

Fall/Winter 2019

FLORIDA FORESTS

AN OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE FLORIDA FORESTRY ASSOCIATION

A FOND FAREWELL FROM
JIM KARELS

ONE YEAR AFTER
HURRICANE MICHAEL

AWARD WINNING FORESTRY

A lit green candle is the central focus, surrounded by a pile of sticks and several wooden stars. The scene is set on a wooden surface, and the background is a soft, out-of-focus bokeh of warm lights.

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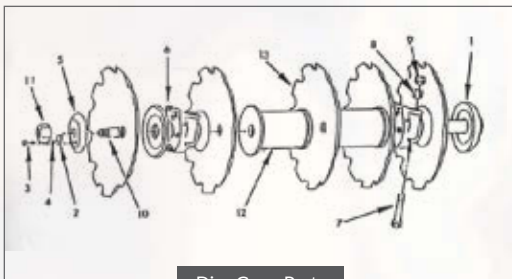
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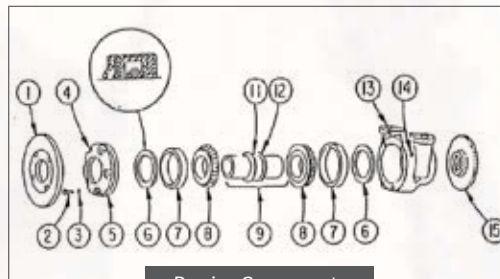


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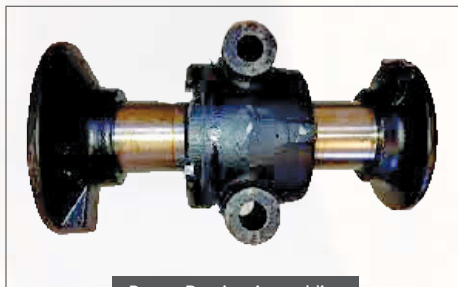
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Volume 23, Issue 2
Fall/Winter 2019



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Florida Forests is an official publication of the Florida Forestry Association
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Florida Forests is published biannually by

NAYLOR
PUBLICATION ASSOCIATION
5950 NW 1st Place
Gainesville, FL 32607
Phone: 800-369-6220
Fax: 352-332-3331
www.naylor.com

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PUBLISHED DECEMBER 2019/
FOR-B0219/4650

Cover image: FLOYDINE/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM



By **EDWARD COLE**, Florida Forestry Association President

I AM HAPPY TO REPORT THAT WE ARE AS STRONG AS EVER: OUR MEMBERSHIP IS ACTIVE AND ENGAGED; OUR PARTNERSHIPS WITH OTHER GROUPS ARE GROWING IN SIZE AND STRENGTH; THE FORESTRY STORY IS BEING TOLD ACROSS THE STATE AND ACROSS GENERATIONS; AND OUR VOICE IS BEING HEARD IN TALLAHASSEE AND IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

Each new year is a blank canvas, and 2020 provides a special opportunity to take stock of events and lessons of the past while looking forward to our vision for the future.

In this issue, we see glimpses of both. State Forester Jim Karels, a longstanding figure in Florida's forest community, provides his own reflections as he prepares for his upcoming retirement. Jim's visionary leadership has spanned decades, changing the face and the future of forestry in our state and across the nation for the better.

Among many other achievements, Jim has played a pivotal role in recovery from the destruction of Hurricane Michael. In November, a historical first was announced: United States Department of Agriculture block grants for forestry. These funds will enable and encourage many landowners to complete clean-up and reforest.

We remain grateful to USDA Secretary Sonny Perdue, our congressional delegation, Governor Ron DeSantis, Agriculture Commissioner Nikki Fried, the Florida Forest Service, and the many others who helped secure this very important support for our industry in Northwest Florida. We are also appreciative of those in the media who worked with us to share forestry's story by highlighting the realities of the hurricane's aftermath. *Details on the available programs can be found on page 11.*

We also shine the spotlight on other visionary leaders in our *Award Winning Forestry* section, which focuses on Association members who have been honored for their contributions to Florida forestry. The Association would not be the same without them and neither would Florida forestry.

Preparing for the future, the Association has strengthened our partnerships with two statewide educational groups, Florida Agriculture in the Classroom (FAITC) and Project Learning Tree (PLT). *Snapshots* features photos from the launch of this year's FAITC ag literacy book, *Forever There's a Forest*. Through FAITC's volunteer program, the book will be read to students in every county of our state. Working with these groups and with the Florida Forestry Teachers' Tour helps ensure that the forestry story is shared with the leaders of today and tomorrow.

The Association has also partnered with the University of Florida/IFAS School of Forest Resources and Conservation on a needs assessment survey. The survey provides valuable insight into potential research and outreach topics that are most important to our members as we strive to move forestry forward. The results of the survey are outlined in *New University of Florida Research Is Helping Florida Foresters*.

I am proud of all that the Association has accomplished over the past year and excited about our plans for the future. And I am happy to report that we are as strong as ever: our membership is active and engaged; our partnerships with other groups are growing in size and strength; the forestry story is being told across the state and across generations; and our voice is being heard in Tallahassee and in Washington, D.C.

In short, we have achieved much and we are working hard to achieve more. We are fulfilling our mission and expanding our vision.

Thank you for your part in these efforts. And thank you for the opportunity to serve. ●



A FOND FAREWELL FROM JIM KARELS

AS THE END of my tenure with the Florida Forest Service draws near, I remain convinced that people are our most valuable resource. Building and developing partnerships across our state and country have been the key to my nearly 40-year career. Without partnerships, there is no success in ensuring Florida's forests are protected and sustainably managed for future generations.

My first memory of being called into a role requiring leadership in various

capacities on multiple levels was during Florida's 1998 wildfires. It was a catastrophic time that greatly impacted our forest industry, our people and our citizens. Those fires forced me to communicate, relying on relationships and partnerships I had and developing new ones.

I will never forget meeting with a landowner after a very large wildfire during those years. We didn't know each other before that day, but both of us

quickly discovered that we were working toward the same goal, utilizing all available resources to protect Florida.

Everyone wants to be heard and understood, and I believe the time we invested with each other that day was a pivotal point in what has become a long-standing partnership between the Florida Forest Service, the Association and the industry. When we take time to listen to others as much as we want to be heard, we will find greater

WHEN WE TAKE TIME TO LISTEN TO OTHERS AS MUCH AS WE WANT TO BE HEARD, WE WILL FIND GREATER UNDERSTANDING, RESPECT AND PERSPECTIVE – WHICH LEADS TO STRONGER PARTNERSHIPS AND A STRONGER FOREST INDUSTRY.



Jim Karels with Florida Forestry Association Executive Vice President Alan Shelby.

understanding, respect and perspective – which leads to stronger partnerships and a stronger forest industry.

In May 2008, during the lowest point of The Great Recession, I was appointed and assumed the role of State Forester and Director of then Florida Division of Forestry. Florida’s forest industry generated \$14.3 billion in total output that year – a number we hadn’t seen since 2002 and a 25% decrease from just one year prior.

