



State and Private Forestry Fact Sheet North Carolina 2025



Investment in State's Cooperative Programs

Program	FY 2024 Final
Community Forests and Open Space	\$0
Cooperative Lands - Forest Health Management	\$4,702,340
Forest Legacy	\$0
Forest Stewardship	\$250,626
Landscape Scale Restoration	\$252,879
State Fire Assistance	\$1,273,659
Urban and Community Forestry	\$671,546
Volunteer Fire Assistance	\$593,832
Total	\$7,744,882

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

The N.C. Forest Service continues to protect, manage and promote forest resources for the citizens of North Carolina through the use of proactive measures that include creating fire adapted communities and restoring fire adapted ecosystems; reducing the risk of wildfire; identifying, managing and reducing threats to forest and ecosystem health; enhancing the benefits and sustainable management of urban forests; conserving working forestland; and, sustaining the economic, environmental and social benefits of North Carolina's forests.

Program Goals

- The cooperative programs are administered and implemented through a partnership between the State of North Carolina, the USDA Forest Service as well as many other private and government entities. These programs promote the health and productivity of forestlands and rural economies. Emphasis focuses on timber and other forest products, wildlife, water resources, rural economies and conservation practices.
- 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 in program delivery and increase forestland value and sustainability through partnerships, doing so in a voluntary and nonregulatory manner. Emphasis focuses on timber and other forest products, wildlife, water resources, rural economies and conservation practices.

Key Issues

- Promotion of the expansion of forest products markets both domestically and internationally. A key component of this effort is timely forest inventory and analysis (FIA) data. This effort should be maintained at current levels or enhanced to provide the most current information. Another key component is the education of landowners to the numerous benefits of forest certification.
- Providing technical assistance to a changing woodland owner demographic to keep working forests working.
- Continued development of ecosystem markets in collaboration with state agencies and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), as well as federal partners such as the Department of Defense.
- The N.C. Forest Service and our military partners have a mutually beneficial relationship. The agency's goals of "keeping working forests working" and forest conservation closely align with efforts to maintain our military's training capacity. To reach these goals, both groups must continue to effectively reach out to private woodland owners.
- Population growth, land use change and development patterns continue to complicate land management and natural resource conservation efforts.

- Continued outreach to an urbanizing and growing population about the multiple benefits that forests provide to North Carolina is needed.
- Providing technical assistance, education and outreach to communities to enhance the benefits and sustainable management of urban forests.
- With 13.5 million acres, North Carolina leads the nation in wildland urban interface (WUI). Many of the thousands of communities across the state face WUI hazards. Efforts to prevent and mitigate hazards and raise awareness are ongoing and need to be continued.
- Continued development and use of technology in the planning, response and reporting of wildfire risk and the impacts to timber, air, water and wildlife resources.
- Fleet management continues to be an agency priority and is critical to maintaining successful delivery of programs and services in North Carolina.

Forest Facts and Accomplishments

Selected Facts	Value	FY 2024 Accomplishments	Value
Population	10,439,388	Landowners Receiving Educational or Technical Assistance	22,252
Acres of Forest Land	18,700,424	Acres Covered by New or Revised Forest Stewardship Plans	5,182
Acres of Nonindustrial Private Forest Land	12,258,717	Acres in Important Forest Resource Areas Covered by New or Revised Stewardship Plans	1,897
Number of NIPF Landowners	199,775	Volunteer Fire Departments Assisted	190
Acres of Federal Land Under State Fire Protection	2,082,700	State Fire Communities Assisted	520
Acres of Private Land Under State Fire Protection	15,383,200	Coop Forest Health Acres Protected	34,598
Number of Rural Fire Departments	1,325	Forest Legacy Project Acquisitions	0
Cities and Towns	553	Communities Provided Urban Forestry Program Assistance	106
Forest Based Employment	151,700	Population Living in Communities Provided Urban Forestry Program Assistance	4,585,081
Economic Impact of Forestry (by rank)	1	Urban Forestry Volunteer Assistance	11,790
State Forestry Budget (All Sources)	72,354,298		

