

Fall/Winter 2023

# FLORIDA FORESTS

AN OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE FLORIDA FORESTRY ASSOCIATION

## The Eye of the Storm: Hurricane Idalia



FORESTRY IN THE FARM BILL

LEGISLATIVE TIMBER TOUR DESIGNED  
TO BUILD BRIDGES

SEAMLESS SUCCESSION:  
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Volume 27, Issue 2  
Fall/Winter 2023



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Phone: 850-222-5646  
info@FLForestry.org  
www.FLForestry.org

**Executive Editor**  
Lee Ann Fisch  
Florida Forestry Association  
Director of Communications

**Association Leadership**  
Jimmy Bielling, President  
Avery Roberts, Vice President/President Elect  
Ann Hutchinson Duff, Secretary/Treasurer  
Alan Shelby, Executive Vice President

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Matt Fischer

**Sr. Editor:**  
Michelle Harris Griest

**Layout and Design:**  
Deb Churchill | Print 2.0h!

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## Our Hope for Continuing Success and Sustainability

By **JIMMY BIELLING**, President

**THE HOLIDAY SEASON** is one of my favorite times of the year. I enjoy the time with family and friends, celebrating the spirit of the season. They bring joy, strength, and comfort as we reminisce about the year that is passing and plan for the one to come.

Having the honor of serving as the president of the Florida Forestry Association has been a highlight of my year and my life. Being able to serve in this capacity as we celebrated our first 100 years as an organization was a bonus! Our leadership team, membership, partners, and staff worked together to create a successful year and a memorable commemoration of our notable milestone.

In the midst of the celebrating, 2023 certainly had its challenges for the forestry community as well. A hurricane that hit during our Annual Meeting, mill closures, and other adversities tested our resilience, tenacity, and determination. Despite the challenges, I truly believe that we will always come out on top. The indomitable American spirit beats strong in all our hearts; we are resolved to adapt and conquer. It's what we do. It's who we are. The past 100 years prove it.

I'm reminded of a Latin phrase: "*Veni. Vidi. Vici.*" *I came. I saw. I conquered.* My belief in our continuing success and sustainability is not a naïve hope. It is based on being in the mix, seeing what is happening, and being committed to doing what is necessary to conquer the circumstances. It is a belief and a commitment shared by many.

That is the secret of our century of success: shared belief and commitment. The Association brings together individuals and companies from all aspects of Florida forestry. We stand together. We fight together. We succeed together. May we all find resolve in our compassion for our community, our friends, and colleagues and continue to forge forward.

I am looking forward to the coming year and the opportunity to serve my last year as your president. Together we will continue to grow the Association and tell our story of forestry and the Association's 100 years of history. Science, technology, environmental protection, and passion have led the way in the advancement of forestry and what it is today. Be proud – you have all been a part of this success story!

In closing, thank you all for the opportunity to serve you and thanks to all for making the Association what it is today. I pray this new year brings you peace, joy, and happiness. •

# THE EYE OF THE STORM: HURRICANE IDALIA

*Hurricane Idalia made landfall on the coast of Taylor County, ravaging forests in its path.*

**HURRICANE IDALIA MADE** landfall as a strong Category 3 storm close to Keaton Beach, FL, on August 29, 2023. The 125-mph sustained winds and heavy rain that came with it ripped through forests in the Big Bend area, with Taylor County taking the most direct impact. According to the Florida Forest Service's (FFS) initial assessment report, the storm is estimated to have damaged more than 289,000 acres of timber, worth over \$64 million.

The initial FFS report on timber damage assessment covers several counties: Dixie, Hamilton, Lafayette, Madison, Suwannee, and Taylor. They categorized the timber into pine, pine/hardwood, hardwood, and cypress. To figure out the values, they used average prices from TimberMart-South in Florida for the second quarter of 2023.

It is important to note that this report shows the overall damage and loss based on the value of the timber before the storm. It does not take into account how much might be salvaged after the storm, which is often lower. These numbers include all damaged timber, whether it can still be used for various products or not. Also, they did not consider the land's urban use when calculating the damaged timber acreage.

Hurricane Idalia's damage to timber is different from what has been seen in recent storms in Florida. Other hurricanes like Michael in 2018, Sally in 2020, and Ian in 2022 caused fairly consistent damage patterns, but Idalia's impact is more scattered. Instead of a uniform damage pattern, Idalia left pockets of severe damage all over the affected area. Surveys on the



*Hurricane damage in Anderson Spring, near Twin Rivers State Forest.*

Hurricane Idalia Timber Damaged Area, Volume and Value Based for the 6 Affected Counties							
Forest Type	Timber Damage Category	Avg Damage to Timber	Merchantable Private Acres	Merchantable Public Acres	Merchantable Total Acres	Damaged Total Timber Tons	Damaged Total Timber Value \$
<b>Pine</b>	Catastrophic	0.50	1,674.27	0.00	1,674.27	26,553.92	\$ 669,335.87
	Severe	0.33	93,531.38	2,425.42	95,956.80	1,004,437.42	\$ 25,318,519.11
	Moderate	0.25	75,525.40	7,727.01	83,252.41	660,191.63	\$ 16,641,230.33
	<b>Total</b>		170,731.05	10,152.43	180,883.48	<b>1,691,182.97</b>	<b>\$ 42,629,085.31</b>
<b>Mixed P/H</b>	Catastrophic	0.50	590.94	0.00	590.94	13,006.57	\$ 201,341.76
	Severe	0.33	24,398.07	139.18	24,537.25	356,442.82	\$ 5,517,734.91
	Moderate	0.25	13,180.15	1,089.40	14,269.55	157,036.40	\$ 2,430,923.42
	<b>Total</b>		38,169.16	1,228.58	39,397.74	<b>526,485.79</b>	<b>\$ 8,150,000.09</b>
<b>Hardwood</b>	Catastrophic	0.50	192.03	0.00	192.03	4,056.70	\$ 62,797.78
	Severe	0.33	18,844.24	1,975.69	20,819.93	290,281.90	\$ 4,493,563.88
	Moderate	0.25	35,060.05	8,670.60	43,730.65	461,905.02	\$ 7,150,289.69
	<b>Total</b>		54,096.33	10,646.29	64,742.62	<b>756,243.63</b>	<b>\$ 11,706,651.35</b>
<b>Cypress</b>	Catastrophic	0.50	59.74	0.00	59.74	3,390.90	\$ 56,492.34
	Severe	0.33	2,000.17	57.34	2,057.50	77,084.10	\$ 1,284,221.06
	Moderate	0.25	1,571.18	384.62	1,955.80	55,510.51	\$ 924,805.16
	<b>Total</b>		3,631.08	441.96	4,073.04	<b>135,985.51</b>	<b>\$ 2,265,518.56</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>266,627.62</b>	<b>22,469.26</b>	<b>289,096.88</b>	<b>3,109,897.90</b>	<b>\$ 64,751,255.30</b>	

