State and Private Forestry Fact Sheet
South Carolina 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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperative Lands - Forest Health Management</td>
<td>$585,863</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forest Legacy</td>
<td>$9,507,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Forest Stewardship</td>
<td>$259,225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landscape Scale Restoration</td>
<td>$456,085</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Fire Assistance</td>
<td>$1,321,350</td>
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<tr>
<td>Urban and Community Forestry</td>
<td>$564,429</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer Fire Assistance</td>
<td>$250,560</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$12,944,512</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

• The cooperative programs are administered and implemented through a partnership among the State of South Carolina, the USDA Forest Service and many other private and government entities. These programs protect and promote the health and productivity of forestlands and rural economies, giving particular emphasis to timber and other forest products, wildlife, water resources, rural economies, and conservation practices.

• The overarching goal is to maintain and improve the health of urban and rural 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 timber volume, increase forestland value, and improve sustainability, and they do so in a voluntary and non-regulatory manner. The programs are a significant aid to retaining working forests.

Key Issues

• The State continues to focus on two key initiatives: protecting South Carolina forest resources and further developing the awareness of the contributions these resources make to the economy and quality of life for SC citizens.

• Other key issues include invasive species, natural resource sustainability, population growth and urbanization, changing landowner goals, endangered and threatened species, physical/social/mental health benefits, urban canopy cover, forest parcelization/fragmentation, and scenic resources/outdoor recreation.

• In 2013, a major initiative was launched to increase the safety of frontline wildland firefighters in the agency. The agency has made significant progress in replacing open cab tractors with environmental cab tractors that provide additional protection from exposure to heat, smoke, and hazardous conditions. Eighty percent of firefighting tractors have been replaced and funding has been identified to ensure that all frontline firefighters have environmental cab tractors by 2026.
Forest Facts and Accomplishments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selected Facts</th>
<th>Value</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>5,118,425</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acres of Forest Land</td>
<td>12,849,178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acres of Nonindustrial Private Forest Land</td>
<td>8,560,409</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of NIPF Landowners</td>
<td>83,939</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acres of Federal Land Under State Fire Protection</td>
<td>926,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acres of Private Land Under State Fire Protection</td>
<td>12,730,912</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of Rural Fire Departments</td>
<td>475</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cities and Towns</td>
<td>271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forest Based Employment</td>
<td>48,255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Impact of Forestry (by rank)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Forestry Budget (All Sources)</td>
<td>40,554,398</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FY 2022 Accomplishments</th>
<th>Value</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Landowners Receiving Educational or Technical Assistance</td>
<td>2,569</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acres Covered by New or Revised Forest Stewardship Plans</td>
<td>12,417</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acres in Important Forest Resource Areas Covered by New or Revised Stewardship Plans</td>
<td>4,952</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer Fire Departments Assisted</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Fire Communities Assisted</td>
<td>195</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coop Forest Health Acres Protected</td>
<td>5,076</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forest Legacy Project Acquisitions</td>
<td>848</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communities Provided Urban Forestry Program Assistance</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population Living in Communities Provided Urban Forestry Program Assistance</td>
<td>3,509,835</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Forestry Volunteer Assistance</td>
<td>5,028</td>
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Program Highlights

Cooperative Fire Protection

State Fire Assistance (SFA) provides funding to support wildland firefighting operations throughout the state. Preparedness funds are used to supply Personal Protective Equipment, water handling equipment and supplies, training (wildland and leadership), air operations support, and upgraded communications equipment. The SC Forestry Commission’s (SCFC) Computer Aided Dispatch System, consistently recognized as one of the best in the country, is also maintained with these funds. SFA mitigation funds in the amount of $176,419 were used by the SCFC to provide assistance to 26 communities in the wildland urban interface. SFA mitigation funds in the amount of $209,283 were used for fuel mitigation on 50 tracts for a total of 2,000 acres treated while reducing risk to 50 additional communities. Wildfire Hazard and Risk Assessments were completed for 52 communities. Approximately 240 Community Wildfire Protection Plans have been developed covering approximately 765 communities. Due to the COVID 19 pandemic, the Firewise Mobile Exhibit was not used for community events this year. The Volunteer Fire Assistance (VFA) program helps rural fire departments support their fire prevention and suppression efforts by building capacity to respond, especially in the wildland urban interface. VFA funds in the amount of $321,354 were allocated to 92 fire departments. There are 796 Communities at Risk that VFA grants have helped protect. The Federal Excess Personal Property Program (FEPP) and Firefighter Property Program (FFP) are other ways the SCFC works with rural fire departments to increase their firefighting capacity by providing equipment and vehicles from the USDA Forest Service. There are 710 pieces of equipment on loan to approximately 247 departments throughout the state, valued at $24.56 million.