Program Highlights

Cooperative Fire Protection

Firewise USA® continues to be a strong program in North Carolina with 34 active communities in the state. The Firewise USA® program also receives promotional assistance through four Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Councils across Western North Carolina, which receive grant money through the U.S. Forest Service to promote mitigation activities in North Carolina. N.C. Forest Service wildfire mitigation staff have given presentations to more than 207 different groups comprised of private homeowners, the public and other fire service officials. Highlights include various presentations on Firewise USA®, community wildfire protection planning and wildfire risk reduction. In 2024, 54 assessments have been completed using the Community Assessor for the South (CAftS). The Federal Excess Personal Property program assists North Carolina fire departments in acquiring and placing fire equipment in rural communities throughout the state. The N.C. Forest Service also administers Volunteer Fire Assistance program funds to support the fire prevention and protection efforts of rural community fire departments that support firefighting resources throughout North Carolina, including the development of Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs). There are currently 899 approved CWPPs at the fire district level in the state, 11 of which have been updated in cooperation with Carolina Land and Lakes Resource Conservation and Development Organization, receiving funding in the first two rounds of CWDG grants and are facilitating updates. N.C. Forest Service wildfire mitigation staff continue to modernize the CWPP process and create tools of engagement that better illustrate collective wildfire risk across boundaries, including the creation of a Collaborative and Continuous CWPP application in with Texas and New Jersey. Working with federal partners, the N.C. Forest Service continues to be a leader in fire research, improving the safety of firefighters and the public.

Economic Action

The N.C. Forest Service continues to provide support to North Carolina's \$42.5 billion forest products industry while also increasing efforts to attract new industry to the state. North Carolina's forest products manufacturing industry supports about 151,700 full-time and part-time jobs in the state with a payroll of \$10.1 billion through direct, indirect and induced effects. International markets play a vital role for the forest products industry, representing approximately \$1.72 billion in trade value. The forest sector in North Carolina contributes about \$231.9 million in state taxes and \$1.15 billion to federal taxes. In June 2023, the Pactiv Evergreen pulp and paper mill in Canton, NC ceased operations, dealing a devastating blow to pulpwood and chip markets throughout the western region of the state. In October 2023, International Paper Company announced it would permanently close the #20 pulp machine at its Riegelwood, NC facility. In July 2024, Weyerhaeuser halted operations at their New Bern sawmill indefinitely due to market conditions. These closures translate to lost markets for North Carolina's private and public woodland owners.

Forest Health Protection

The N.C. Forest Service is responsible for assisting forest landowners in detecting and providing management options to control destructive native and nonnative forest insects and diseases. Services are provided through the county level, with forest health staff providing training and technical expertise in identification, biology and control of forest insects and diseases. Threats from emerging and established nonnative, invasive insects, diseases and plants have increasingly challenged the Forest Health Branch. Spongy moth, balsam and hemlock woolly adelgid, beech bark disease, dogwood anthracnose, butternut canker and Phytophthora root rot have been long established. More recently, emerald ash borer, redbay ambrosia beetle/laurel wilt, thousand cankers disease and spotted lanternfly have emerged. Plants, including Oriental bittersweet, Chinese privet, Japanese stiltgrass, autumn olive and alligator weed are severely impacting forestland statewide. Several nonnative, invasive pests found elsewhere in the U.S., including Asian long-horned beetle, sudden oak death, beech leaf disease and others, are also capable of impacting forest health in the future. In collaboration with other state and federal agencies and universities, forest health staff monitor the movement of these pests through trappings and surveys. Trapping and ground and aerial surveillance are used to monitor current forest health conditions. The Forest Health Branch is also responsible for administering the Southern Pine Beetle Prevention Program, a cost share program promoting precommercial thinning as a preventative measure against southern pine beetle outbreaks.