Table 1: An estimate of the amount of timber damage caused by Hurricane Idalia and the total value of the damaged timber.

ground found places with moderate or severe damage that were not expected based on other observations.

In some areas, the damage was severe due to downdrafts and tornadoes. This hurricane did not bring a lot of rain because it moved quickly across the state, with the heaviest rainfall in Desoto County being 7.11 inches. Radar data showed that parts of Madison County had similar rainfall.

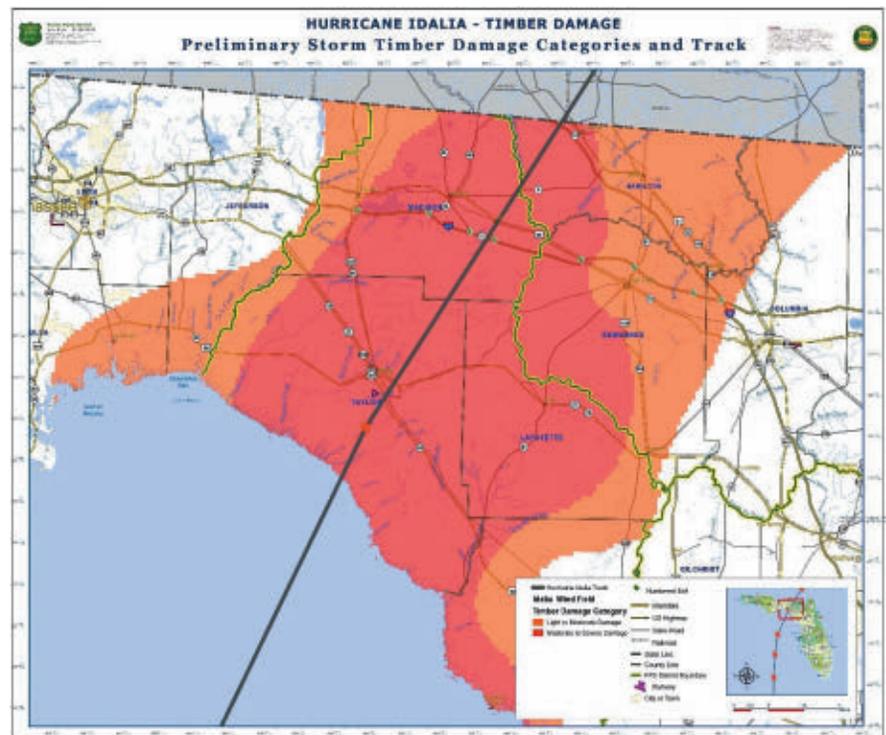
“For this part of the state in particular – which relies heavily on the timber industry – more than \$64 million worth of damaged timber shows just how devastating Hurricane Idalia was, and this does not take into account any potential future harm or disease that could come to remaining timber stands,” said Agriculture Commissioner Wilton Simpson. “Due to

the decades-long investment between the time of planting to harvesting, these communities will not only need immediate support but also long-term solutions to recover. I will continue working with local, state, and federal partners to ensure that impacted producers have access to the recovery resources they deserve.”

PHOTO CREDIT: THE FORESTRY COMPANY



PHOTO CREDIT: FLORIDA FOREST SERVICE





Damage from the hurricane ranged from moderate to catastrophic.

The Association worked with Commissioner Simpson and the Florida legislature to address the need for hurricane relief and recovery during the special session in November. The results were significant:

### TIMBER LANDOWNER ASSISTANCE COST-SHARE GRANT PROGRAM

- \$37.5 million appropriated to the Florida Department of Agriculture

and Consumer Services (FDACS) for the Timber Landowner Assistance Cost-Share Grant Program.

- Assists timber landowners through cost-share grants in declared counties damaged from Hurricane Idalia with site preparation (including debris removal) and tree planting on impacted forest lands.
- Grants must be up to 75% of the costs for site preparation and tree

planting costs with a maximum award of \$250,000.

### AGRICULTURE AND AQUACULTURE PRODUCERS NATURAL DISASTER RECOVERY LOAN PROGRAM

- \$75 million is appropriated to FDACS for the Agriculture and Aquaculture Producers Natural Disaster Recovery Loan Program for Hurricane Idalia.
- Established to make low-interest or interest-free loans, up to \$500,000 for an application period, to agriculture and aquaculture producers that have experienced damage or destruction from declared natural disasters.
- Loans may be used to restore, repair, or replace essential physical property or remove vegetative debris from essential physical property.

Additionally, to mitigate the impacts of recent disasters affecting the state, HB 1-C does the following:

- Provides that certain agricultural equipment that was unable to be used for 60 days due to Hurricane Idalia would be assessed at salvage value on the 2024 property tax roll.

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- Grants refunds of sales tax paid on fencing materials used to repair or replace farm fences on lands classified as agriculture and were damaged due to Hurricane Idalia.
- Grants refunds of sales tax paid on building materials used to repair or replace nonresidential farm buildings damaged as a result of Hurricane Idalia.
- Grants refunds of motor fuel taxes used for agricultural shipments and debris removal after Hurricane Idalia.