Thankfully, former Commissioner of Agriculture Charles Bronson allowed me to continue the process of building stronger relationships within the industry and with the Florida Forestry Association – coming together as one for the benefit of the industry and its people.

Today, Florida’s 17 million-plus acres of forestland covers nearly half of the state’s land area, generating more than

\$25 billion in total revenue and support for more than 124,000 jobs. In addition, the Florida Forest Service has become a nationwide leader in prescribed fire, burning more than 2.3 million acres per year statewide. What I am most proud of with the prescribed fire program is that we have continued to increase the acres burned amid Florida’s rapidly growing population. None of this would be possible without all of us working together to build sustainable forests.

I would be remiss not to acknowledge Working Forests Week – a concept established in 2015 in partnership with the Florida Forestry Association that aims to expand the voice of forestry to civic groups, schools and educators across the state. Working Forests Week, along with the nearly 20-year history of the Florida Forestry Teachers’ Tour, are highly successful initiatives that

deserve ongoing attention and support to continue increasing awareness of Florida’s forests. With partners across the industry – including private landowners, The Nature Conservancy, Audubon Florida, Florida’s Water Management



Districts, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, the University of Florida IFAS, Rayonier, West Rock, Project Learning Tree and so many more – we have expanded our platform to not only talk about the value and importance of Florida’s forests, but encourage future generations to join us in this highly rewarding industry.

The industry’s growth and accomplishments over the last decade did not come without tragedy for our Florida Forest Service family. Unhesitatingly, the





lowest point in my career was on June 20, 2011 when we lost two of our own, Joshua Burch and Brett Fulton, in the Blue Ribbon fire. Leading families and your people through line-of-duty deaths of their fellow firefighters is something no leader wants to do. The loss of these brave men tested and challenged me personally.

I had to resist my instinct to withdraw and stay busy, avoiding the depth of the pain we were all experiencing. It was my responsibility to take point and prioritize honoring the loss of our brothers. I could not have done this without the support of the industry – the Association, other state forestry agencies, local industry partners and more – you all moved in and allowed us to step away and be with our people, take care of the families and begin learning from one of the darkest times in our agency’s history. This experience demonstrates the epitome of our forest industry, and I am beyond grateful to be part of such a community.

One of the greatest privileges during my time as Director is co-founding Operation Outdoor Freedom, a program that provides recreational opportunities to wounded veterans on state forests, agricultural and private lands throughout Florida. Since 2009, Operation Outdoor Freedom has manifested into more than anyone could have planned. We have witnessed the outdoor experiences evolve into safe environments where all generations of veterans come together

– a place where their sense of purpose is renewed, and new bonds cultivate a broader support system. The veterans have impacted me personally with their stories of valor and unending courage. I consider it an honor to have had the opportunity to not only meet some of Florida’s greatest, but to spend time with them and now call them friends.

I want to thank former Commissioner of Agriculture Adam Putnam for his leadership and support of the Florida Forest Service’s initiative to give back to the men and women who have served our

country. Thank you also to our partners who have joined us in this endeavor, share our vision and see the value – the Florida Forestry Association, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, the National Wild Turkey Foundation, Florida’s Water Management Districts, and private forest and ranching landowners across the state – they are the key to our continuing to provide opportunities to Florida’s wounded veterans.

Last year, we witnessed Hurricane Michael ravage the Panhandle, resulting in one of the single-most devastating



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IN A STATE THAT HAS GROWN TO 22 MILLION PEOPLE – MORE THAN DOUBLE SINCE I JOINED THE AGENCY IN 1985 – I AM CONFIDENT IN ALL THAT IS AHEAD FOR THE FLORIDA FOREST SERVICE ... I BELIEVE IN FLORIDA, AND I BELIEVE OUR FOREST INDUSTRY IS BETTER THAN EVER.



natural disasters to ever hit a forest community. I could not be prouder of our agency and the industry’s response efforts following this catastrophic storm. I am grateful for the support of Commissioner of Agriculture Nikki Fried, the Florida Forestry Association, FFS personnel and countless others as we worked to bring support and awareness to the needs of over 16,000 private forest landowners – making our mark in history with the first USDA block grants for timber. Now, we must stay vigilant in the Panhandle, continuing to face the challenges left in the wake of Michael

and working to ensure we come out stronger.

In a state that has grown to 22 million people – more than double since I joined the agency in 1985 – I am confident in all that is ahead for the Florida Forest Service as they engage new leadership and experience growth in programs and staff culture. I believe in Florida, and I believe our forest industry is better than ever.

Together, the Florida Forestry Association and the Florida Forest Service have accomplished more than any other state. I am beyond grateful for the opportunity to have served Florida

the last 35 years, working to protect and manage our great state’s number one agriculture commodity. It has been an honor being a member and partner. You all are more than partners. You have become life-long friends, and I look forward to continuing our relationship in the future. My family and I wish you all well. If I can ever be of assistance or service to you, please contact me. ●

James “Jim” Karels,
State Forester & Florida Forest Service Director



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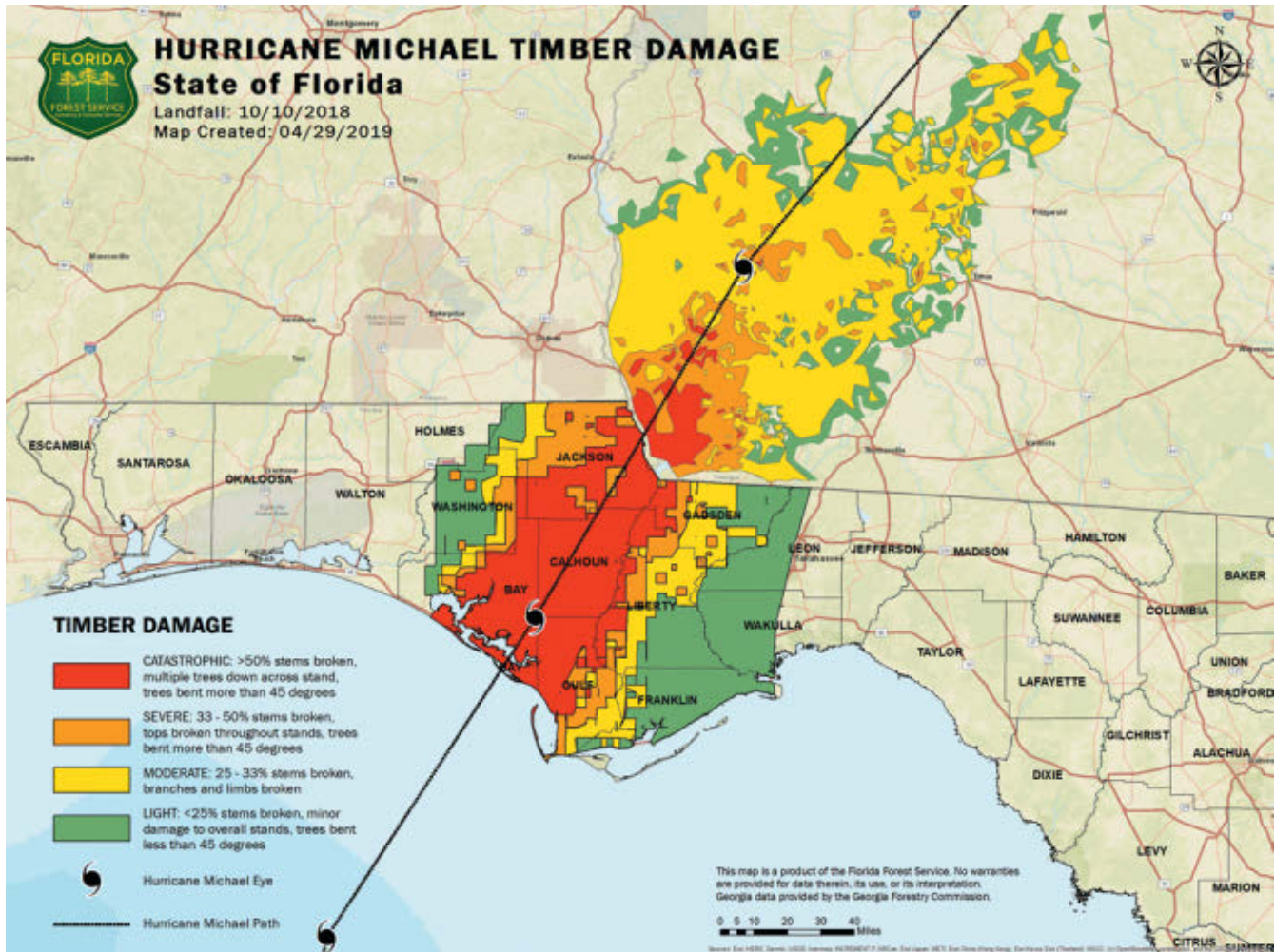