Forest Health Protection - Hurricane Helene and notable program efforts

N.C. Forest Service personnel also assist with nonnative, invasive plant control efforts on state lands and quantify and assist with management of abiotic forest health problems, including wind events and flooding. Surveys are often conducted to assess damage following catastrophic events such as tornadoes, hurricanes and ice storms. Hurricane Helene caused widespread timber damage in Western North Carolina. The economic impact was large and resulted in large areas of windthrown and broken trees. The long-term impacts from this event are still being evaluated. Some notable occurrences from FY24 for our state include the following:

- 5.9 million acres, or 18.4% of North Carolina was covered using aerial surveillance.
- 39 counties trapped for southern pine beetle with low occurrences recorded.
- 50 traps distributed statewide for walnut twig beetle with no new expansion recorded.
- 76 counties confirmed to have emerald ash borer with four new counties confirmed in FY24.
- 19 counties with laurel wilt confirmed in Southeastern North Carolina. States adjacent to Western North Carolina have occurrences on our border.
- Spongy moth infestations continue to occur and are treated yearly by cooperating agencies.
- Balsam and hemlock woolly adelgid are present throughout the range of their host species.
- White pine dieback associated with Matsucoccus sp. scale and Caliciopsis sp. canker continues to concern forest health professionals.

Forest Legacy

There are currently 11 projects involving 23 tracts in the North Carolina Forest Legacy program. The tracts include 21,474 acres. Of these acres, 6,220 acres are owned in fee, and 15,254 acres fall under a "working forest conservation easement." North Carolina's Forest Legacy Program closed on Dark Ridge Conservation Easement totaling 3,850 acres. The cost for the Dark Ridge project was \$7,246,000 which

includes \$4,865,400 from the Forest Legacy Program. The NCFS Forest Legacy Program received funding for the Buffalo Creek project. The award totals \$13.5 million and is the largest grant award the NCFS Forest Legacy Program has ever received for a single project. Funding for this project was provided by the USDA Forest Service. The Buffalo Creek project is slated to become a N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission game land and will add 1,218 acres of public access to parts of Watauga and Caldwell counties.

Forest Stewardship

North Carolina has 201,248 acres in forestland currently covered by the North Carolina Forest Stewardship Program. Of this total, there are 72,821 acres within the federal investment area for Forest Stewardship as identified by the North Carolina Forest Action Plan. FY24 monitoring data indicates that 92% of these Forest Stewardship plans are being implemented. North Carolina was third within USFS Region 8 to complete their monitoring for FY24 ahead of the deadline.

In FY24, the Forest Stewardship Program added 73 new and revised Forest Stewardship plans, addressing multiple resource management objectives on 5,182 acres. According to the North Carolina Forest Action Plan, these stewardship plans addressed more than 1,897 acres within the federal investment areas for the Forest Stewardship Program.

The N.C. Forest Stewardship and N.C. Tree Farm programs continued to work together during FY24, sharing data and technical assistance that will ideally make N.C. Tree Farm third-party forest certification available to Forest Stewardship Program participants. A secondary result is the leveraging of each program's strengths related to landowner assistance and outreach.

The N.C. Forest Stewardship Program utilized USDA Forest Service funding to assist with state forest action plan implementation. A portion of these funds was awarded as a subgrant to the N.C. Tree Farm Program to assist landowners with their third-party certification fees. Funding is still being used by the N.C. Tree Farm Program and will wrap up during the third quarter of state FY25. The program has utilized their sub grant to assist 198 tree farms with certification cost sharing covering 51,069 acres.

Information, Education and Outreach

Through the N.C. Forest Service Information, Education and Outreach Program, rangers and foresters statewide have provided valuable information to forest landowners and the public related to N.C. Forest Service programs, services and forestry-related issues. Personnel with the N.C. Forest Service participated in nearly 1,800 outreach events, reaching many farmers, forest landowners and the general public. These events include landowner workshops, natural resource conferences, state and county fairs, educational programs across the state forest system as well as other community connections. Additional outreach efforts include media interviews, newspaper and magazine articles and a variety of advertising opportunities, all promoting N.C. Forest Service program and service delivery areas.

Landowner Assistance

The N.C. Forest Service, in cooperation with forestry consultants assisted 3,835 landowners requesting woodland plan preparation and technical assistance on 189,103 acres. NCFS personnel also provided technical assistance to our federal partners to help administer several conservation programs to woodland owners.

