Georgia Forest Resource Fact Sheet 2025

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Investment in State's Cooperative Programs

Program	FY 2024 Final
Cooperative Fire Protection	$1,960,885
Cooperative Forestry	$1,652,999
Forest Health Management	$987,231
Forest Legacy and Community Forest Programs	$18,144,670
Total	**$22,745,785**

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

Key Issues

- According to the Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment, Georgia has 11,768 communities at risk of wildland fire of which 5,066, or 43%, are rated at high or very high risk from wildfires. Twenty-five percent of Georgia's landscape, or 9 million acres, is categorized as Wildland Urban Interface (WUI). In FY24, there were 3 homes and 6 outbuildings lost or heavily damaged by wildfire in Georgia.
- The GFC is a leader in southeast U.S. water resource issues working closely with multiple partners like the Water Resources Committee for the Southern Group of State Foresters, the University of GA, and many others to help make the connection between water resources and healthy working forests. Forestland retention and forest management are key to maintaining healthy water resources and other important ecosystem services which provide financial, economic, and social benefits for society.
- Each year, Georgia's timberlands grow 53% more wood than is utilized. Over supply of stumpage, particularly pine saw timber, highlights the need for new markets for forest products from private lands. Forestry innovation to find new markets and opportunities to compensate private forest landowners for carbon and ecosystem services are still being supported and slowly growing. Reforestation is an important initiative as FIA data shows general tree planting declines during the last decade.
- With the continuing change in demographics in the southeast, GFC recognizes the need for increased outreach efforts targeting forest landowners and more general audiences. Efforts continue to increase use of social media and traditional media to distribute messages for water quality and working forests, forest health issues, urban forestry and reforestation needs.

Forest Facts and Accomplishments

Selected Facts	Value
Population	10,711,908
Acres of Forest Land	24,402,035
Acres of Nonindustrial Private Forest Land	17,038,330
Number of NIPF Landowners	142,336
Acres of Federal Land Under State Fire Protection	0
Acres of Private Land Under State Fire Protection	22,622,063
Number of Rural Fire Departments	470
Cities and Towns	535
Forest Based Employment	57,325
Economic Impact of Forestry (by rank)	1
State Forestry Budget (All Sources)	72,301,154

FY 2024 Accomplishments	Value
Landowners Receiving Educational or Technical Assistance	153,851
Total Acres of all New or Revised Forest Stewardship Plans	59,665
Acres of New or Revised Stewardship Plans within Federal Investment Areas	35,395
Volunteer Fire Departments Assisted	46
State Fire Communities Assisted	155
Forest Health Non-Federal Acres Protected	5,600
Forest Legacy Project Acquisitions	0
Communities Provided Urban Forestry Program Assistance	245
Population of Communities Receiving Urban Forestry Program Assistance	7,574,139
Labor Value of Urban Forestry Volunteer Assistance	0

Program Highlights

Economic Action

In 2022, Georgia's forest industry contributed $42 billion in direct revenue output, up 1.6% from 2021 and 140,787 jobs with compensation of $9.1 billion. Maintaining the forest sector status as one of the top economic drivers in the state is critical, particularly for rural communities. Georgia's forest industry would not exist without the state's highly productive and sustainable forests. The state's forests have a large excess utilization capacity for existing industry expansion or for new forest industries. New markets and demand for this large excess timber supply will help forest owners keep their forests as forests and not convert them to non-forest uses. GFC Forest Utilization and Marketing department provides forest resource analyses for existing industries seeking to expand operations, new industrial prospects, forest owners, business consultants, and state and local economic developers. New market opportunities for timber growers are being explored and may include growing timber for carbon benefits, to produce

sustainable transportation fuels, and as feedstock to replace petrochemicals in packaging and batteries.
Several major announcements and events affecting the forest sector occurred during 2023: A 70 MW biomass electricity generating plant is to be built by Altamaha Green Energy near Jesup, in SE GA. Graphic Packaging sold their Augusta, GA paper mill to Clearwater Paper Corporation in May 2024. The Augusta paper mill produces bleached paperboard and employs 700 employees. Hurricane Helene left a path of destruction on timberlands in South and East Georgia. 8.9 million acres of Georgia's forest land was located in Hurricane Helene's path with 1.47 million forested acres receiving the majority of timber damage from the storm. Helene caused a total timber resource impact of $1.28 billion. The impact of the storm on timber availability near the path of the storm will be felt for years.