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ONE YEAR AFTER HURRICANE MICHAEL

Forest Industry Makes History With First USDA Block Grants

By **MONICA CORBIN**, Communications and Public Relations, Florida Forest Service

WHILE LOOKING BACK on Hurricane Michael may be painful or even feel redundant, it has been imperative to keep the catastrophic damage at the forefront – to remember the people, the families and the livelihoods devastated by this storm. Michael certainly made its mark in history, but so has the forest industry.

It’s no secret that it will take years to return the Panhandle’s landscape into great working forests, but the progress made to this end is nothing short of remarkable. Eight months after landfall, the \$19.1 billion Emergency Disaster Relief package was passed by Congress and signed by the President. With Florida

leading the way, the package included timber for the first time in the history of federal disaster funding.

The two sections of the package that are relevant to the forest industry are the \$480 million for the Emergency Forest Restoration Program and the \$3 billion for Farm Disaster Assistance, which is



ALL PHOTOS ARE COURTESY OF THE FLORIDA FOREST SERVICE AND ILLUSTRATE SOME OF THEIR MILESTONES OVER THE PAST YEAR.

Above: Cleared 1,094 miles of roads and fire lines.



Assisted over 780 forest landowners with documenting damage for the EFRP, totaling 3,000 work hours.

appropriated to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) office to help agriculture producers across multiple states recover from 2018 and 2019 natural disasters.

Emergency Forest Restoration Program

The USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) of Florida administers the Emergency Forest Restoration Program (EFRP), which provides payments to eligible owners of non-industrial private forest land to enable them to restore the land damaged by Hurricane Michael. The program offers financial assistance of up to 75 percent of the cost to implement approved emergency forest restoration practices. Eligible Florida counties include Bay, Calhoun, Dixie, Franklin, Gadsden, Gulf, Holmes, Jackson, Jefferson, Lafayette, Leon, Liberty, Madison, Taylor, Wakulla, Walton and Washington. The FSA has extended the EFRP enrollment period for damages incurred by Hurricane Michael through April 30, 2020. Interested landowners should contact their local FSA office for details or visit www.farmers.gov/recover.

Farm Disaster Assistance – Florida Timber Recovery Program

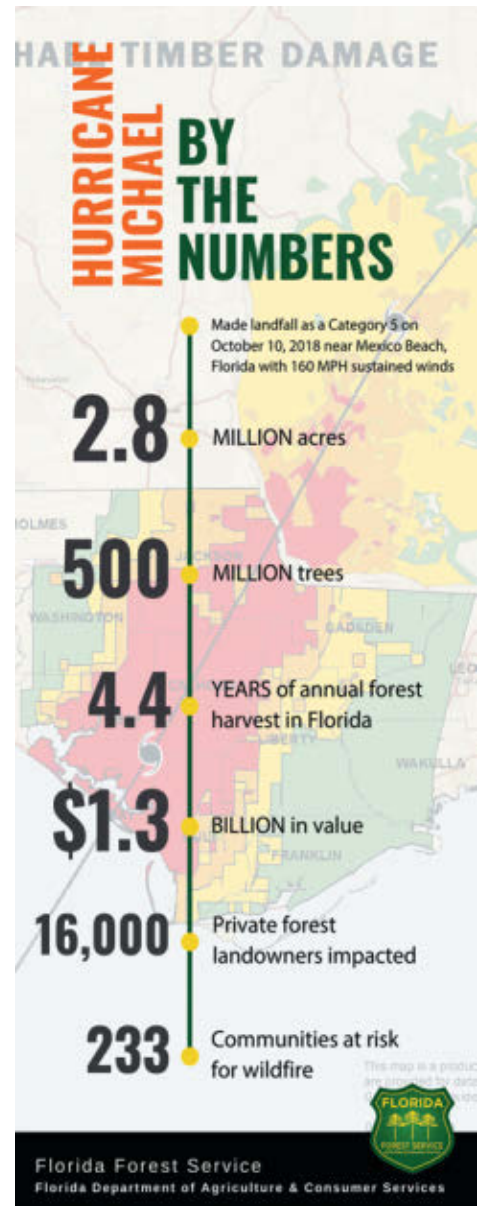
While the Emergency Forest Restoration Program offers valuable assistance, the Florida Forest Service (FFS) recognized the need for additional resources to help landowners mitigate the loss of valuable timber products and reforest their lands. Immediately

following the Emergency Disaster Relief package announcement, the FFS Forest Management (FM) Bureau began drafting a proposal to submit to the USDA for the Florida Timber Recovery Program. Thanks to the dedicated efforts of FM Bureau Chief Jimmy Roberts, FM Assistant Bureau Chief Bonnie Stine and their team, the countless hours paid off.

Through consistent engagement with the USDA, Florida's proposed program was adopted by other states and approved by Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue in November. The USDA announced \$380.7 million in federal block grant funding has been allocated for Florida, nearly half of the \$800 million declared for Florida, Georgia, Alabama and North Carolina disaster relief programs.

"I am truly grateful to Secretary Perdue and the USDA for this historic timber landowner recovery program," said Jim Karels, State Forester and Director of the Florida Forest Service. "We know all too well how vital forests are in the Panhandle, and this program will help landowners reforest and rebuild their livelihoods."

"This page in our country's history would not have been possible without the consistent voice and dedication of Commissioner of Agriculture Nikki Fried, the Florida Forestry Association, our Florida Forest Service personnel and, of course, the landowners who so generously allowed us to keep telling their stories to bring awareness and support."