Many thanks to **Governor Ron DeSantis** for his approval of the legislation, bill sponsors **Senator Corey Simon** (R-Tallahassee) and **Representative Jason Shoaf** (R-Port St. Joe) for their excellent work on behalf of their districts, and to **Commissioner Simpson** for his leadership on recovery efforts and his commitment to Florida forestry.

For the 2024 legislative session, Commissioner Simpson has submitted a \$4 million budget request for Florida's Future Forests Program (FFFP) in the 2023-2024 state budget. FFFP offers



Hurricane's Idalia's impacts were more scattered than previous storms.

landowners cost-share payments to help increase the acreage of Florida's healthy forests, which provide clean air, clean water, wildlife habitat, recreation, and thousands of essential products. The program is open to non-industrial, private landowners, local governments, and registered nonprofit organizations. Grants are provided on a lottery basis.

The Association has created a resource page for those impacted by the hurricane on its website, FLForestry.org. The page features information on available assistance, resources, and recovery information on federal and state levels. •

*The information in this article regarding storm damage is courtesy of the Florida Forest Service.*

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# FORESTRY IN THE FARM BILL

By **ALAN SHELBY**,  
Executive Vice President, Florida Forestry Association

*Morning cattle run at Usher Land & Timber, Inc.*

**THE FARM BILL** is a comprehensive piece of federal legislation that primarily deals with agriculture, farming, and food-related policies. It is adopted by Congress roughly every five years and has a significant impact on various aspects of the country's agricultural and food systems.

As part of its advocacy efforts, the Florida Forestry Association is a member of the Forestry in the Farm Bill (FIFB) Coalition. FIFB is a diverse coalition of more than a hundred organizations representing a range of interests across the

forest sector that come together to offer a set of recommendations focused on improving the forest-related sections of the Farm Bill.

The Farm Bill covers a wide range of topics. It shapes how food is produced, who gets help to buy food, and how we care for the environment in the United States. It affects not only farmers but also consumers, the environment, and rural communities.

Similarly, forestry-related titles within the Farm Bill are also wide-ranging, as are the FIFB recommendations. Below

we have highlighted proposals of particular interest to the Florida forestry community.

**Enhance the Good Neighbor Authority (GNA):** Make it easier for the U.S. Forest Service to work together with states, tribes, and counties on projects to restore and manage federal forests, expanding the ability of the U.S. Forest Service to partner with the Florida Forest Service to expedite management and harvest operations on national forests. In addition, remove the requirement that GNA project revenues



Log truck leaving the forest.

be spent on federal lands and the sunset date (October 1, 2023), for states to retain GNA project revenue. This has become even more important for some of our consuming mills that operate along the path of Hurricane Michael.

**Fully fund the conservation and reforestation programs without limitation to species planted or stem density.** This should include the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP), Wetland Reserve Program (WRP), and Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP).

**Fully Fund the Forest Inventory Analysis (FIA) Program.** This program collects data on the forest growth/drain trends around the country. It provides critical information for the forest manufacturing sector.

**Review and revamp the USDA's Emergency Forest Restoration Program (EFRP).** The EFRP was created in the 2008 Farm Bill to help forestland owners clean up and reforest after a disaster. After Hurricane Michael, a Category 5 storm that impacted

2.3 million acres of forestland in the Florida Panhandle, impacted landowners discovered that the EFRP has its share of programmatic challenges, including access and timely reimbursements. Five years later, some of those challenges are still being worked through. At a minimum, the EFRP program needs to be carefully reviewed and revamped. Alternatively, a new program may need to be considered that adequately supports the needs of forestland owners following a natural disaster.

- **Eliminate the requirement for County Farm Service Agency (FSA) offices to implement the program.** FSA offices are not always available. For example, Hurricane Michael destroyed the county FSA offices along with everything else. Consider authorizing the FSA to partner with the states to administer the EFRP program, similar to how state block grants were administered.
- **Include the S231-Emergency Conservation Program Improvement Act in the Farm Bill.** This would allow a landowner to receive an up-front EFRP payment, as opposed to having to come up with the money, then waiting to be reimbursed.
- **Exempt forestland owners from having to get an FSA Farm Number.** This proved to be a very cumbersome process in the aftermath of the disaster. The Farm Number requirement works best for the traditional row-crop farmer who works regularly with the FSA, rather than a forest owner whose only exposure to FSA is often on the heels of a disaster.
- **Eliminate the Salvage Deduction requirement and the prohibition of timber harvest within 10 years.** These contribute to unhealthy forest stands with the spread of pests and disease, particularly with Southern Pine Beetles.

**Establish regional, forest industry workforce training hubs to support rural, forest-based economies through the creation of high school and immersive career pathways that lead to immediate job placement.** Florida forestry is important to our state both economically and environmentally. To remain competitive and sustainable,



Aerial view of forest.



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we must attract and retain skilled workers. A wide range of jobs are available. However, many of these jobs require specialized training and knowledge. A program of this nature could provide grants to academic and vocational institutions to start programs that would give potential workers the training they need to work in the forest sector.

**Increase funding for wildfire mitigation programs, establish cost-share programs for prescribed burning, and manage the costs of liability insurance.** Prescribed burning is an important tool for forest management. Without prescribed fire, bad things can happen. Flammable fuels build up and increase the risk of uncontrollable wildfires.

Prescribed fire also minimizes the spread of pests, insects, and diseases. It removes unwanted species that threaten species native to an ecosystem. And it improves habitat for threatened and endangered species.

However, the price of prescribed fire liability insurance has become cost-prohibitive for some certified burners. This has caused a serious decrease in the number of acres that are being burned. This, in turn, has increased the risks and reduced the benefits.