Economic and Public Benefits of Trees — Urban and Community Forestry

In FY24, GA had 127 Tree City USA communities, 19 Tree Campus USA colleges and 2 Tree Line USA utilities. GFC provided community forestry technical assistance to governments and tree advocacy groups representing over 7.9 million GA residents. Approximately 583 educational programs, community events, meetings or trainings were conducted by U&CF staff. Through partnership with the Georgia Arborist Association, U&CF staff were able to conduct 5 Certified Arborist Review classes, training 133 individuals to become Certified Arborists. GFC also partnered with GAA to provide 6 programs reaching 130 individuals, and also sponsored an urban wood reutilization exposition at the International Society of Arboriculture Conference in Atlanta. In partnership with the Georgia Tree Council, the Statewide Arbor Day was held in the City of Jefferson, where Tree Cities from across the state were honored. GFC provided seedlings and tree planting demonstrations. In addition, U&CF funding was used to support the GTC which conducted three quarterly programs, a College Canopy Conference, and an Annual Conference. U&CF funding was used to provide 3,575 seedlings to 24 Keep Georgia Beautiful affiliates for distribution at their "Bring One for the Chipper" and 3,700 seedlings to 18 affiliates for Arbor Day events. GFC's Urban Forest Strike Team was deployed this year to Augusta-Richmond County where trees damaged in Hurricane Helene were assessed and inventoried for FEMA reimbursement of public risk mitigation costs. GFC also partnered with GTC to offer the Georgia ReLeaf grant program which provided $100,237 to fund 13 tree planting or tree giveaway projects across the state.

Establishing New Forest Products and Values Highlight

GFC champions market growth of all forest industry sectors through existing and new product research, development and technology transfer that may lead to new income streams for forest owners including sequestered carbon and other ecosystem service valuations, forest planning and financial analyses. U&M staff provided 352 forest planning and financial analyses assists using Simulator for Managed Stands growth and yield modeling to help educators and forest owners on improving economic outcomes from various forest management scenarios. Staff provided 120 technical advice reports on carbon sequestration, carbon markets, GA's Carbon Sequestration Registry and other ecosystem services that may lead to new values realized from forests. Staff presented relevant information about mass timber applications and carbon markets at nine conferences and forest landowner events. Staff collaborated with numerous NGO's, state, regional and national organizations to advance the development of a new forest product in GA, cross-laminated timber. Staff participated in numerous technical conferences on timber supply forecasting, mass timber, forest industry logistics, and financial analyses and delivered this information through outreach/education efforts to customers, company prospects, and the general public. Staff maintains, monitors and collects growth data on (2) nine-year-old, biomass reforestation demonstration plots, located on the Bartram and Dixon state forests, which may result in new forest biomass silvicultural prescriptions and potentially new income streams from forest biomass. Staff continued research on four, multi-year and multi-state projects including construction sector wood usage, forestry sector economic impact modeling, urban forest wood utilization and projections on timber harvest and wood supplies.

Forest Inventory & Analysis

During Federal FY 2024, Georgia's FIA Foresters collected data on a total of 1239 plots. Of these, 73 plots were National Forest Intensification Plots (mostly in the mountainous northern region of Georgia) with downed woody debris data collection added. Downed woody debris collection is added to all plots in and surrounding the National Forest to build fuel models and also for total carbon counts (which includes dead and down vegetation). Fifty-nine of the plots were P2-Plus Plots that have added crown variables to each tree, downed woody debris on each subplot, and vegetative profiles collected on each subplot. We also completed 20 Utilization Plots (aka Felled Tree Study). These plots require our foresters to measure cut trees on active logging sites to provide up to date taper/volume equations and get an estimate of what is utilized and what is left on site during logging operations. A percentage of the completed plots were checked for accuracy and the average accuracy for Georgia's FIA foresters was an excellent 97% for the fiscal year. We had 11 FIA Foresters working full time doing FIA Plots for FY 24 (full staffing is 11 foresters based on current funding). We also had a full time FIA Coordinator.