Distributed over 12,000 native trees to residents through the Arbor Day Foundation Community Tree Recovery program.



Deployed additional resources to impacted area to assist with wildfire suppression due to dry conditions.



Suppressed 275 wildfires that have burned 4,191 acres in the 11 counties impacted.



Approved more than \$500,000 in grants for rural volunteer fire departments through the Volunteer Fire Assistance program.

The Florida Timber Recovery Program will compensate forest landowners for the lost value of their timber damaged by Hurricane Michael, helping them clear downed trees and replant. Block grant funding will also help producers repair and replace irrigation infrastructure damage from Hurricane Michael. The Florida Forest Service will work with the Florida Division of Emergency Management to administer the USDA block grants.

“Timber’s inclusion in the block grants provides the help and the hope that the Panhandle sorely needs right now,” said Florida Forestry Association Executive Vice President Alan Shelby. “Although it won’t make forest landowners whole, it will make a tremendous difference in their ability to begin recovery and move forward with clean-up and reforestation.”

Additionally, the Florida Forest Service has applied for a \$7.9 million Disaster Recovery Supplement grant from the USDA Forest Service. If approved, the funding will help the FFS with the increased demand in the Panhandle, supporting programs for forest health (reducing pests, diseases and invasives), fire protection (suppression and mitigation), forest stewardship (landowner assistance) and community forestry (urban forest recovery).

Florida’s forest industry and its many partners are paving the way for forest timber relief in our country. What a tremendous victory to serve as a catalyst to keep moving forward – to stay committed to seeing the working forests in our Panhandle restored. ●

“TIMBER’S INCLUSION IN THE BLOCK GRANTS PROVIDES THE HELP AND THE HOPE THAT THE PANHANDLE SORELY NEEDS RIGHT NOW. ALTHOUGH IT WON’T MAKE FOREST LANDOWNERS WHOLE, IT WILL MAKE A TREMENDOUS DIFFERENCE IN THEIR ABILITY TO BEGIN RECOVERY AND MOVE FORWARD WITH CLEAN-UP AND REFORESTATION.”

– ALAN SHELBY, FLORIDA FORESTRY ASSOCIATION EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT

AWARD WINNING FORESTRY

Recognizing Association members who have been honored for their contributions to Florida forestry.

FLORIDA FORESTRY ASSOCIATION'S LEGISLATOR OF THE YEAR AWARD

SENATOR GEORGE GAINER AND REPRESENTATIVE LORANNE AUSLEY



SENATOR GEORGE GAINER

Senator George Gainer, R-Panama City, is only in his first term in the Florida Senate, but that did not stop him from stepping up and taking a leadership role in disaster relief and recovery efforts after Hurricane Michael.

Always a staunch supporter for the forest industry, Sen. Gainer's advocacy has kept the industry and its people in the forefront of legislative awareness. He has used every tool available to do so, right down to his socks!

At the beginning of this year's legislative session, the Senator had socks made with his face on them. Whenever someone would comment on them, he would use it as a launchpad into a conversation about the needs of the people in the hurricane impact zone. The Senator and his socks quickly became a social media sensation, keeping attention on hurricane relief and recovery.

The session ended in May, but Sen. Gainer continues to be an active promoter of reforestation efforts. He believes in the economic and environmental benefits of working forests and educates other key policymakers about them as well.



REPRESENTATIVE LORANNE AUSLEY

An Ironman triathlete, a mom and a legislator, Representative Loranne Ausley brings the passion and commitment of a world-class triathlete to her public service on behalf of her community.

Whether it is running a marathon or working for people in need, she is tireless in her pursuit to reach her goals. Since last October, she has focused much of her work on recovery efforts in the Panhandle after Hurricane Michael.

After Hurricane Michael, Rep. Ausley took the task of advocating for the impacted people and industries head-on. Her leadership during the legislative session elevated awareness of the critical need for hurricane relief and recovery efforts. She continues to be an active

spokesperson and to focus on positive, productive solutions to the challenges still being faced.

In addition to her legislative efforts, she also uses her strong social media platform to tell the forestry story and to bring awareness to the devastation caused by the hurricane.

FLORIDA FORESTRY ASSOCIATION ABOVE & BEYOND AWARD

BUMP FAIRCLOTH



Frank "Bump" Faircloth joined the Association in 1976.

"Bump Faircloth is the kind of member every association wants to have," said Association President Carlton Jones, who presented the award. "He is eager to step in wherever needed, gladly offering support, advice and help however he can."

Faircloth served as the CEO of Suwannee Lumber Company in Cross City for 27 years. Under his leadership Suwannee became one of the largest Southern Yellow Pine sawmills in the South. Suwannee was sold to Blue Wolf Private Equity in 2013 and then last year to Conifex.

Currently, Faircloth is chairman for Blue Wolf Capital Partners. He serves as a consultant and assists with mergers and acquisitions. He is also a Tree Farmer.

Outside of the forestry realm, he founded Faircloth Ford in Perry, FL, created and owned several other businesses, and serves his community and church in several capacities.

Despite having such a full plate, Faircloth became a trusted “go-to” person for the Association. His most visible efforts are with the Timber Toppers Golf Tournament, which he organized and sponsored for many years, but he has been active in many other ways as well, explained Jones.

“Bump is the first person to raise his hand to volunteer and the last to sit down when the work is finished,” said Jones. “In short, you can always count on him to go above and beyond.”

FLORIDA FORESTRY ASSOCIATION DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD

JIM KARELS



James “Jim” Karels has served as State Forester and Director of the Florida Forest Service since 2008, after more than 20 years with the agency in a variety of capacities.

The Florida Forest Service manages more than one million acres of state forests, provides forest management assistance on more than 17 million acres of

private and community forests and is responsible for protecting homes, forestland and natural resources from the devastating effects of wildfire on more than 26 million acres.

“The impact that Jim has had on Florida forestry is immeasurable,” said Association President Edward Cole, who presented the award. “He is always there when needed, doing whatever needs to be done, taking the lead and making things happen.”

“After Hurricane Michael, Jim and his team at the Florida Forest Service immediately had boots on the ground, and they have remained highly active in relief and recovery efforts,” said Cole. “Jim’s leadership is a major force in rebuilding forestry in the Panhandle.”

Karels is also a national leader in both prescribed fire and wildfire management. He was the president of the National Association of State Foresters (NASF) and is currently representing all 50 states as the NASF Fire Committee Chair.

He has more than 38 years of experience in prescribed burning, wildfire suppression and land management throughout the United States. With his expertise, he has been called in to fight wildfires across the United States.

“Jim Karels is one in a million,” said Cole. “He is undoubtedly deserving of this honor.”

Karels has received numerous other honors this year, including election to the Florida Foresters Hall of Fame, the National Association of State Foresters’ Jeff Jahnke Current Achievement Award for Leadership and the Wildland Fire Leadership Development Program’s Paul Gleason Lead by Example Lifetime Achievement Award.

