



# State and Private Forestry Fact Sheet

## South Carolina 2021



### Investment in State's Cooperative Programs

Program	FY 2020 Final
Community Forestry and Open Space	\$0
Cooperative Lands - Forest Health Management	\$729,027
Forest Legacy	\$1,920,000
Forest Stewardship	\$369,027
Landscape Scale Restoration	\$174,226
State Fire Assistance	\$1,313,324
Urban and Community Forestry	\$494,457
Volunteer Fire Assistance	\$232,901
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$5,232,962</b>

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.
- Wildland fire emergency response capacity declined in recent years due to funding cuts. With the improving economy and funding, more firefighters have been added and additional new equipment (enclosed cab tractors, transports, firetracks and engines) has been purchased. A major initiative was launched in 2013 to replace all open cab tractors and restore numbers of firefighters to a sufficient level for an average fire season. Sixty-four percent of tractors have been replaced.

**Forest Facts and Accomplishments**

<b>Selected Facts</b>	<b>Value</b>	<b>FY 2020 Accomplishments</b>	<b>Value</b>
Population	4,625,364	Landowners Receiving Educational or Technical Assistance	3,380
Acres of Forest Land	12,857,041	Acres Covered by New or Revised Forest Stewardship Plans	13,176
Acres of Nonindustrial Private Forest Land	9,712,000	Acres in Important Forest Resource Areas Covered by New or Revised Stewardship Plans	7,446
Number of NIPF Landowners	301,000	Volunteer Fire Departments Assisted	5,000
Acres of Federal Land Under State Fire Protection	926,000	State Fire Communities Assisted	130
Acres of Private Land Under State Fire Protection	12,730,912	Coop Forest Health Acres Protected	6,000
Number of Rural Fire Departments	539	Forest Legacy Project Acquisitions	593
Cities and Towns	269	Communities Provided Urban Forestry Program Assistance	74
Forest Based Employment	47,047	Population Living in Communities Provided Urban Forestry Program Assistance	2,926,732
Economic Impact of Forestry (by rank)	3	Urban Forestry Volunteer Assistance	7,827
State Forestry Budget (All Sources)	40,011,137		

**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 \$195,043 were used by the SCFC to provide assistance to 25 communities in the wildland urban interface. SFA mitigation funds in the amount of \$57,531 were used for fuel mitigation on 13 tracts for a total of 962 acres. Wildfire Hazard and Risk Assessments were completed for 12 communities. Over 228 Community Wildfire Protection Plans have been developed covering approximately 735 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 \$196,451 were allocated to 69 fire departments. There are 699 Communities at Risk that VFA grants have helped protect. The Federal Excess Personal Property Program (FEPP) and Firefighter Property Program (FFP) programs are other ways the SCFC works with rural fire departments to increase their firefighting capacity by providing equipment and vehicles on loan from the USDA Forest Service. There are 850 pieces of equipment on loan to approximately 236 departments throughout the state, valued at \$21.41 million.

**Economic Action**

The impact of forest industry on South Carolina's economy has grown from \$17.4 billion in 2006 to \$21.2 billion in 2018. The industry sector using small-diameter wood remains strong, and the solid wood product industry has largely recovered from the past recession and housing downturn. There are 91 primary and 800 secondary forest product mills in the state that support a total of 98,306 jobs.

The Forestry Commission administers a marketing program in support of our forest industry by offering market research, education and promotion. In 2019, international sales of SC forest products amounted to \$1.25 billion in 123 countries.

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 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 and aerial survey were disrupted by the pandemic in 2020. More than 40 site visits were made to investigate reported pine pests throughout the state, but there was no evidence of southern pine beetle found during these visits.

One hundred and five acres of forest susceptible to SPB were thinned pre-commercially, 774 acres of pines were planted at reduced densities to decrease susceptibility to SPB, and 115 acres of longleaf pine were planted under the Southern Pine Beetle Prevention Program.

Oak wilt continued 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. Cogongrass infestations have been detected in 13 SC counties, but only five of these were active in 2020, covering less than 20 acres. Tornadoes in the spring caused some damage, but the breakage of limbs of pines and water oaks in Aiken and Barnwell counties may result in Ips outbreaks or outbreaks of oak wilt.

Asian longhorned beetle was detected in Charleston in May 2020. Clemson's Department of Plant Industry and USDA-APHIS' Asian Longhorned Beetle Eradication Program have been conducting surveys to determine the extent of the infestation and have put in place an eradication program and quarantine for the movement of wood from the infested area. The prognosis 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. To date, the South Carolina Forest Legacy Program has completed 15 fee-simple acquisition projects (66,554 acres) and two conservation easements (12,080 acres). In total, 79,634 acres of working forest land and valuable wildlife habitat has been protected across the state. 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 TWS Certified Wildlife Biologist is the coordinator of the program. During FY20, multiple potential project tracts were investigated. The FY20 FLP Acquisition Grant known as the "Saluda Rivers Connector Project, Pacolet-Milliken Tract" (850 acres in Greenville County, SC) was approved for funding and due diligence items are currently being completed. It has not yet closed. The FY21 submission of the "Razor Tract Project" (691 acres in Laurens County, SC) was not awarded. SCDNR's FY22 submission, the "Southern Coastal Biodiversity Initiative, Slater Tract" (3,827 acres in Jasper County) was reviewed by the Ranking Committee in November 2020 and well-received. We are still awaiting the final decision whether the grant will be awarded or not. The Great American Outdoors Act permanently funded the Forest Legacy Program and increased the overall amount available to states and territories. This was a huge success for the Program and has encouraged larger, more substantial conservation projects to be put forward for consideration nationwide.

### **Forest Stewardship**

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 has 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 should reverse this trend in FY21 by allowing funds for consultant-written plans. The SCFC planned to provide these funds in FY20, but decided to wait until after the revision of SC's Forest Action Plan and Forest Stewardship Priority areas.

Currently 262,418 acres are enrolled in the Forest Stewardship Program in SC with 125,828 of these acres being in Important Forest Resource Areas. Implementation monitoring indicates that approximately 71% of South Carolina's current Forest Stewardship Plans are being implemented. In addition to adhering to the standard implementation monitoring protocol for FY20, 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. Results also indicate that landowners with Forest Stewardship Management Plans are significantly more likely to be engaged in active management of their woodlands.

### **Urban and Community Forestry**

SC Forestry Commission Urban Foresters were able to provide technical and educational assistance to 43 communities, 18 non-profit organizations, 8 educational institutions, and 40 other entities. 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. The SCFC U&CF program is partnering with the Green Infrastructure Center (GIC) to help coordinate tree planting campaigns in three municipalities. The purpose of this project is to assist communities with strategic tree planning and planting by demonstrating the use of data in planning to retain canopy and how to motivate planting across both public and private sectors. SCFC is partnering with GIC in a "Canopy Coaching" project to assist five communities with technical support to map their urban canopy, plantable areas, and set urban canopy goals. SCFC is working on the "Planners Forest Toolkit" with stakeholders to provide planners with a suite of policy tools and practices to expand or conserve forests. The guide will include examples of successful forest conservation policies from across SC and best policy practices. 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 GIC are collaborating with state, regional and local governments, and federal and state agencies to create a strategic green infrastructure network and plan for SC. Work continues on an LSR grant "Creating Resilient Coastal Forests" which involves mapping forest cover for several coastal counties and developing risk assessments and resiliency plans.

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## **Contact Information**



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