Forest Legacy

Georgia is continuing to work with partners to close on four active Forest Legacy Projects: 3000 Acre Suwannee River Headwaters project that will protect working forests and buffer the headwaters of the Suwannee River, near its origin in the Okefenokee Swamp; 8384 Acre and an 1817 Acre Dugdown Mountain Corridor Project that will protect working forests and the headway of the Ridge & Valley Region of Georgia (both projects are expected to close in FY25); 9016 Acre Upatoi Ravines protecting the productive forestland and headwaters of the high-priority Upatoi Creek located in the GA Fall Line.

Forest Management and Forest Protection

Hurricane Helene changed the landscape of southeast Georgia and will take many years to recover. 8.9 million acres of Georgia's forest land was located in Hurricane Helene's path with 1.47 million forested acres receiving the majority of timber damage from the storm. Wildfire containment will be more difficult from both an access and fuel load standpoint raising concerns for safety of the public and for the safety of firefighting personnel. Forest management regimes have been interrupted and changed due to the 1.47 million acres of damaged timber throughout the hurricane's path, and forest health throughout the area is at a critical point if proper

silviculture treatments are not administered. The state of Georgia has provided funds for 2 programs to be administered by the GFC to improve public safety and reduce fuel loads: a Fuel Mitigation Program and a Forest Access Road/Firebreak Debris Clearing Program. 14 Outreach programs have been conducted to educate the public and provide guidance on Hurricane Helene recovery reaching 1403 people. Helene caused a total timber resource impact of $1.28 billion in Georgia.

Healthy Forests — Forest Health Protection

In 2024, GFC foresters incorporated insect, disease or invasive species advice in 804 management cases involving 75,215.49 acres. Each Stewardship and Tree Farm plan written in GA incorporates advice to landowners concerning forest health issues. GFC foresters provided forest health training to over 98,365 Georgia citizens during 43 training sessions. Annually, prediction traps are set statewide to provide early detection of destructive forest insects and provide information to produce an active response to the threat. Diligent efforts are made to detect destructive forest insects in GA such as: southern pine beetle, ips engraver beetle, emerald ash borer, spongy moth, redbay ambrosia beetle, walnut twig borer, Asian longhorned beetle and any new first introduction pest that is found in the United States. The invasive insect spotted lanternfly was reported and confirmed in November 2024 in Fulton Co, GA. In 2024, 1,665 southern pine beetle infestations were detected with a total loss of 4,400 acres of pine timber. Aerial forest health surveys flew 9,789 miles resulting in visual observations on 20,381,481acres. Annual early detection/rapid response surveys were also conducted to identify non-native forest pests entering the US through international commerce. The Invasive Plant Control Program continued, assisting landowners with control of targeted invasive plant species. In 2024, 40 contracts were completed on 1,504.59 acres. Two hundred and twenty-five new cogongrass infestation sites were reported and two hundred and twelve were treated by the GFC during 2024. Cogongrass infestations have been identified in seventy-eight Georgia counties involving 2,176 sites on 547 acres through the years. Only 353 infestations remain active in GA and all active spots, with the exception of the thirteen spots reported in December, have been treated with herbicides at least once.