FLORIDA FORESTERS HALL OF FAME

MARK MILLIGAN, DR. ERIC JOKELA
AND JIM KARELS

The Florida Division of the Society of American Foresters (SAF) has announced the induction of three Association members into its prestigious Hall of Fame: F4 Tech President **Mark Milligan**, University of Florida emeritus professor **Dr. Eric Jokela**, and State Forester **Jim Karels**.

With only 25 foresters previously inducted, election to the Hall of Fame is intended to be the highest honor and recognition of professional service a forester may receive in Florida. The recent inductees will be honored at the Southeastern Society of American Foresters (SESASF) awards banquet during its 2020 annual meeting in Panama City, FL.

MARK MILLIGAN



Mark M. Milligan founded ForesTech Consulting, Inc. in 1998 and serves as president of the Tallahassee company, now doing business as F4 Tech. Under Milligan’s leadership, F4 Tech focuses on providing foresters and technicians with field tested, user friendly technology that does not involve extensive knowledge of how the hardware or software works. The company’s handheld data recorder with GPS capabilities adds efficiencies to field data collections and transfer.

F4 Tech products and services have expanded to include turnkey, natural resource solutions including data collection, mapping, data driven decision-making, long term resource planning, and analytical services. Milligan has secured several U.S. patents and the company's work has affected over a million acres of private and public lands.

Milligan has served the forestry profession as Chair of the Florida Chapter of the Association of Consulting Foresters. He has held numerous offices in the Society of American Foresters, including Florida Division Chair in 2007.

Milligan also serves as chair of the Florida Forestry Association's Environmental Committee and sits on its Executive Committee and Board of Directors.

DR. ERIC JOKELA



Dr. Eric J. Jokela joined the UF School of Forest Resources and Conservation in 1984 and was named as Emeritus Professor

upon his retirement in 2018. As a professor of silviculture, he taught both graduate and undergraduate courses, receiving the school's Teacher of the Year award seven times.

He directed the Cooperative Research in Forest Fertilization program when he first arrived in Florida and later served as a founding co-director of the Forest Biology Research Cooperative. These two cooperatives established scores of long-term research installations from Texas to Virginia, producing scientific insight that has had a profound impact on the productivity, health and sustainability of managed pine forests in the southeastern United States.

Jokela published over 85 peer-reviewed papers and many technical reports and is among the most cited silviculturists in North America. He served on the editorial boards of a number of leading international forestry journals and was the founding editor in chief of the open access journal, *Forests*.

Jokela chaired the SAF Florida Division in 2005 and the Southeastern SAF in 2013. He received the Florida Division's Stephen Spurr Award for research in 2006 and Southeastern Society's Award of Excellence in Research and Development in 2008. He was named an SAF Fellow in 2011 and

received the Barrington Moore Award for Biological Research in 2015.

JIM KARELS



James "Jim" Karels has served as State Forester and director of the Florida Forest Service since 2008, after more than 20 years with the agency in a variety of capacities. To read more about Jim Karels distinguished service, please see his profile for the Florida Forestry Association Distinguished Service award.

AUDUBON FLORIDA SUSTAINABLE FORESTER AWARD

MICHAEL DOONER



Michael Dooner, a timber stands owner and consultant, went above and beyond after Hurricane Michael to revitalize timber operations in the Florida Panhandle. Forestry's environmental and economic importance became acutely apparent than in the wake of the hurricane, when Floridians emerged from storm shelters to find vast forest tracts laid low, along with the livelihoods of the families and the ecology that depended on them.

While he had holdings of his own to assess, salvage and replant, Dooner worked tirelessly with agency personnel to improve recovery efforts on the ground. He helped connect forest owners with essential services, and also advocated for federal disaster relief to

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give a hand up to the region's hard-hit forest economy.

"Thank you, Michael," Audubon's Director of Policy Beth Alvi said, "for helping see the Panhandle through this challenging time, and for protecting the region's forest way of life and its economy."

"Michael Dooner is a great example of what forestry is all about," said Florida Forestry Association Executive Vice President Alan Shelby. "He remains focused on moving forestry forward, especially in the tough times. Michael is a forward thinker and understands the connection between forestry and the environment and economy."

Dooner is a past president of the Association and continues to play an active role on its leadership team. He is a recognized and respected advocate for Florida forestry.

2019 FLORIDA OUTSTANDING TREE FARMER OF THE YEAR

JOHN RUSSELL



John Russell is the family manager for Russell Brothers Farm, a longleaf pine plantation bordered by Pine Barren Creek in the Oak Grove community in north Escambia County. His parents, Jay and Clara Russell, bought the property when they moved from Holmes County in 1946. Their sons, Keith and John, purchased the property from their parents and have focused on longleaf restoration since becoming involved in the Longleaf Initiative Program in 2008.

Russell demonstrates a true passion for land management. He has always worked very closely with county and state forestry and wildlife agencies to ensure best management practices are

followed in managing the property. He has spent time educating himself on how to better manage his forest.

Russell understands the importance of fire in forest management and has become a certified burn manager so he can do his own prescribed burning. He is proud of the family history of the property and does the right things to preserve and also share its importance with others.

Russell looks forward to hosting "field days" for local schools to bring students out to visit and learn the history and importance of the longleaf pine forests.

"John Russell exemplifies the high standards of Florida's Tree Farmers," said Association Executive Vice President Alan Shelby. "His passion for the land and the time, energy and work that he pours into it are worthy of this special recognition."

FLORIDA OUTSTANDING TREE FARM INSPECTOR OF THE YEAR

CATHY HARDIN



Hardin with State Forester Jim Karels (left) and Florida Tree Farm Program President Stephen Lloyd (right).

Cathy Hardin, the Florida Forest Service county forester serving Escambia County, was recognized for her excellent service to private forest landowners and the Florida Tree Farm Program.

Landowners and assistance programs have benefited from Hardin's dedication and hard work. She has tremendously influenced the expansion and implementation of the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Program and the Tree Farm Program in Escambia County. Due to her efforts to revitalize the program in her area, Escambia County is now among the

top performing counties in the state for landowner cooperation and enrollment.

Hardin has helped numerous landowners plan and manage their forests, including the winner of 2019's Outstanding Florida Tree Farmer, John Russell, and Landowner of the Year, Bob Jenkins.

FLORIDA LAND STEWARD'S LANDOWNER OF THE YEAR

BOB JENKINS



PHOTO BY STAN REVIS

Robert "Bob" Jenkins was recognized by the Florida Land Steward Partnership for outstanding forest management on his property known as Jenkins Millview Trace. The property in Millview has been in the Jenkins family since the 1930s, but increased urbanization has made Jenkins Millview Trace part of the wildland-urban interface area. Recognizing this change, Jenkins has taken active steps to reduce the risk of wildfire to his property and neighboring homes.