**Recognize and incentivize forest growers for being an integral part of the solution to climate change issues.** Carbon storage is a key topic in any



Mature forest in Jackson County, FL.

climate change discussion. Forestry provides a big part of the solution to carbon sequestration challenges, which in turn could be incentivized to create non-timber income for forestland owners.

**Continue the wood innovation grant program run by the U.S. Forest Service.** This excellent program was started in the 2018 farm bill. It gives grants to spur research and development and innovation in the wood product space, and it has helped get more wood products into usage. Consider specifically focusing one grant on a project related to mass timber building construction.

**Promote mass timber in rural infrastructure.** Authorize a small mass timber pilot program within the USDA's rural infrastructure program to help provide essential community facilities to rural communities. With a small tweak in language, some of these facilities (hospitals, libraries, schools, and even multi-family housing) can be built with locally grown or manufactured mass timber.

Association leadership has participated in listening sessions as well as conducted a forestry tour for congressional aides (see pages 14-15) to highlight these points. We encourage our members to reach out to their representatives and senators on the federal level to share these opportunities for inclusion in the next Farm Bill. •



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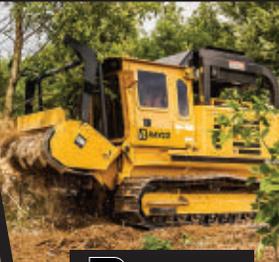


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# LEGISLATIVE TIMBER TOUR DESIGNED TO BUILD BRIDGES



By **SUZETTE COOK**,  
Extension Communications for the  
UF School of Forest, Fisheries and  
Geomatics Sciences

**JOHN ALTER OF** Alter-Bevis Farms joined forces with Alan Shelby of the Florida Forestry Association to educate legislative delegates representing U.S. Senators Marco Rubio and Rick Scott, Congressman Neal Dunn, and Florida Commissioner of Agriculture Wilton Simpson about the timber industry in Jackson County.

On October 24, delegates Dan Paasch, Katie Doughty, Nicole Smith, and Hannah Love, along with Florida Forest Service staff and Florida Forestry Association members and staff, visited ArborGen Seed Orchard, Alter-Bevis Farms, Rex Lumber harvest site and mill, and the Enviva Pellet Mill.

Staff and management at each facility welcomed the guests and explained processes and procedures they use to make sure every bit of harvested timber is used in forms ranging from lumber to pellets.



IMAGES COURTESY OF SUZETTE COOK, EXTENSION COMMUNICATIONS FOR THE UF SCHOOL OF FOREST, FISHERIES AND GEOMATICS SCIENCES



"This is about education and relationships," Alter said about his goal in planning the tour. "And it was logical to do it during Florida Forests Week (October 22-28)."

Alter said he worked with Shelby to outline the stops. "It's amazing how much people know and want to share but don't always have the opportunity," Alter said. "Well, this gave them both. They are full of facts and data."

Alter thinks everyone should know how trees grow, why trees grow, and why we grow trees.

"It's educational and, from a political standpoint, now there are faces and names connected and a common knowledge of the industry," he said about having delegates visit timber businesses. "They could get a question from a constituent or committee and now they know where to get that answer. It's bridge building." •



# SEAMLESS SUCCESSION: PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

By **TAMMY CUSHING**,  
Extension Forest Business Specialist, University of Florida School of Forest,  
Fisheries and Geomatic Sciences

**IT IS TIME** to face reality and start planning!

I do a lot of presentations about taxes and succession planning. I usually make the joke about how I'm that person who talks about death AND taxes and how that makes me a load of fun to talk to. No jokes today. None of us knows how many days we get to live this life. It is time to get your stuff in order. It is time to set up or update your succession plan.

Have you thought about the future of your land? Let's be honest. No one wants to think about their own death.

However, if we flip the thinking, we can focus on how we help our loved ones during the transition period. It is important to think about what will happen to your land in the future. After investing heart, soul, (and probably money) in your property, doesn't it make sense to plan for a transition of that property to the next generation or to an organization of your choice?

There are many reasons why you may not have started a succession plan. For some people, they have a will. That is a great start, but it only addresses the distribution of property. For people with

a house, stock, and cash, that is probably good enough. But for landowners or folks with a family business, the will doesn't consider transitioning the property.

I've heard people say they are too young to worry about succession planning. That may be true if you are under 40 and don't own land, but, if you are reading this, you probably need a plan, especially if you have multiple children. If you haven't started succession planning because you are concerned about the expense, consider that failing to plan may ultimately cost the family more

and result in problems that are much greater than money issues.

I often hear people say that the idea of succession planning is just overwhelming, and they really do not know where to start. While this is a long and not necessarily fun process, it can be broken down into smaller parts. Getting started can often be the hardest part. Rather than not starting because it is so overwhelming, let's look at the process as five steps.

**1. Collect Information.** As you begin this process, it is important to have an understanding of what you own. Later in the process you will be speaking with potential heirs, and knowing what you own will help you match potential heirs to property that best suits everyone's goals.

In addition, even though the federal estate tax currently exempts the first \$12.9 million in assets, not all states have such a generous exemption. This is an important consideration if the property is in a different state than where you live.

As you determine what you have, it will aid in knowing whether you have a potential tax issue. Understanding the full suite of your estate will also assist you in thinking through the options for providing for different family members and causes.

While you are collecting information, it is also helpful to corral all documents in a central location. These documents include your will, management plans, active contracts, etc. Having documents all in one place will reduce the stress when paperwork needs to be filed or a family member is looking for guidance on management of the property. Alternatively, you can compile a list of where documentation is located. The list should be somewhere so heirs can quickly find it.

**2. Establish vision and goals.** Goal setting can be a very important part of the succession process. Three types of goals exist. **Process-oriented goals** are focused on what you want to achieve during the process of

succession planning. These goals might include improving working relationships between family members or developing a communication strategy. **Short and long-term goals** focus on the land and the transition of management. These goals may be financial and/or nonfinancial in nature. Examples may include transitioning some decision making to others or updating the management plan to meet certification standards.