Landowner Assistance

In FY24, GFC foresters completed a total of 8,534 cases/site visits covering 510,833.09 acres. Verbal advice was given during most visits and followed up with a written plan to the landowner and other documentation such as maps, pamphlets, directories, etc. Over half of the cases and acres served were associated with the planning and certifying practices for incentive programs, such as EFRP, CRP, SPB, EQIP, IPSC and CSP. The following is a breakdown of the cases completed: General Advice: 1,792 cases, 160,210 acres; BMP Assurance Exam: 76 cases; BMP Firebreak Inspection: 828 cases, 722.55 miles; BMP Survey Site Visits: 90 cases; EFRP: 170 cases, 13,638.31 acres; CRP: 1,632 cases, 53,356.25 acres; SPB: 215 cases, 12,415.69 acres; EQIP: 2,136 cases, 174,838.96 acres; IPSC: 122 cases, 4,753.64 acres; Tree Farm: 17 cases, 5,994.37 acres; SGL Cost Share: 122 cases, 12,235.03 acres; CSP: 13 cases, 1,623.71 acres; State Lands Cases: 35; FSP completed/renewed: 175 cases, 51,537.51 acres; FSP certified: 6 cases, 1,494.83 acres; Cogongrass site visits: 866; Arbor Day Foundation Cost Share: 108 cases, 3,272.71 acres; Totals: 8,534 cases, 510,833.09 acres, 722.55 miles.

Landscape Scale Restoration

During FFY2024 , GFC's Water Quality Program continued to participate in a multi-state 2022 LSR Grant which also included TX, SC, and AR. SC is the lead state on this LSR Grant iteration. This grant project continued to aim at working with various partners across the SE United States to help educate people on the important link between healthy well managed forests and healthy water supplies. This is all related to the SE Partnership for Forests and Water. For this grant we are funding the writing of Stewardship Management Plans to better inform landowners on proper forest management, to help them to better retain and manage their forestland. This in turn should help protect healthy water supplies. In GA specifically, we have been concentrating on the Upper Oconee Watershed with this project. During FFY2024 GFC was able to contract with local consulting foresters to write forest management plans for various landowners in the Upper Oconee Watershed in NE GA. The intent of this project is educating landowners to help improve forest management and forest retention, thus benefitting water resources for everyone in the watershed and downstream. For FFY2024, this project resulted in 12 plans covering over 5450.17 acres. This grant project is still continuing with additional plans in the works.

Marketing and Technical Assistance

GFC U&M staff markets and promotes the state's forest resources through print and online media, conference exhibitions and public speaking venues; forest industry surveys and economic impact reports; and by cultivating new customers at domestic and international trade shows. Staff initiated the 2023 Timber Product Output Survey in cooperation with the project lead, USFS SRS, completing 69 surveys of primary wood-using industries. Technical advice and marketing services were provided to over 700 stakeholders including disseminating domestic and international trade leads to potential buyers and exporters, cultivated via memberships with the SFPA, AHEC and other economic development and industry partners. Formal presentations were provided to 21 groups. Staff attended/displayed marketing exhibits at 5 domestic trade shows.

Private Working Forest Lands — Forest Stewardship

GFC Stewardship staff consist of 3 Forest Stewardship Specialist and 1 coordinator. The cumulative enrollment for active landowners is 2235 plans covering 630,199 acres in GA. There are 296,040 acres of these plans in "Federal Investment Areas". In FY24, 197 plans covering 56,996 acres were written. GFC continued the incentive program for plan writers as a mechanism to get GFC employees to produce additional management plans at a reduced cost over conventional contracting. The GA program has continued to develop partnerships with conservation organizations, like the National Tree Farm System, to broaden outreach efforts. New partnerships to reach more landowners, like HEIRS property owners, are being developed with groups, such as the McIntosh Seed, Coastal Regional Commission, and the HEIRS Law Center. This effort delivers focused technical info delivery to landowners who have been challenged with clear title issues. Through these efforts, GFC reached over 35,000 additional landowners during FY24. Through the Certified Steward designation, the FSP continues to recognize landowners with 5 new Certified Stewards nominated in FY24. Partnerships will continue to be developed to broaden outreach. New partnerships include Carl Vinson Institute,

GA Trust Alliance, & UGA Extension. GFC, through the FSP, is also supporting programs such as the Shortleaf Pine Initiative, Long Leaf Pine Initiative, West Central Georgia Prescribed Fire Initiative and the Conservation Woodland Program by providing cost share and outreach across the state. The Landscape Management Plan was implemented to support Stewardship and certify 9 new Tree Farm certifications in FY24. Stewardship also continued a virtual training series covering forestry topics that reached just under 5,500 viewers during FY24. Stewardship has continued to partner with the NWTF and sponsored the SEED Subsidy Program. 84 landowners participated and enhanced 205 acres of turkey habitat.