Economic Action

The impact of forest industry on South Carolina’s economy has grown from $17.4 billion in 2006 to $23.2 billion in 2020. The industry sector using small-diameter wood remains strong, and the solid wood products industry is operating at full capacity with strong domestic markets. There are 86 primary and 934 secondary forest product mills in the state that support a total of 100,133 jobs. The Forestry Commission administers a marketing program in support of our forest industry by offering market research, education and promotion. In 2021, international sales of SC forest products amounted to $946 million.

South Carolina has an abundant resource with more standing wood inventory than ever recorded. The wood supply is balanced between hardwood and softwood forests as well as between natural pine and planted pine stands. However, wood supply projections point to a decline in small-diameter pine until tree planting increases. Projections of large-diameter pine inventory continue to increase creating an opportunity for economic growth.

The SCFC owns two forest tree seedling nursery and tree improvement facilities in support of forest
landowners and tree planting. The Tree Improvement Program, headquartered at Niederhof Forestry Center, includes 1.5 generation longleaf pine and 3rd generation loblolly pine seed orchards. Taylor Nursery is being operated under the management of ArborGen as part of a 10-year contract that includes the production and sale of forest tree seedlings. Up to 5 million pine and hardwood seedlings will be produced for South Carolina forest landowners at SCFC-approved pricing.

The Environmental Management program also falls within the Resource Development Division. Ongoing training programs, relationship development, and assistance programs, have routinely resulted in 95+% compliance rates with state-approved Best Management Practices. BMP Foresters work with landowners and loggers to minimize impacts to water quality and site productivity.

**Forest Health Protection**

Southern pine beetle trapping was conducted in 32 counties; results indicated potential for outbreaks in Berkeley County. An ongoing outbreak of southern pine beetle was detected by the US Forest Service in the Francis Marion National Forest.

During FY22, two hundred sixty four acres of forest susceptible to SPB were thinned pre-commercially and 2,664 acres of pines were planted at reduced densities to decrease susceptibility to SPB under the Southern Pine Beetle Prevention Program.

Oak wilt continues to be a problem in water oaks in Aiken, Barnwell and Lexington Counties. Conversations with landowners strongly suggest that the outbreak of oak wilt started after the 2014 ice storm as broken limbs allowed insect vectors carrying the fungal pathogen into the vascular tissue of the tree. This appears to have been exacerbated by wind events in the Barnwell area in the spring of 2021.

There are ten active cogongrass infestations in four counties (Anderson, Beaufort, Berkeley, Charleston, and Hampton) that are in the process of treatment and eradication.

Emerald ash borer continues to be found in the upstate (Pickens, Greenville, Spartanburg, Oconee, Cherokee, York, and Laurens Counties) and we have advised several landowners, including the city of Greenville and the Conestee Nature Preserve, on best practices to mitigate infestation by emerald ash borer.

Asian longhorned beetle continues to infest Charleston County, but eradication efforts are underway and the prognosis for eradication is good. Asian longhorned beetle has been successfully eradicated from Illinois, New Jersey, Canada, and large parts of New York, Ohio and Massachusetts. However, we can expect the eradication process to be of long duration, involving at least a decade of monitoring.