In the early 2000s, Jenkins and his consulting forester began implementing a stewardship plan to replace slash pine stands with longleaf pine and to introduce regular prescribed burns to control the underbrush and establish varied wildlife habitat. Since then, the property has been burned regularly on a three-year rotation and mechanical mulching treatments have been utilized to remove brush in areas unable to be burned. Bob has also opened Jenkins Millview Trace to fellow landowners to participate in prescribed burning and provides recreational opportunities for local families. •



GLBG/PHOTO COURTESY OF THE FLORIDA
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AFTER HURRICANE MICHAEL, INVASIVE PLANTS MOVE IN

By **JEFFREY EICKWORT**, Entomologist, Florida Forest Service

THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT INVASIVE PLANT INFESTATIONS CAN BE PREVENTED AND CONTROLLED BY THE CHOICES WE MAKE IN OUR LAND MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES. CAREFUL CLEANING OF VEHICLES AND EQUIPMENT USED IN LAND MANAGEMENT CAN REDUCE THE CHANCES OF ACCIDENTALLY CARRYING SEEDS, SPORES OR PARTS OF INVASIVE PLANTS ONTO NEW SITES.

THE DIRECT DAMAGE that Hurricane Michael caused to trees and forests is obvious to anyone who travels through the affected region. But long after the broken and toppled trees are removed and new ones are planted, a more insidious threat can creep into storm-ravaged areas: non-native, invasive plants. If allowed to establish, these aggressively spreading weeds can crowd out native and desirable species, raise the risk and intensity of wildfires, and increase the cost and difficulty of land management for decades to come.

Examples of invasive plants of concern in the areas impacted by Hurricane Michael include:

COGONGRASS (*IMPERATA CYLINDRICA*)

Widely recognized as one of the world’s worst weeds, cogongrass is a perennial grass that forms dense, rapidly-spreading patches with yellowish-green leaves growing about three to four feet tall from a thick network of rhizomes (underground stems). A new infestation can easily be started by a small piece of rhizome stuck in dirt carried on vehicles and equipment, such as those used for post-storm salvage and land clearing activities. In addition to out-competing other vegetation, cogongrass is highly flammable (even when green) and burns hot enough that even fire-adapted tree species like the longleaf pine are often killed.

JAPANESE CLIMBING FERN (*LYGODIUM JAPONICUM*)

This lacy, twining vine forms tangled mats over the ground and spreads up and over other vegetation. When it climbs up the trunks of trees, it can serve as a “fire ladder” that carries low-intensity ground fires up into the canopy. Like other ferns, this species reproduces by releasing tiny spores. These spores can be moved around by hurricane winds and on clothing and equipment used by people working in storm-damaged areas.

CHINESE TALLOW (*TRIADICA SEBIFERA*)

This tree species was once popular in the nursery trade, but don’t be fooled by its attractive appearance; it is an aggressive weed that can quickly take over land that was cleared of other trees due to hurricane damage or other disturbances. Its waxy, white seeds (which earned it the nickname “popcorn tree”) are spread by birds and moving water.



COGONGRASS. PHOTO BY CHARLES T. BRYSON, USDA AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH SERVICE, BUGWOOD.ORG



JAPANESE CLIMBING FERN. PHOTO BY FLORIDA DIVISION OF PLANT INDUSTRY, FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND CONSUMER SERVICES, BUGWOOD.ORG



CHINESE TALLOW. PHOTO BY JOHN M. RANDALL, THE NATURE CONSERVANCY, BUGWOOD.ORG



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WHAT YOU CAN DO

The good news is that invasive plant infestations can be prevented and controlled by the choices we make in our land management activities. Careful cleaning of vehicles and equipment used in land management can reduce the chances of accidentally carrying seeds, spores or parts of invasive plants onto new sites. A combination of herbicide applications, mechanical control and cultural practices can be very effective at eradicating established infestations. The Florida Forest Service has requested federal funding to launch a private landowner assistance program aimed at treating invasive plant infestations in the region affected by Hurricane Michael. The USDA-NRCS's Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) can provide cost-share assistance to treat infestations on agricultural lands. Details on these and other available programs can be found by using the Private Landowner Assistance Tool on www.floridainvasives.org.



HACK AND SQUIRT. PHOTO BY JAMES H. MILLER, USDA FOREST SERVICE, BUGWOOD.ORG



LYGODIUM SPRAYING. PHOTO BY CHRIS EVANS, UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS, BUGWOOD.ORG

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AN INSIDE LOOK AT FLORIDA'S COUNTY FORESTER PROGRAM

By **DANNY STEVENS**, Cooperative Forestry Assistance Supervisor, Florida Forest Service & **JEN TUCKER-JENKS**, Conservation Programs Manager, Florida Forest Service



Landowners Billy and Marcia Boothe with Joe Vanderwerff, FFS Cooperative Forestry Assistance Region 1 Coordinator, during a recent Forest Stewardship tour of the Boothe's property, Crooked Creek Preserve, in Gadsden County.

FLORIDA'S COUNTY FORESTER program has provided free professional support to private forest landowners for over 75 years – a unique service not available in most states. The program was established in 1941 when the County Forestry Law was enacted to permit the Florida Forest Service (FFS) to hire foresters in cooperation with individual Florida counties. The Florida Legislature recognized the economic and environmental importance of forestry and passed the law to ensure the long-term sustainability of Florida's timber supply and forest resources. Currently, the Florida Forest Service employs 38 county foresters who serve all 67 counties.

County foresters have the knowledge and experience to assist landowners with various forestry practices and can help landowners reach their forest management goals. Though timber production remains a primary goal for many landowners, county foresters can provide guidance and information about a range of topics such as multiple use management, shade trees in your yard and improving wildlife habitat. Your county forester is also the connection for landowners interested in assistance and recognition programs.

The Forest Stewardship Program, the flagship landowner assistance program administered by the FFS, is a great opportunity for landowners with 20 or more forested acres to

COUNTY FORESTERS HAVE THE KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE TO ASSIST LANDOWNERS WITH VARIOUS FORESTRY PRACTICES AND CAN HELP LANDOWNERS REACH THEIR FOREST MANAGEMENT GOALS.

obtain free management, guidance and recognition for the hard work they do to manage their forests. Enrollment in this program comes with a written management plan as a guide for landowners to follow. Certification in the Tree Farm program is for active landowners who have a minimum of 10 acres, and their participation also earns them the designation of sustainably grown wood.

FFS county foresters can also help landowners with enrolling in several financial assistance programs that are designed to fund key forestry practices, including prescribed burning and reforestation. One of the programs the FFS administers, the Southern Pine Beetle (SPB) Assistance and Prevention Program, aims to keep loblolly pine forests healthy and support slash and longleaf pine planting where appropriate because stressed loblolly pine is one of the SPB's favorite meals. FFS offers the Longleaf Pine Private Landowner Incentive Program to encourage active management of existing longleaf pine forests or new conversions to longleaf pine. In addition, the USDA has two programs for forest landowners – the Natural Resources Conservation Service's Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Farm Service Agency's Conservation Reserve Program (CRP).



Marion County landowner Daniel Hightower receives his Forest Stewardship Certification plaque and new Forest Stewardship sign from FFS County Forester Greg Barton.

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NEW UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA RESEARCH IS HELPING FLORIDA FORESTERS

By UF/IFAS School of Forest Resources and Conservation

MEMBERS OF THE Florida Forestry Association own and manage millions of acres of Florida's forests. Proper forest management requires a great deal of time, commitment, skill and knowledge to ensure forests deliver benefits that meet landowner needs. In a constantly changing world, scientists in the UF/IFAS School of Forest Resources

and Conservation aim to help association members continue to meet their goals.