Urban and Community Forestry

In FY24 GFC contracted with the Green Infrastructure Center (GIC) to work with 7 communities from across the state on activities such as canopy mapping. Funding was utilized to contract with GIC to provide a Technical Assistance program to 4 specific communities still recovering from the impacts of Hurricane Michael. GFC has also reimbursed funding to communities and groups across the state to improve community forests through tree plantings and tree maintenance.

Water Quality

The GFC Water Quality program is funded through an EPA Section 319 grant and by state funds. During the FFY2024 reporting period, the GFC conducted regular statewide BMP Assurance Monitoring of active or recently active forestry operations. The latest statewide Forestry BMP Survey of completed forestry operation sites was started. GFC staff completed a total of 90 site inspections with at least 150 people attending for various BMP Assurance Exams or to vet sites for our statewide BMP Survey. GFC completed 29 BMP Survey Inspections to start our 2025 BMP Survey, which will continue through calendar year 2025. A full analysis and report are planned at completion by the GFC Water Quality Staff at the end of calendar year 2025. GFC staff participated in 65 public events for at least 2665 cumulative attendees including talks/presentations and meetings with various groups. GFC also provided content for online BMP education for the Master Timber Harvester Workshops and Continuing Logger Education, which reached a total of 237 people completing the online on-demand courses. GFC staff performed 15 Field Demonstrations of BMPs for 179 participants. GFC staff also recorded forestry BMP Advice Visits for 148 people on a total of 15739 acres. GFC foresters completed 242 Firebreak BMP Inspections on GFC installed firebreaks, recorded 34 one-to-one and/or group Logger Conferences with at least 117 people, and hosted at least 48 one-to-one and/or group GFC Forester/Ranger Trainings including such topics as: Master Timber Harvester Training for all GFC foresters, BMP training for GFC employees, training on mechanical site prep in wetlands for foresters, firebreak BMP training sessions for GFC protection and management personnel, and basic BMP trainings for new employees as part of our online GFC Fire Academy. GFC distributed 343 BMP brochures at various BMP events. GFC maintains a public website with documents and information related to GFC, Forestry, Water Resources, BMPs, etc.

Wildland Fire — Cooperative Fire Protection

There were 2,685 wildfires that burned over 13,641 acres of private forestland during FY24. 488 unlawful burn notices were issued. Wildland fire suppression, leadership, and prescribed fire training were delivered using virtual and organized group strategies which ensured high levels of training opportunities. GFC enforcement personnel investigated 38 wildfires and 16 arson fires, 3 charges have been filed on those fires. The GFC serviced 3,885 requests and installed 25,948 miles of pre-suppression firebreaks during the year. There were 1,552,251 total acres that received prescribed burning during the year, with the GFC providing direct assistance on 164,291 acres. The GFC conducted seven (7) Prescribed Fire Manager Certification training sessions with 290 participants in attendance. Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP) have been completed in 145 counties to date, with 4 CWPP revisions being completed in FY24. An additional 6 CWPP revisions are underway after being awarded funding through the competitive Community Wildfire Defense Grant program. There are 131 Firewise, USA national recognitions for GA, with 3 new communities in FY24. All obtained re-certification in FY24. With continuation of Firewise Communities in FY24 which involved updating plans and assessments, the Federal Excess Personal Property Program assists Georgia in acquiring and placing fire equipment in rural communities throughout the state. Through the Federal DOD Firefighter Program, the GFC acquired 58 individual pieces of equipment to support both GFC, local counties, as well as fire and emergency service agencies with a combined asset value of $675,000.00. The GFC administered Volunteer Fire Assistance Program funds to support fire prevention and protection efforts of rural community fire departments. Through national and regional coordination, the GFC provided National Wildland fire response filling 289 individual personnel resource orders on 37 unique incidents in 13 different states.

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