The important part here is that you've thought about what you want to accomplish. If you don't know that answer, then it really doesn't matter what you do.

**3. Engage the family.** We've all seen the movies or television programs where the family is seated around the table and the will is read. This event has all the drama of happiness at a windfall inheritance and the destruction of relationships when someone is left out. The intention is for this type of drama to remain on the screen only. Another benefit of engaging the family is to figure out who is interested in the property and to consider whether a potential heir needs some job training prior to assuming ownership. Family gatherings on the property are a great time to let future owners get a feel for the decisions that need to be made to operate the property. Most importantly though, family members get a feeling of connection to the land.

Eventually it is critical to have a family meeting. This family meeting looks different for different families, but the intent is to convey information about the property and begin to think about transitioning management responsibilities to future owners. The meetings can include outside advisors or be strictly family. There are no rules other than what works best for your family. The intent is to involve other family members as appropriate in recognition of their potential future roles.

**4. Create succession plan.** Once all the information is collected and family members have met to discuss

the property and its transition, it is important to start committing a plan to paper. Decisions should be made as to who the future owners will be and how the property and management will transition from the current to future owners. In this plan should be some timeline for transition, so that future owners will have the knowledge necessary to take over when the time comes. Hopefully by this point you have communicated your intentions to family members.

**5. Create estate plan.** The current federal estate tax laws allow over \$12.9 million to transfer without taxes (with certain restrictions) and include provisions for portability of that exemption between spouses. However, in certain states, there is a state "death" tax that is triggered at a much lower amount.

Florida does not have such a tax but if you are a resident of another state, it is important to know whether they do. As an example, Massachusetts has an estate tax that allows only \$2 million before a tax is assessed. Regardless of whether you live in one of those states, an estate plan is still the next step.

The estate plan involves putting in place formal documents that express your wishes for the distribution of your property. Without some of these documents, state law will determine the distribution. To create the estate plan, you will need to meet with advisors who have the technical skills needed to produce documents that are legally recognized in your state. At this point, if you want to consider a different ownership structure for the property (such as a trust, LLC, etc.), those changes can be explored.

If you have previously worked through some of this information, take a look at what you've already done. The succession planning process is one that has a beginning but no real end until the property is moved to the next owners. The plan should be re-evaluated for any changes within the family, changes to the assets, or changes to the law.

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This isn't a process you start on Friday evening and by dinner Sunday have it completed. It can take a while to assemble a succession plan, especially if you need to do some homework. But don't wait too long to get started.

You can go to an attorney and you will be told most of the same things here (plus more). My goal is really to help you gather needed information, have conversations with family and friends and think about your goals before you go to the attorney.

Hopefully this will reduce what it will cost.

The process of planning for succession can be overwhelming. The best way to approach the process is one step at a time. The important thing is for you to get started. There are resources available to assist you with this journey and many professionals are trained to help with specific parts of the process.

There is no right or wrong way to go about succession planning, so jump in and get started. The time is now! •

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# CELEBRATING A CENTURY OF SUCCESS

## A New Look for a New Century

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**IN 2023, THE** Florida Forestry Association marked a monumental occasion – its 100th anniversary. Our journey began in Jacksonville in 1923, when our organization was first established. Over the years, we have achieved some remarkable milestones that have shaped the landscape of forestry in Florida.

Shortly after our inception, the Association took the lead in pushing for legislation that led to the creation of the Board of Forestry, which in turn organized the Florida Forest Service. We also played a crucial role in founding the University of Florida's School of Forestry, which is now known as the School of Forest, Fisheries, and Geomatics Sciences. Additionally, we were instrumental in establishing the Columbia Ranger School in Lake City. These accomplishments have left a

lasting impact on the forestry sector in Florida.

Throughout our history, we have been strong advocates for our members, protecting their right to grow, harvest, and use forest resources. We have also worked tirelessly to create opportunities for them to expand and develop their businesses. We have initiated and supported research initiatives, workforce programs, and educational outreach efforts, and have consistently promoted the economic and environmental advantages of forestry and championed the cause of sustainability.

As we move into the future, our Association remains unwavering in its dedication to the mission and values that have guided us for the past century. We are also embracing innovation and outreach, principles that have been key to

our success. To mark this exciting new phase, we have unveiled a fresh look for the new century.

We are enthusiastic about beginning another century of representing all sectors of Florida's forest community. We extend our heartfelt thanks to all our members, both past and present, for their unwavering dedication and significant contributions to our success. Your support and commitment to our cause have been instrumental in getting us to where we are today.

We'd also like to express our gratitude to our partners who have collaborated with us over the years to advance the interests of Florida's forestry.

Here's to the next 100 years, filled with promise, growth, and a continued dedication to the sustainable future of Florida forestry! •

# GOVERNOR AND CABINET HONOR ASSOCIATION'S 100TH ANNIVERSARY

Many thanks to Commissioner Wilton Simpson for sponsoring the resolution.

## State Of Florida

### RESOLUTION

**WHEREAS**, the Florida Forestry Association was founded in 1923 to educate the people of Florida and the Legislature to the need of protecting and developing the great natural resources that lay in the state's vast forest acreage; and

**WHEREAS**, the Florida Forestry Association represents all segments of Florida's forest community, providing strength and unity for its members and promoting the economic and environmental benefits that forestry provides; and

**WHEREAS**, the Florida Forestry Association was instrumental in the establishment of the Florida Forest Service, the School of Forestry at the University of Florida (later renamed as the UF/IFAS School of Forest, Fisheries and Geomatics Sciences) and the Columbia Ranger School in Lake City; and

**WHEREAS**, the Florida Forestry Association has actively engaged in the development and implementation of Best Management Practices for silviculture and wildlife as well as championed the practice of prescribed fire and other vital sustainability measures; and

**WHEREAS**, the Florida Forestry Association has changed the landscape of Florida forestry, initiating and supporting research efforts, workforce programs, and educational outreach; and

**WHEREAS**, the Florida Forestry Association acts as the voice of Florida forestry on local, state and national levels, providing leadership, education, and training for future generations; and

**WHEREAS**, the Florida Forestry Association continues to expand the mission and vision set forth by its founders, protecting and promoting the viability and sustainability of Florida forestry.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Governor and Cabinet of the State of Florida do hereby recognize the 30<sup>th</sup> day of August, 2023, as

#### THE 100<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE FLORIDA FORESTRY ASSOCIATION

and thank members past, present, and future for their collective efforts to sustainably grow, harvest, utilize, and replant healthy trees in order to protect and maintain Florida's forests.