**Forest Legacy**

South Carolina was one of the first states to participate in the Forest Legacy Program (FLP) and has been a national leader in acreage and funding. The FLP is unique in South Carolina in that it resides within the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR), specifically in the Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division. A Certified Wildlife Biologist is the coordinator of the program. To date, the South Carolina Forest Legacy Program has completed 16 fee-simple acquisition projects (67,402 acres) and two conservation easements (12,080 acres). In total, almost 80,000 acres of working forest land and valuable wildlife habitat have been protected across the state. The SCDNR officially closed on the "Saluda Rivers Connector Project: Pacolet-Milliken Tract" in April 2022, permanently protecting 848 acres of a highly productive Appalachian forest in SC's Saluda River Basin. This tract will, for the first time, link the Middle and South Saluda Rivers through protected land. The tract is in the Foothills FLP Focus Area. SCDNR's FY22 submission, the "Southern Coastal Biodiversity Initiative: Slater Tract" (3,827 acres in Jasper County) fell on the line for the initial cut-off for funding, but thanks to an earmark in the federal budget by Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-SC), $9,457,000 (out of the initial $12M ask) was awarded to fund this project. SCDNR is going through the final permissions processes and intends to close on the property during the first quarter of 2023. SCDNR's FY23 submission, the "Southern Coastal Biodiversity Initiative: Bigbee, Glover, and Duck Ponds Tracts" (1,842 acres in Jasper County), adds to the Slater Wildlife Management Area/Heritage Preserve footprint. It made the national list for funding and will be the next project to go through the permissions/due diligence process. SCDNR did not submit a project for FY24 consideration, since we are working to complete these older projects first.
A goal of the SC Forestry Commission is to conserve and manage working forest landscapes in our state to achieve multiple objectives. The SCFC continues to emphasize Forest Stewardship Plan development and landowner recognition programs, focusing efforts on priority areas identified in the state’s Forest Action Plan. Private forestry consultants have historically played a very active role in producing Stewardship Plans for private landowners across the state, but decreased federal funding for the program over the last few years eliminated our ability to partner with the private sector for consultant-written plans. Thus, the number of new and revised plans completed by consulting foresters has decreased significantly. However, recent additional state funding for Forest Stewardship employee salaries has begun to reverse this trend by freeing up funds for consultant-written plans. The SCFC provided these funds in FY21 after the development of the SC Forest Stewardship Priority Parcel Viewer, which provides quick assessments of priority parcels that are eligible for consultant-written plan funds. Demand for consultant written plans has been relatively low compared to years past, but increased rates proposed for FY23 should improve demand.

Currently 199,097 acres are enrolled in the Forest Stewardship Program in SC with 81,291 of these acres being in Federal Investment Areas. Implementation monitoring indicates that approximately 88% of South Carolina’s current Forest Stewardship Plans are being implemented. In addition to adhering to the standard implementation monitoring protocol for FY22, SCFC included additional evaluation of specific management outcomes that have resulted from the implementation of Forest Stewardship Plans. Results indicate that Forest Stewardship Plans are having a positive impact on these practices, resulting in more retention of working forests and increased timber production which generates more forestry jobs.

Outreach to Socially Disadvantaged Landowners
The South Carolina Forestry Commission participated in five workshops designed to inform socially disadvantaged farmers and landowners of the services available to assist them in land and forest management. These workshops, facilitated by the South Carolina Association for Community Economic Development, reached 79 landowners, 25 of whom became eligible for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). In addition, the agency supports efforts by the Center for Heirs’ Property Preservation to provide assistance to socially disadvantaged landowners, serving as speakers at workshops and delivering technical assistance as needed.

Urban and Community Forestry
SC Forestry Commission Urban Foresters were able to provide technical and educational assistance to 86 communities, 40 non-profit organizations, 12 educational institutions, and 79 other entities during FY22. In July 2020, the SCFC received state appropriations for U&CF program salaries. The federal grant has been modified to reflect that federal appropriations will not be used for the funding of U&CF programs salaries. Federal funds will be utilized for operations, including a pass-through project to help build capacity in municipal and county U&CF programs. SCFC is partnering with Plan Green to provide a webinar series for planning commissioners called “The Certified Urban Forest Advocate Training Program” which provides information on how to include urban forestry in their decision-making processes. SCFC and the Green Infrastructure Center (GIC) are collaborating with state, regional and local governments, and non government organizations to create a strategic green infrastructure network and plan for SC. Work was completed on an LSR grant “Creating Resilient Coastal Forests” which involves mapping forest cover for several coastal counties and developing risk assessments and resiliency plans. The SCFC U&CF program is providing competitive matching subawards directly to communities to fund projects such as tree inventories, development of management plans, and other projects that will contribute to the management and protection of urban forests. Also, the SCFC U&CF program is partnering with the Green Infrastructure Center to provide technical assistance to SC communities for mapping their urban canopy, plantable areas, and set urban canopy goals.
**Contact Information**

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