growth to removals) of 1.71, after excluding 10 counties impacted by Hurricane Michael. However, in some counties, especially for pine pulpwood, the sustainability index is below 1.0 (more pulpwood being removed than produced) due to high levels of industrial timber demand for pine pulpwood, 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 continue to impact Florida's forests continued sustainability.

Rapid urbanization, increased climatic fluctuations and 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.

FFS deployed an Urban Forest Strike Team comprised of arborists from three states to assess storm damaged trees following Hurricane Ian. This team used existing tree inventory data from the City of Naples to compare trees to their pre-storm condition and to find trees which were missing following the hurricane.

Trees provide key ecosystem services in their communities and urban tree programs advance the concept of sustainability. Trees are an essential resource helping cities become more livable by mitigating urban heat islands, keeping surface water free from pollutants and sediment and providing human health benefits to residents. Urban forest management is critical to restoring and protecting forest systems to maintain tree canopy and water quality.

Development pressure on Florida's forests and working lands continue to result in the conversion of properties, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic began in early 2020, which prompted an escalation of sellers under new financial strains, and buyers focusing on rural areas with open space away from city centers. There is a greater need now for an abundance of conserved and protected lands, and therefore the funding necessary to procure and manage such lands in perpetuity.

Forest Facts and Accomplishments
**Selected Facts**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fact</th>
<th>Value</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>21,538,187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acres of Forest Land</td>
<td>16,952,518</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acres of Nonindustrial Private Forest Land</td>
<td>6,544,367</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of NIPF Landowners</td>
<td>70,436</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acres of Federal Land Under State Fire Protection</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acres of Private Land Under State Fire Protection</td>
<td>19,788,273</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of Rural Fire Departments</td>
<td>525</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cities and Towns</td>
<td>412</td>
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<tr>
<td>Forest Based Employment</td>
<td>124,104</td>
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<tr>
<td>Economic Impact of Forestry (by rank)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Forestry Budget (All Sources)</td>
<td>107,921,940</td>
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**FY 2022 Accomplishments**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accomplishment</th>
<th>Value</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Landowners Receiving Educational or Technical Assistance</td>
<td>9,463</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acres Covered by New or Revised Forest Stewardship Plans</td>
<td>28,747</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acres in Important Forest Resource Areas Covered by New or Revised Stewardship Plans</td>
<td>3,832</td>
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<tr>
<td>Volunteer Fire Departments Assisted</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Fire Communities Assisted</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coop Forest Health Acres Protected</td>
<td>7,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forest Legacy Project Acquisitions</td>
<td>3,594</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communities Provided Urban Forestry Program Assistance</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population Living in Communities Provided Urban Forestry Program Assistance</td>
<td>16,148,218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Forestry Volunteer Assistance</td>
<td>67,891</td>
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**Program Highlights**

**Cooperative Fire Protection**

State Fire Assistance continues to fund and support firefighting resources throughout Florida, including the development of 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. This past year we acquired 9 trucks used for high water rescue and brush fire fighting valued at $1,257,714.00, 2 UTV vehicles for rescue ($30,000.00), 9 secure storage containers for hurricane relief ($68,000.00), 1 fire truck ($125,000.00), and 4 emergency scene light towers ($42,500.00). Additionally Florida Forest Service acquired through these programs mobile bath units, generator sets, replacement engines for fire trucks, and miscellaneous items, such as firefighting hand equipment, shop tools, medical supplies, power hand tools with a value of $937,757.58. In addition, the FFS administers Volunteer Fire Assistance Program funds to support the fire prevention and protection efforts of rural community fire departments which, this past year, assisted 43 volunteer fire departments with purchasing personal protective equipment (PPE) and other equipment valued at over $229,926. Through our mitigation and prevention grants, we successfully reduced the hazardous fuel load on over 26,824 acres adding protection to 3,549 structures and delivered 564 programs covering Firewise, wildfire prevention resulting in over 689,000 contacts and 201 direct door-to-door contacts on "Ready, Set, Go."

Our number of in-person programs and mitigation projects have started to rebound from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and we have been able to resume an increasing number of in-person contacts.

**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 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 2019 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 0.71, after excluding 10 counties impacted by Hurricane Michael in October 2018. This indicates 71 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, over 2.7 million acres of which are 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 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 almost 3.7 million acres enrolled in the Wildlife BMP program, 2.4 million acres of which are on privately-owned lands and nearly 1.3 million acres on publicly-owned lands.