**WHEREFORE**, the Governor and Cabinet of the State of Florida have hereunto subscribed their names and have caused the Official Seal of the State of Florida to be hereunto affixed in the City of Tallahassee on the 22<sup>nd</sup> day of August, 2023.



  
\_\_\_\_\_  
**RON DESANTIS**  
GOVERNOR

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
**ASHLEY MOODY**  
ATTORNEY GENERAL

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
**JIMMY PATRONIS**  
CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
**WILTON SIMPSON**  
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# Honoring Excellence: 2023 AWARD WINNERS



DSA-recipient Jim Cottingham accepted his award at the Association's 2023 Annual Meeting.

## Distinguished Service Award: Jim Cottingham

*The Association's Distinguished Service Award celebrates those leaders whose lifetime achievements have positively impacted the trajectory of the Association.*

Now retired, Jim Cottingham's resume of service to the Association is long and distinguished. Jim is celebrated not only for his forward-thinking leadership but also for his commitment to turning his dreams into reality.

"Jim dreams big dreams," said Association President Jimmy Bielling. "And then he does whatever it takes to bring those dreams to life. He is the strong, silent type who gets the job done without a lot of fanfare, makes it the best possible, and then moves on to his next goal."

One of Jim's stand-out accomplishments is bringing Log A Load for Kids to Florida. The Log a Load For Kids Foundation program raises funds to

improve children's health through treatment, education, and research at Children's Miracle Network (CMN) Hospitals and other local pediatric hospitals. Thanks to Jim's initiative in introducing the program in Florida, along with his work with fundraising events on their behalf, nearly \$2.5 million has been raised to date! An untold number of children and their families have had access to life-saving medical care that otherwise would not have been possible.

Jim's innovative spirit also led to the Association's first Silent Auction more than 30 years ago. This event not only injects a dose of fun into the gatherings but also serves as a fundraising mechanism for the Association. The proceeds paved the way for the organization to offer a broader spectrum of programs and services to its members.

Jim served on the Executive Committee under several presidents. He chaired

the Tree Farm Committee at one point, but his true calling lay in leading the Steering Committee, where his success was so notable that his colleagues on the Executive Committee voted to rewrite the by-laws to keep him in the captain's seat, bypassing term limits. Jim graciously accepted this opportunity, along with all the work that came with it.

Jim's career was as remarkable as his volunteer efforts. In 1980 he moved from Georgia to Panama City and worked with Southwest Forest Industries. He worked there for over 41 years for five different companies who purchased the mill over the years, ultimately retiring from WestRock as the Regional Manager in 2021.

On the personal front, Jim and his wife Cindy are the proud parents of three children, Clay, Carly, and James, and the dotting grandparents of four delightful grandchildren, Posie, Oliver, Theodore,



The Cottingham family.

and Blakely. All the grandkids live within minutes of Jim and Cindy's house.

Jim is happily spending his retirement babysitting, doing yard work, golfing, and traveling. He and Cindy have visited Australia, Hawaii, Alaska, Boston, Maine, Las Vegas, and all four of Utah's national parks. Closer to home, they also enjoy trips to San Antonio and Austin to see their son Clay.

Even in retirement, Jim's work ethic has not dimmed. He manages two family farms in South Carolina.

"Every group hopes to have someone like Jim in leadership," said Alan Shelby, the Association's executive vice president. "His long list of accomplishments and the positive impact he has made in so many areas truly stand out. He is one of a kind."



**Above and Beyond Award:  
Zachary (Zak) Seymour**

*The Association's Above & Beyond Award recognizes those who can usually be found going the extra mile...those who become the "go-to" person in any group they join...those whose service and commitment to the Association is always a step beyond what is expected.*

"Without a doubt, Zak Seymour embodies the spirit of the Above & Beyond Award," said Association

President Jimmy Bielling. "He pours 150% into everything he undertakes."

A longtime employee of Farm Credit of Florida, Zak is an active member of the Association's Board of Directors and Steering Committee, as well as a graduate of its Forestry Forward leadership program. He is a familiar face to all in the forestry family and can always be found offering a helping hand wherever needed.

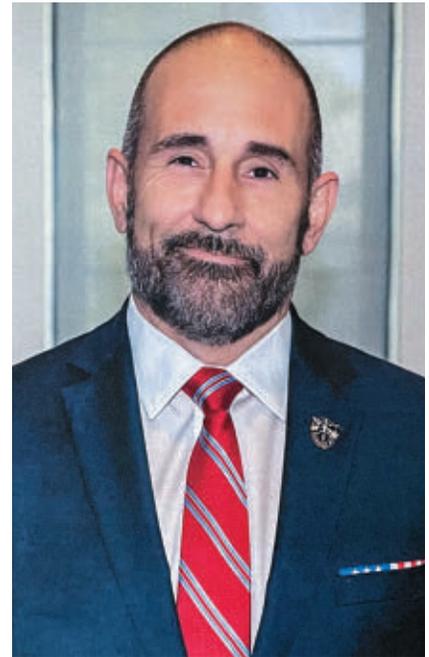
In fact, Zak's involvement in the Association can be traced back to an Annual Meeting many years ago. It was Thursday night after all the festivities were finished. The staff was packing and loading up the van, and Zak asked, "Hey, what can I do to help?"