The Forest Development Program (FPD) provided 419 landowners with \$1,590,462 in financial assistance resulting in 17,320 acres of tree planting. Nearly 31,000 acres were improved through tree planting, site preparation and forest stand improvement practices. The FDP began receiving \$1 million in recurring state appropriations beginning in FY24.

The N.C. Prescribed Burn Program began funding projects in 2022. In FY24, the N.C. Prescribed Burn Program provided \$139,410 in financial assistance to 152 landowners that resulted in 8,086 acres burned for silviculture, hazard reduction and/or wildfire habitat purposes.

The Southern Pine Beetle Prevention Program provided \$238,485 in financial assistance to 70 landowners that resulted in 2,928 acres that were pre-commercially thinned.

Prescribed Fire Education and Training

In FY24, the Prescribed Fire Education program continued to focus on prescribed fire training to landowners, forging strong partnerships to support prescribed burning associations (PBAs). In partnership with Southern Regional Extension Forestry, the N.C. Forest Service (NCFS) began providing a newly developed Prescribed Fire Guidebook to assist with training. We added the Triangle Prescribed Burn Association and Lumbee Cultural Burn Association to our growing network of burning organizations, bringing the total to eight. Of the six PBA's where the NCFS is assisting with supports, members reported more than 8,000 acres burning in 2024. North Carolina hosted two certified burner courses with 224 attendees. NCFS prescribed fire education specialists assisted 51 participants in 2024, nine of which became certified burners. Turnbull Creek Educational State Forest (ESF) hosted its second annual F.L.A.M.E (Fire Learning and Mitigation Education) Week for landowners February 2024, with 80 individuals attending in-person sessions that included two Learn and Burn events with live prescribed fire demonstrations.

Urban and Community Forestry

The Urban and Community Forestry program continued its charge to enhance the health and sustainable management of urban forests in North Carolina. This is accomplished through the delivery of grants, technical assistance, education opportunities and program support to municipalities organizations, agencies, industries and private landowners. In FY24, 23 U&CF grant projects were worked, totaling \$895,000 of grant funding. There were 11 projects completed, five are in progress and six are in the award phase. Of these 23 projects, 11 are inventory/assessment projects, seven are education/training projects, two are tree planting projects, one is an advocacy group development project, one is a management plan development project, and one is an ordinance/tree planting project. Financial support provided to the North Carolina Urban Forest Council resulted in the delivery of 19 urban and community forestry educational, job training and outreach programs serving 602 attendees. A total of 448 technical urban forestry assists were provided to landowners and communities. N.C. Forest Service staff, including 20 staff who are International Society of Arboriculture Certified Arborists, provided technical assistance to 118 municipalities. Arbor Day Foundation recognitions included 71 Tree City USA communities, 12 Tree Campus Higher Education colleges and universities and two Tree Line USA utilities. More than 11,274 hours of volunteer service were recorded in achieving these designations.

Water Resources

During FY24, the agency conducted 2,234 initial water quality compliance inspections on forestry operations and an additional 2,410 follow-up inspections. Data was collected from 59 tracts to continue the fifth cycle of the Best Management Practice (BMP) implementation survey. The N.C. Forest Service continued to proactively support stream crossing BMPs by loaning and cost sharing portable bridges to loggers. Agency owned bridgemats were used on five timber harvests for five crossings to access an estimated 79 acres. The agency developed and began to administer Temporary Bridges for Forestry Crossings Program, which cost shares portable bridges to primary or secondary forest product operators. Training for the year included dual instruction of nine college level classes and five associated field labs, covering a range of BMP topics. Additional technical outreach training consisted of presenting at 11 workshops with an estimated external attendance of more than 550 individuals. The agency also supported instruction of three logger education workshops and an online refresher module to deliver BMP messaging to more than 1,200 professional loggers. The N.C. Forest Service Water Quality program is funded through leveraged sourcing of state appropriations coupled with a vital annual allocation of USEPA-derived funds via the Nonpoint Source 319-Grant program, supplemented by occasional contributions from other grant awards.

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