Technical assistance for BMPs is provided by the Forest Hydrology Section primarily through site assessments, courtesy checks, and implementation surveys. During 2022, BMP Foresters provided 162 technical assistance visits to private landowners. 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 and forest landowners. Forest Hydrology Section staff presented 21 classes reaching 741 people during the past year.

Forest Health Protection

The FFS Forest Health Section responded to an outbreak of southern pine beetle (SPB) from June to August 2022, primarily affecting state and federal lands in Franklin and Wakulla Counties. A total of 68 confirmed or suspected SPB infestations were recorded in ground and aerial surveys. Suppression activities were initiated promptly on the affected State Forests, and survey information was shared with other affected landowners and land managers. The total area impacted remained below 60 acres, and no new infestations were detected after August. The routine annual trapping and aerial surveys for southern pine beetle (SPB) activity were also conducted as usual across North Florida. A total of 30 aerial surveillance flights have been flown logging over 9,554 miles during 66 hours of flight time. Total area surveyed for bark beetle surveillance flights is estimated at 19,356,653 acres.

The Southern Pine Beetle Assistance and Prevention Program, which is funded by the USFS Forest Health Protection Program, accepted 105 applications from non-industrial private landowners in 2022 to provide cost-share assistance and incentive payments to conduct preventative forest management practices on 6,887 acres. In the past year, the FFS Forest Health Section provided at least 986 assists in the form of pest identifications, disease diagnoses, and management recommendations to a wide range of private and public recipients throughout Florida.

Forest Inventory and Analysis

The FFS partners with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), 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 USFS on data review and validation before FIA data is posted online. The FIA program is widely recognized by 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 the federal fiscal year 2022, Florida FIA crews collected information on 619 plots in 67 counties. The latest Florida forest inventory data posted on USFS websites is for 2019. 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 2022. In June of 2022, FFS closed on Wolfe Creek Forest, Kingfisher Tract 2022, a 3,594-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 August of 2022, FFS closed, in fee-simple, on 313 acres within the Wakulla Caves Forest, Legacy Tract project. The forest lands add protection to a watershed containing a world-famous, first-magnitude spring, Wakulla Springs. The acquired acreage adds to the mosaic of conserved lands in the local area including the Apalachicola National Forest, Wakulla Wildlife Management Area, and Edward Ball Wakulla Springs State Park that provide safe haven for wildlife like black bears and bobcats. The acquired areas are now being managed by FFS as part of Wakulla State Forest. FFS continues to work on engaging remaining landowners whose properties are contained within the project boundary for acquisition.

FFS worked with partners to bring two new project submittals to the National Panel that took place in November of 2022 for the Forest Legacy Program FY2024 funding request: Avalon Woodland Ravines – Phase 1 (5,495 acres, less-than-fee), and Rosewood Bluffs, Rosewood Scenic Heritage Tract (3,680 acres, less-than-fee).

FFS staff and partners are working towards state purchase of a conservation easement on the Keystone Longleaf Preserve project. Once closed, it will be Florida's first easement under two FFS-administered acquisition programs: The Forest Legacy Program, and the Rural and Family Lands Protection Protection Program, recently funded at $300 million dollars by the Florida Legislature.

**Forest Stewardship**

The Florida Forest Stewardship outreach program continued to provide landowner assistance and education activities that traditionally take place through in-person meetings and via a variety of webinars and other virtual media opportunities. The outreach program reached over 7,000 landowners through educational events and mailings including landowner workshops, webinars, land management e-mail newsletters, video meetings and Polycom conferences. The FFS and partners used these events to inform landowners about forest management practices and programs. Topics included vegetation management, storm preparation and recovery, forest carbon sequestration, and Tree Farm. Recorded webinars and web courses will offer landowners and the public the continued opportunity to learn about sound forest management into the future.

**Geospatial Technology**

The FFS manages Florida's state forest system which encompasses over one million acres statewide and offers a variety of recreational opportunities for the public. A review and spatial cataloging of recreation resources on the Florida's 38 state forests was initiated to identify opportunities to enhance recreational programs and provide web maps. The division is continuing to move dynamic mapping to ArcGIS online by transitioning personnel from ArcMap to ArcGIS Pro and from Collector to Field Maps. The transition to ArcGIS Pro is voluntary for users currently.