Not only did he roll up his sleeves that night, but he became increasingly instrumental in the execution and success of both the annual fire-arm raffle and silent auction, as well as being involved in the overall Annual Meeting planning process. When Zak Seymour offers to help, he means it.

Zak has put his heart, soul, creativity, and even his cooking skills into his efforts on behalf of the Association. He has made it a family affair as well, convincing his wife Sloane to join him in emceeing the Trade Show Social in years past.

Beyond his dedicated service, Zak is a devoted family man. Any free time is spent with Sloane and their 10-year-old son.

**ZAK IS A FAMILIAR  
FACE TO ALL IN  
THE FORESTRY  
FAMILY AND  
CAN ALWAYS BE  
FOUND OFFERING  
A HELPING HAND  
WHEREVER NEEDED.**



**Legislator of the Year (Senate):  
Senator Jay Collins**

*Advocacy is at the heart of all that the Association does. The Legislator of the Year awards honor those lawmakers who have distinguished themselves as champions for Florida's forest sectors within the state's legislative chambers.*

A decorated veteran, Senator Jay Collins was elected to the Florida Senate in 2022, representing the Tampa area. Notably, while still only a freshman legislator, he was appointed as the chair of the Senate Agriculture Committee. In this pivotal role, Senator Collins hit the ground running holding several committee meetings to highlight damage from Hurricane Ian and to have producers outline challenges they face in Florida.

Chair Collins's dynamic leadership sparked collaboration with Agriculture Commissioner Wilton Simpson and the industry itself, leading to the promotion of various important legislative issues. Among his achievements, Chair Collins took the helm as the Senate sponsor of the FARM TEAM card, a groundbreaking initiative streamlining the process for obtaining agricultural sales tax exemptions. Additionally, he spearheaded legislation that bars local governments from imposing special assessments on agricultural lands.

These are but a few highlights of the many issues Chair Collins championed on behalf of Florida's agricultural and silvicultural industries.

"It is clear Chair Collins has a bright future fighting for agriculture in the Florida Senate," said Association Vice President Alan Shelby. "We are grateful for his friendship and support."



**Legislator of the Year (House):  
Representative Kaylee Tuck**

Representative Kaylee Tuck of Lake Placid comes by her love of agriculture honestly. She was born and raised in an agricultural family which grew everything from caladiums to citrus.

Since her election to the Florida House of Representatives in 2020, Representative Tuck has emerged as a strong advocate for Florida agriculture. Her leadership was once again on display during the 2023 legislative session as she championed legislation which was the foundation for the preemption of special assessments of agricultural lands.

Rep. Tuck also dedicated extensive hours to crafting legislation that would have empowered agricultural producers to establish farm worker housing on their agricultural lands. This legislation also would have provided greater clarity and protection for the property tax classification of agricultural lands known as Greenbelt.

"Rep. Tuck's agricultural roots undoubtedly drive her to champion the cause of protecting and preserving the rights of everyone in ag and forestry," said Shelby. "We look forward to working with her well into the future."



**National Outstanding Tree Farmer of the Year:  
Doug and Teresa Moore**

Doug and Teresa Moore own the beautiful 2,400-acre South Prong Plantation nestled in Baker County, FL. Their dedication to forestry excellence originally earned them the Florida Outstanding Tree Farmer of the Year. Today, their accolades extend to the national stage.

Prior to embarking on their forestry venture, the Moores spent over three decades tending to a dairy farm in Jacksonville. However, their dream of owning an expansive timberland came to fruition when they bought South Prong Plantation.

Doug eagerly immersed himself in educational programs offered by the University of Florida extension services and the Florida Forest Service, among others. His commitment led him to one of his first endeavors: becoming a Certified Prescribed Burn Manager. In fact, Doug played a pivotal role in establishing the North Florida Prescribed Burn Association, where he serves as one of the founding members and a director.

The Moores are highly regarded for their successful integration of timber and wildlife management and generously share their expertise with others. Their involvement spans various organizations, including the Tree Farm System, the Florida Forestry Association, the Florida Forest Service, and others. They ardently champion the cause of improved forest management practices.

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**THE MOORES ARE  
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INTEGRATION OF  
TIMBER AND WILDLIFE  
MANAGEMENT AND  
GENEROUSLY SHARE  
THEIR EXPERTISE  
WITH OTHERS.**



### Jon Gould Florida Outstanding Tree Farmer of the Year: Terry and Howard Putnal (in memoriam)

By Ginger Feagle, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission,  
and John Nash, Florida Tree Farm Program President

Howard Putnal, Terry's late father, originally purchased the Madison County property in the early 1980s and it has been a Florida Certified Tree Farm for nearly 40 years. Over 350 of their 493 acres are enrolled in the Florida Tree Farm Program. Howard always aspired to be the Florida Tree Farmer of the Year, but sadly passed away just over a year ago.

Terry Putnal is very proud to manage the property in accordance with his father's vision and honors the management decisions that he and his father developed together. Terry has ensured his father's legacy will continue by confirming that his nephew is familiar with their forest and wildlife management plans.

One of Howard's greatest concerns for the property's future was to preserve the headwaters of the cypress tree-laden Norton Creek. Terry respects this wish and included this preservation in his current management plan. In past years, Terry's father planted many sawtooth oaks and other mast-producing trees in

this wetland zone for wildlife. Terry has continued to follow his father's lead by removing planted pines that adjoin the creek and is allowing the forest to naturally regenerate.

Terry is a wealth of knowledge to his community regarding the appropriate application of herbicides for successful pine establishment and growth. Terry works in close partnership with Florida Forest Service county foresters Zach Butler and Jared Beauchamp, to obtain the best and most recent industry information.

In addition to managing his own property, Terry operates a business that provides high-quality site preparation, planting, and vegetation management for other landowners. Although it is his livelihood, whenever a landowner asks Terry for information on proper herbicide application, management decisions, or planting techniques, Terry provides the information free of charge because he wants the landowner to be successful.

