



*Photo: From left, Association Executive Vice President Alan Shelby, Jim Karels, Senator Corey Simon, James Spratt, Jimmy Bielling, and Association President Avery Roberts at a fundraiser for Simon.*

## TREEPAC ELECTION SUCCESS

TREEPAC, the Association's political action committee, contributed \$66,000 to 43 candidates in the 2024 election cycle. Ultimately, an impressive 42 (98%) of those candidates were successful in their bid for office.

TREEPAC is nonpartisan. It contributes to the campaigns of Democrats and Republicans who support the forest industry.

Mark Milligan, who chaired the TREEPAC committee during the 2024 election cycle, attributed the success to the support of Association members: "We are able to help elect candidates who will work to support and protect Florida forestry because of the tremendous support we receive from our members," he said. "The networking and financial resources they provide make an important difference."



## MIKE BELL: AUDUBON FL SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY OF THE YEAR AWARD

Audubon Florida has honored Mike Bell with its 2024 Sustainable Forestry Award. The award is presented annually to a forester, forestry family, or forest business that demonstrates improvements in bird and wildlife habitats and water resources through forest management practices.

Mike recently retired as Vice President of Public Affairs and Communications after a distinguished 23-year career at Rayonier Inc. He received the award in recognition of his body of work advocating for the protection of land, water, and wildlife and promoting sustainable environmental stewardship practices.



## SHAWN DEROME: DISTINGUISHED YOUNG ALUMNUS

Congratulations to Shawn DeRome for being recognized as the University of Georgia Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources' Distinguished Young Alumnus!

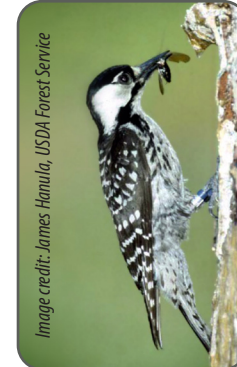
Shawn is the Eastern Director of Public Affairs for Rayonier, where she is responsible for addressing current and emerging policy and community issues that affect the company's interests across the US South. A member of the Florida Forestry Association's Executive Committee, she chairs the Association's Environmental Committee. She has also served as chair of the Georgia Forestry Association's Emerging Leaders, Warnell's Young Alumni Committee, and regularly mentors students and speaks to classes.



## HARVARD PROMOTED

Krista Harvard has been promoted to Director of Business Operations at the Florida Forestry Association.

Krista joined the Association team in 2019 as the office coordinator. A graduate of Florida State University, she and her husband, Staige, live in Tallahassee with their son, Miles.



*Image credit: James Hanula, USDA Forest Service*

## RED-COCKADED WOODPECKER UPDATE

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) is reclassifying the red-cockaded woodpecker from endangered to threatened under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended.

Data shows that the species' status has improved to the point that it is no longer in danger of extinction across its entire range, although it still faces risks in the foreseeable future. This rule became effective November 25, 2024.

Learn more at [bit.ly/RCWListing](https://bit.ly/RCWListing).

## EUDR UPDATE



The European Parliament has approved the European Commission's proposal to delay the EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR) for one year.

One amendment to the original proposal was approved. It establishes a new "no risk" category of compliance tiers. The critical benefit of a country qualifying as "no risk" is that the onerous geolocation requirements would not apply to countries in this tier.

Learn more at [bit.ly/EUDRupdate](https://bit.ly/EUDRupdate)

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## COMMISSIONER WILTON SIMPSON DELIVERS FRESH FROM FLORIDA CHRISTMAS TREES TO FLORIDA CAPITOL



Continuing a long-standing tradition and kicking off the Christmas Season at the Florida Capitol, Florida Commissioner of Agriculture Wilton Simpson this week presented Florida-grown Christmas trees to the offices of Governor Ron DeSantis, Chief Financial Officer Jimmy Patronis, Florida Senate President Ben Albritton, and Florida House

Speaker Daniel Perez. Commissioner Simpson is also encouraging Floridians to support Florida Christmas tree growers, many of whom were impacted by recent hurricanes.

"Florida-grown Christmas trees bring a special touch of home to the holiday season, and we're proud to continue this tradition at the Florida Capitol. I want to thank Bavarian Christmas Tree Farm and the Camacho family for providing these beautiful trees that represent the hard work and dedication of Florida's growers," said Commissioner Simpson.