In the aftermath of Hurricanes Ian and Nicole the FFS provided GIS mapping support for timber damage assessments utilizing multiple agency resources.

FFS continued updates to Rural & Family Lands program project spatial data as new projects were brought in and as existing projects are purchased. This included maintaining a comprehensive database on what has been purchased and what is proposed for purchase.

FFS also continues to collaborate with Texas A&M Forest Service on a Landscape Scale Restoration (LSR) project to incorporate climate change forecast data into the Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment Portal (SouthWRAP) decision support system.

FFS is continuing to help the Technical Oversight Team for the Southeast FireMap tool under development by Tall Timbers Research Station, USDA, and USGS. This tool aims to map all detectable fires in the Southeastern US and produce a comprehensive dataset of fire occurrence on private and public lands.

**Landowner Assistance**

The FFS and its partners offer landowners assistance through technical guidance and management planning as well as helping them to enroll in federal and state financial assistance programs for forest management. A variety of state-administered incentive programs have been delivered to landowners during the past year. Over 9,323 acres are being treated with funding from the Southern Pine Beetle
Prevention Program. Two hundred thirty-eight landowners were provided technical assistance over a total of 693 work hours for the EQIP and CRP programs of the NRCS and FSA. County foresters prepared 204 plans for private landowners covering 40,127 acres.

Partnership with the American Forest Foundation (AFF) continues with Florida's statewide Landscape Scale Forest Management Plan (LMP). FFS Foresters are utilizing this tool to provide efficiency in landowner engagement.

FFS continued servicing a state funded program to encourage carbon sequestration through tree planting across the state. This year, 249 landowners applied for funding, and it is anticipated that over 17,700 acres will be planted by 238 landowners in early 2023.

**Prescribed Burning Accomplishments on State Forests and Other Lands**

During the 2021-2022 fiscal year, FFS was able to treat 179,519 acres of Florida State Forests and Babcock Ranch Preserve with prescribed fire; which is down roughly 24,000 acres from the previous year due to COVID restrictions, personnel concerns, and some challenges with weather conditions during January and February 2022. During this reporting year, overall weather conditions provided many days with conditions favorable for prescribed fire, which allowed FFS to issue prescribed fire authorizations for just over 2.15 million additional acres of managed lands in the state. Prescribed fire continues to be a safe way to apply a natural process, ensure ecosystem health, and reduce wildfire risk.

**RESTORE**

During this past year, FFS has conducted hydrological restoration on seven high priority basins on Tate's Hell State Forest. Work included installation of four low water crossings, three standard culverts, and eight ditch blocks. Additionally, reforestation was completed on 624 acres of watershed. FFS staff also continued worked this year finalizing the budget for an awarded RESTORE proposal focusing on enhancing private forest lands within important watersheds in the northern Gulf of Mexico.

**Shared Stewardship**

The FFS signed onto the formal Shared Stewardship Memorandum of Understanding for the State of Florida in August 2020, along with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, USDA Forest Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Farm Service Agency.

Since 2017, the FFS has partnered with Apalachicola National Forest (ANF), under the umbrella of Shared Stewardship, through a Good Neighbor Agreement to assist with forest management activities on ANF. Over the past year, FFS completed the Florida River and GNA Second Thinning timber sales, which were delayed as a result of Hurricane Michael. Further, the FFS entered into the new Apalachicola National Forest Rock Bluff and Thousand Yard Bay Good Neighbor Agreement, which broadened the scope of work over the entire forest. No common stand exams or archaeology surveys were required to be completed this past year.

**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-eight 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 been a primary partner on a regional project to develop an online refresher training program for the Urban Forest Strike Team – arborists who are specifically trained to provide assistance to communities following a disaster event that alters the local tree canopy. Florida led a multi-state Urban Forest Strike Team deployment to Naples following Hurricane Ian. This team of arborists from Florida, Georgia, and Virginia assessed over 1,100 storm damaged trees on public property.

One hundred sixty - four 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 provide trees to residents through the Energy-Saving Trees program. The trees planted through Energy-Saving Trees have positively impacted our communities and over 24,400 trees have been planted around Florida homes to date. This is a valuable program with a need for continued support. FFS continued
working with the Florida Urban Forestry Council, Florida Project Learning Tree, Community Greening, the University of Florida, and Florida International University to promote urban forestry and proper arboriculture practices around the state of Florida.

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