**TERRY'S LAND  
MANAGEMENT  
STRATEGY IS A  
GREAT EXAMPLE  
OF HOW TO  
RESPONSIBLY  
USE FORESTRY  
PRACTICES "IN THE  
RIGHT PLACE" TO  
MEET ECONOMIC  
GOALS.**

Terry wants to see the best in forestry and contributes to his growing knowledge by being the first to experiment with techniques such as planting seasons, densities, temperatures, methods (e.g., bare-root vs. containerized), and/or herbicide application rates.

Recreationally, Terry allows hunting on the property, but his main interest is vested in the history of the old Florida Cracker Horse and scrub cows. He maintains breeding herds of both breeds and endorsed having the Cracker Horse become the "State Horse" by joining others in a ride to Tallahassee. Not only does he recognize the cultural history and breed's function, but he'll also actively jump on their back to round up stray cattle when moving the herd.

Terry's land management strategy is a great example of how to responsibly use forestry practices "in the right place" to meet economic goals. Guided by his father's passion for forestry, Terry provides a positive impact to fellow forest owners and is very worthy of this honor. •

# 2023 Annual Meeting & Trade Show

The Association celebrated its 100th anniversary at the 2023 Annual Meeting & Trade Show, August 29-31, at the Sandestin Golf and Beach Resort. Highlights included a slate of excellent speakers, multiple networking events, a live version added to our traditional silent auction, and a memorable close-out performance by the Swingin' Medallions. •



Happy 100th anniversary to us!



President Jimmy Bielling and his wife Kathy enjoying the Trade Show.



John Alter was able to see a little bit of home in Farm Credit's new exhibit backdrop featuring his forestland in Jackson County. He shared the moment with Emily Lowe of Farm Credit of Northwest Florida. (Photo Credit: Lesia Andrews)



Chris & Shawna Meyer, the dynamic duo from the University of Miami School of Architecture, highlighted the growing technology using mass timber.



Laura Spratt, daughter of Association lobbyist Jim Spratt, at home with her new puppy, Paxton, the Spangler Creek Kennels GSP from the Association's live auction. Clearly, her dad is not the only one in the family who knows the art of persuasion.



The Association proudly showcased its new look at the Trade Show.



It was a beautiful day on the course for the Timber Toppers Golf Tournament.



The celebration ended on a high note with a performance by the iconic Swingin' Medallions.



Association Director of Membership Whitney Hough, special guest Will Fisch, and host Kathy Bielling before the Women of Forestry Networking Brunch.

# Forestry Forward

**C**ongratulations to the members of Forestry Forward Class 13 for successfully completing the Association's two-year leadership program!

**Richard Bertrand**  
*Vulcan On-Board Scales*

**Bryan Camposano**  
*Florida Forest Service*

**Milli Jones Fiorelli**  
*AgAmerica Lending*

**Shawn Lewandowski**  
*Florida Forest Service*

**William McCrea**  
*Legacy Wildlife Services*  
– NRPS Inc.

**Blake Reese**  
*American Forest Management, Inc.*

**Aaron Smith**  
*Four Rivers Land & Timber, LLC*

**Jeremiah Thompson**  
*SVN Saunders Real Estate*

**William White**  
*West Fraser, Inc.*

**And congratulations also to the incoming members of Class 14!**

**Shayn Baggett**  
*Farm Credit of Northwest Florida*

**Harrison Fahy**  
*Nutrien Ag Solutions*

**Marshall Hilton**  
*F4 Tech*

**Andy Lamborn**  
*Florida Forest Service*

**Michael Klassen**  
*Florida Forest Service*

**Jason Nastovski**  
*Natural Resource Planning Services, Inc.*

**James Rhue**  
*Pritchett Trucking, Inc.*

**Jesse A. Saarela**  
*Natural Resource Planning Services, Inc.*

**Andrew Sims**  
*UF/IFAS*

**Patrick Smalley**  
*Usher Land and Timber, Inc.*

**Shea Stroud**  
*Deseret Cattle & Timber*



## Book Release

**A**ssociation Board member **Cindy Roe Littlejohn** of Roe Sisters Tree Farms has announced that the second book in her *Palmetto Pioneers* series is expected to be released on Amazon by the end of this year. This narrative non-fiction book, *From Harmony to Hostility*, picks up where the first book ended in 1845.

In the first book, the main character in the series, Mary, who is illiterate, marries an educated widower from Washington, DC. In the second book, Mary and William's love develops deeper over time as they share experiences, figure out their lives together, and explore new beginnings. It is a family relationship story about their lives together as they build their family. Florida's economy boomed from statehood in 1845 until the beginning of the Civil War. Their family assets increased, too.

As Mary's saga continues into the War and her men march away one by one, she learns to navigate a man's world alone to protect her children and home. This second book ends in 1863, the second year of the Civil War. History books downplay Florida's role in this war, but to its people who stayed behind, they lost so much.

# F4 Tech Launches Land Investment Group

**F4 Tech**, a leading natural resource management firm based in Tallahassee, Florida, has opened **F4 Land Investment Group**, a forestry-based real estate division, and joined Tarpon Blue Real Estate Services, LLC, which specializes in buying and selling agricultural, commercial, residential, and recreational/hunting properties.

Tarpon Blue Real Estate Services and F4 Land Investment Group each bring decades of public agency and private

industry experience and results, now with new opportunities for strategic alliances in real estate sales, acquisitions, and investments.

F4 Tech was founded in 1998 by Mark Milligan and is known for its innovative and high-tech approach to using data and science for developing, implementing, and managing resource management plans. Clients include a variety of private landowners; the U.S. Department

of Defense; U.S. Forest Service; Florida Department of Environmental Protection; and Georgia Department of Natural Resources.

Tarpon Blue Real Estate Services, LLC is part of the Tarpon Blue Family of Companies, which owns and operates a variety of large entities that focus on the acquisition and management of agricultural, development, and natural resource assets across the United States. •



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