In 2018, a research team led by Taylor Stein, professor in ecotourism and natural resources management, and Jennifer Fill, postdoctoral research associate, designed a survey to assess the needs of Florida Forestry Association members.

"In order to prioritize and communicate our programs effectively, we need to know what research and outreach topics would benefit them the most," said Stein, "We sent out a survey to the Association membership, and 136 individuals participated."

Over half the 136 survey participants were male and either own their land

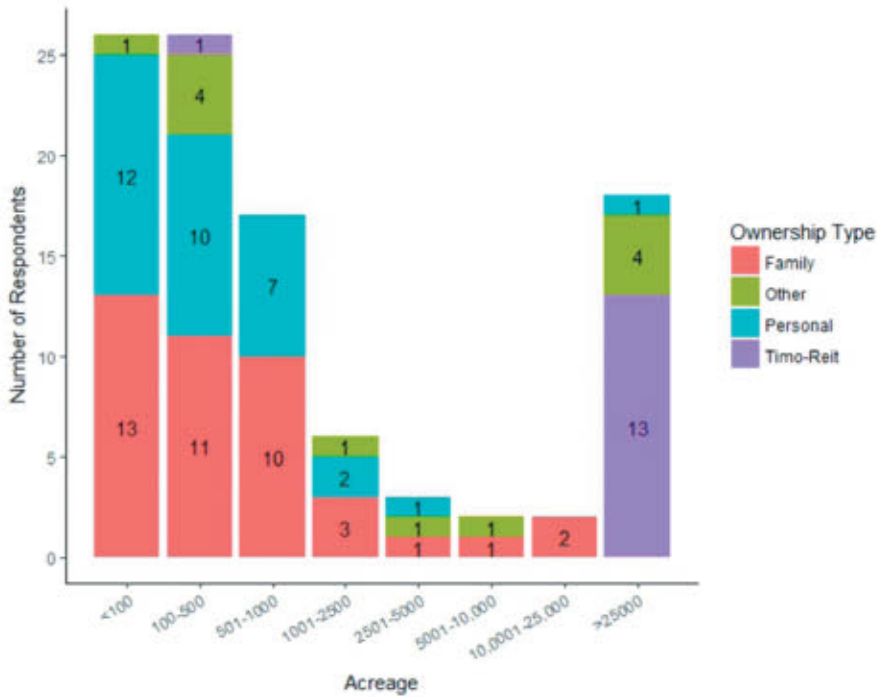


Figure 1. The number of acres owned or managed by survey participants in different ownership categories. Labels in stacked bars indicate number of respondents.

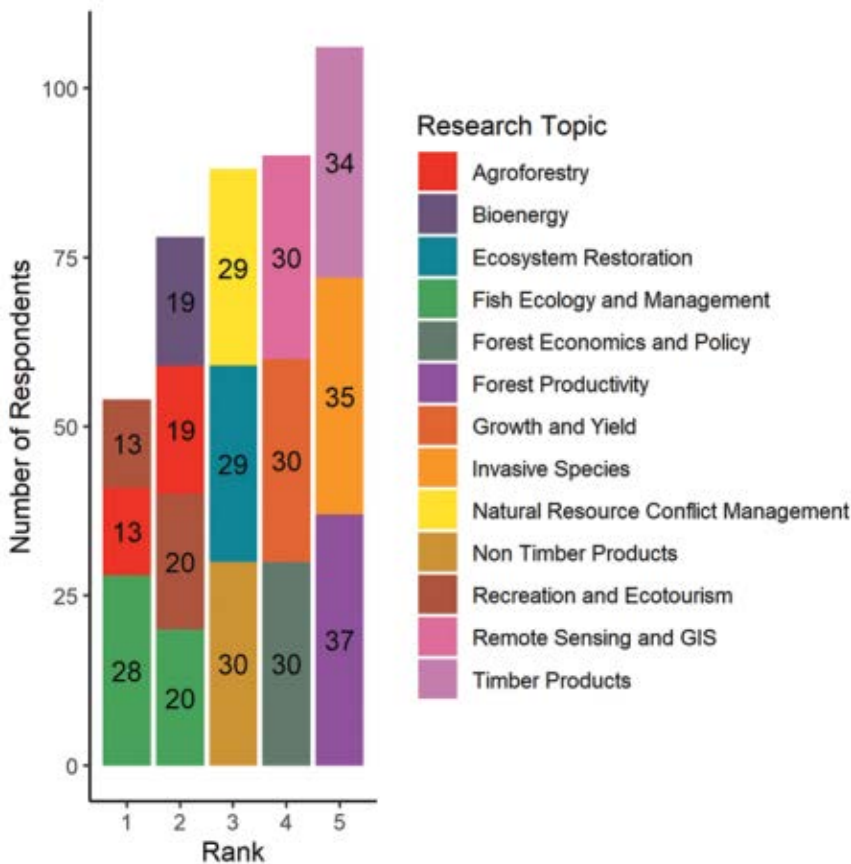


Figure 2. Most commonly scored research topics that forest landowners felt would help them improve their land management. Labels inside stacked bars indicate number of respondents. 1 = Not At All Helpful, 2 = Somewhat Helpful, 3 = Helpful, 4 = Very Helpful, 5 = Extremely Helpful

personally or in the family. Of the 100 participants who specified their property acreage, 52% owned or managed 500 or fewer acres of land with 27% managing more than 25,000 acres of land.

Income generation and timber production were the most important reasons for owning land overall.

“Results show that FFA members believe that research on forest productivity, timber products, invasive species, forest economics and policy, growth and yield, and silviculture will be most helpful to them as forest landowners,” said Stein.

The study found that outreach and education efforts should focus on providing information about pest and invasive species management (identification, control methods, herbicide options); silvicultural techniques (site preparation methods, tree spacing and fertilization, thinning); and how to generate income from timber and other sources (markets and prices, inventory techniques, the sales process).

The next step of the assessment was to determine the best method of information delivery.

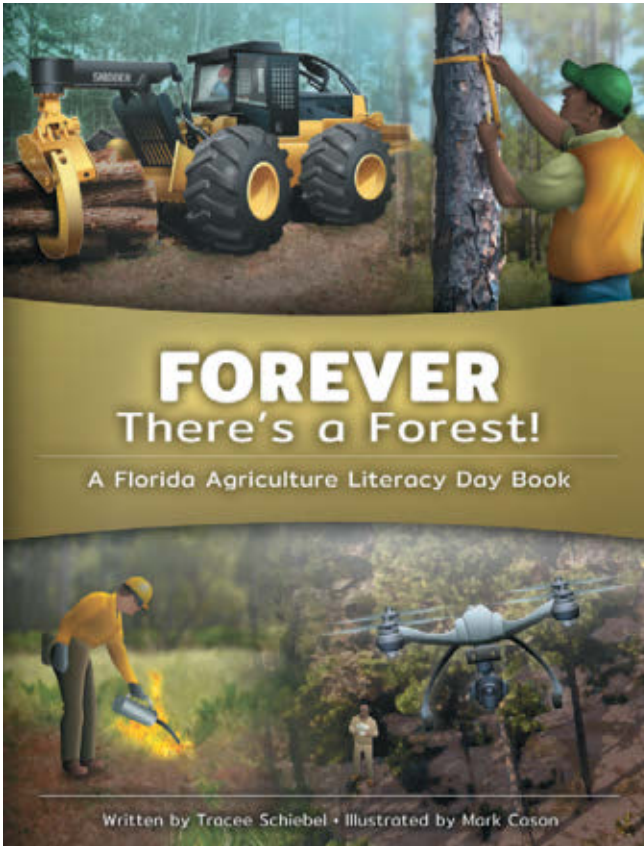
“We could be doing cutting edge research, but if the information is published in a way that’s inaccessible outside of academia then we aren’t serving our stakeholders,” said Stein, “Association members want to learn about the practical applications of our research.”