"Many of our growers have faced significant challenges from recent storms, and now more than ever, it's important to support local growers. By choosing a Florida-grown Christmas tree, you're not only celebrating the season but also helping to sustain Florida agriculture."

## WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS!

Many thanks to our new members who joined this quarter and also to the people who recruited them!



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Buckles, Brendan

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Rowell, William

Santos, Taija

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Swingle, Patricia

Taylor, Jacob

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Vinzant, Sandra

Wasdin, Brittany

Waters, Trenton

Williams, Goss "Bear"

## DON'T MISS OUT!



*Do we have your contact  
information?*

We want to make sure that all our members are receiving all the benefits of belonging! If you are not currently receiving our electronic communications, please reach out to our Director of Membership, Whitney Hough (Whitney@FLForestry.org) with your email address. Don't miss out on all the Association's news, information, and events!

## HUNTING FOR WAYS TO SAVE?



Partnering with Outdoor Underwriters, Inc., the Association offers our members special reduced rates for liability insurance for hunting leases and timberland. For more information, please contact Brittany Varn (850.222.5646 or Brittany@FLForestry.org).





## 2024 Membership Contest

Every \$1 in dues generated = 1 point  
Example: Friend of Forestry member @ \$70 = 70 points

The recruiter with the most points (250 minimum)  
on 12.31.24 wins!

Prize: \$250 Visa Gift card compliments of



Contact Whitney Hough (Whitney@FLForestry.org) for details.



## FLORIDA FOREST SERVICE POSTS RECORD YEAR FOR PRESCRIBED BURNS

By Tim Brown, FFS Communications Manager

ONE OF THE many benefits of prescribed burning is the prevention of catastrophic wildfires, and the Florida Forest Service's commitment to this practice led to a recording-setting year during the 2023-2024 fiscal year.

"Prescribed fire is one of the best and most reliable tools we have to combat the dangers of wildfires in our state," said Florida Commissioner of Agriculture Wilton Simpson. "We more than doubled last year's prescribed fire total, confirming our agency's commitment to protecting Florida's homes, businesses, and natural resources in wildfire-prone areas."

In the past fiscal year – which ran from July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2024, the Florida Forest Service set a new annual record by treating 277,818 total State Forest acres with prescribed fire. That more than doubled last year's prescribed fire total of 131,628 acres treated, surpassing the previous annual record of 246,104 acres from 2014-15. Additionally, FFS set a new monthly record for prescribed fire this year, totaling 94,087 acres in February.

"I'm proud to say the Florida Forest Service has surpassed 200,000 acres prescribed burned in three of the past six years," said Florida Forest Service Director Rick Dolan. "We also exceeded our annual goal of 266,059 acres entering the fiscal year."

Because of Florida's fire-dependent ecosystems and year-round fire season, FFS administers one of the nation's most active prescribed fire programs. Prescribed burning is an important land management tool in Florida as it increases forest health, improves wildlife habitat, enhances timber growth, and reduces the risk and severity of wildfires.

For the 2023 calendar year, FFS issued 48,129 open burning authorizations, allowing 2.4 million acres of land to be managed with prescribed fire. In 2023, FFS was called on to suppress 2,444 wildfires that burned 64,143 acres of land, and 190 homes were destroyed or damaged by wildfire. Because of this constant threat, FFS has prevention and mitigation programs to help reduce wildfire risk.

## GET ENGAGED



The success of any organization is highly dependent on an engaged membership. An easy and effective way to be active in the Association is through our committees: Government Relations, TREEPAC, Environmental, Steering and Communications. To learn more about the Association's committees and their missions, please visit the Association's website at [FLForestry.org/Resources/Programs/AssociationCommittees](http://FLForestry.org/Resources/Programs/AssociationCommittees).

## FLORIDA FOREST LAND VIDEO SERIES FOR LANDOWNERS



The Florida Forest Service, Florida Forestry Association, the University of Florida (UF), and filmmakers from Untamed Science collaborated to create a new "My Florida Forest Land" video series. The goal of this series is to help Florida landowners learn about management tools and practices that improve their forest lands.

You can watch the videos at [MyFLForest.land](http://MyFLForest.land).



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*Merry Christmas  
&  
Happy New Year*

*from Alan, Brittany, Krista,  
Lee Ann & Whitney*





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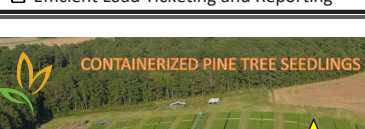
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