Landowners indicated a strong preference for information delivery via newsletter or online website, with recommendations for management conveyed clearly in text or video. Some information, such as timber or wildlife management techniques or best management practices, should be communicated in one-day hands-on workshops.

“Overall, this study showed us what Association members have as priorities,” said Stein, “So we can now better focus our research and outreach activities on topics they believe are most important.”

Read the full report at: <https://sfr.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/FFA-Final-Report.pdf> •

FOREVER THERE'S A FOREST



The 2019 Ag Literacy Day book features an in-depth look at Florida forestry.

The launch of Florida Agriculture in the Classroom's Ag Literacy Day book, *Forever There's A Forest*, was held in conjunction with Working Forests Week. One hundred third-graders from Sealey Elementary School in Tallahassee, FL, attended a special kick-off event at Tall Timbers Research Station on October 22, 2019. They were treated to time with Smokey Bear and Florida Forest Festival Princess Caroline Gray, who read the book to them. They also participated in activities led by staff from the Association and the Florida Forest Service and plantation manager Jason Hough to help them learn about forestry.

Members of the Florida Farm Bureau, 4-H, FFA and other volunteers also read to students across the state and will continue to do so throughout the school year.

If you are interested in reading *Forever There's a Forest* at a school in your area, please visit www.faitc.org/ag-literacy-day for more information •



Nobody gives a better bear hug than Smokey! He and the rest of the Florida Forest Service team were a big hit with all the students.



Third graders from Sealey Elementary School in Tallahassee were treated to a morning of forestry fun at Tall Timbers Research Station.

FOREVER THERE'S A FOREST

The students had a blast identifying animal tracks that might be found in a forest! Many thanks to volunteer Jason Hough, manager of Mandalay Plantation, for making this activity come to life in such a fun way!




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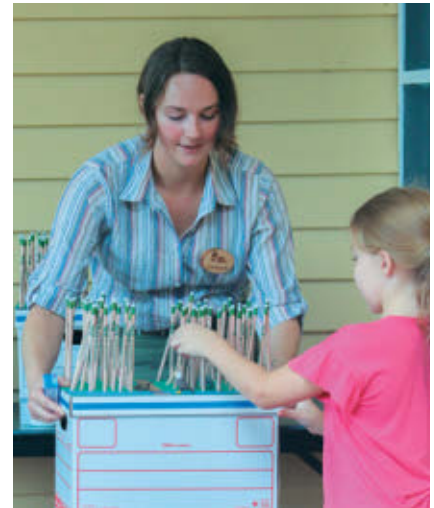
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Association Director of Forestry and Regulatory Affairs Laura Bosworth helped students understand the many roles forestry plays in their daily lives with an informative and entertaining "Goods from the Woods" activity.

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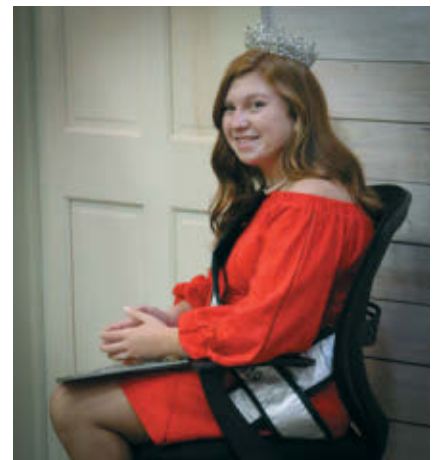
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Florida Forest Festival Princess Caroline Gray provided a royal touch as she read *Forever There's a Forest* to her captivated audiences.



Florida Forest Service Wildfire Mitigation Specialist Todd Schroeder – Tallahassee Forestry Center, Association lobbyist Jim Spratt, Florida Forest Service Fire Prevention Coordinator Andy Nesmith, Attorney General Ashley Moody, Governor Ron DeSantis, Smokey Bear, Florida Forest Service Assistant Director Erin Albury, Commissioner of Agriculture Nikki Fried, Florida Forest Service Forest Protection Bureau Chief John Fish, and Chief Financial Officer Jimmy Patronis.

Forestry took center stage at the October meeting of the Florida Cabinet. Resolutions in recognition of **Working Forests Week**, **Smokey Bear's birthday** and **Ag Literacy Day** were passed. After the meeting, Commissioner Fried read this year's featured Ag Literacy Day book, *Forever There's a Forest*, to a group of students at the Florida Historic Capitol.



Ryan Pavlik

Association board member **Ryan Pavlik** of Stoutamire-Pavlik & Associates, Inc. was recently selected to participate in the UF/IFAS Wedgworth Leadership Institute for Agriculture and Natural Resources (WLI).

With seminars ranging from the Florida Panhandle to Miami, time spent in Washington D.C., and a three-week international learning experience, this two-year leadership development program broadens the participants' perspectives and builds a network within the industry and beyond. Program graduates are equipped to address

challenges of local, state, national and global dimensions.

"The candidates selected for this program are already leaders in their respective industries," said WLI Director Christy Chiarelli. "Our goal is not to teach leadership, but rather, to give existing leaders an introduction to public policy and to create a networking system for participants to develop professionally. It is our aim to further develop their skills to address issues affecting Florida's agriculture industry and natural resources."

Florida Forestry Association:



Whitney Hough has been promoted to Director of Member Services. Whitney joined the staff in 2015 as the Association's administrative

manager and was subsequently promoted to Member Services Coordinator before taking on her current role.

Whitney lives in Thomasville, GA, with her husband, Jason, and their children, Colt and Palmer.



Laura Bosworth has joined the Association team as Director of Forestry and Regulatory Affairs. Laura spent her earlier career

working and playing in the forests of the Southeast as a county forester, a long-leaf specialist and the Southeastern Tree Farm manager. She attended Iowa State University where she obtained her bachelors in forestry with a focus on ecosystem management and services.



Krista Harvard has joined the Association staff as Office Coordinator. Krista was originally born in West Palm Beach and moved to Tallahassee in

2000. She received her Bachelor's Degree in Biology from Florida State University in 2015. After graduation, she worked in the field of case management before leaving the medical field for the Florida Forestry Association.

Krista and her husband, Staige, live in Tallahassee with their two dogs and three cats. •

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