

Fall/Winter 2021

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AN OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE FLORIDA FORESTRY ASSOCIATION

2022 Legislative Preview

**Award Winners
in the Spotlight**

**Rebuilding Community
Canopies**



**LEASE LIKE A BOSS: THE ADVANTAGES OF
LEASING OVER PURCHASING**

**NEW CARBON SEQUESTRATION PROGRAM
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AT THE ASSOCIATION,
IT'S OUR GOAL TO
MAKE SURE FORESTRY
ALWAYS HAS A SEAT
AT THE TABLE.

TREEPAC Puts the Action in Political Action

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

"IF YOU DON'T have a seat at the table, you're probably on the menu."

At the Association, it's our goal to make sure forestry always has a seat at the table. With the 2022 legislative session beginning January 11, that goal is uppermost in our minds.

The challenge? Eighty percent of Florida's elected officials represent districts *south* of Ocala. Most of Florida's forestland lies *north* of Ocala.

How do you overcome that?

TREEPAC, the Association's political action committee (PAC), contributes to candidates running for the state House or Senate. The criteria: support of the forest industry and a pro-business philosophy.

TREEPAC is nonpartisan. Political affiliation doesn't matter. Support of sustainable forestry practices does.

TREEPAC is the only PAC solely representing Florida's entire forestry community. Its mission is to help elect candidates who will work to protect the ability to grow, harvest and use Florida's forest resources.

Every year is a new playing field. Every election cycle is a fresh start, especially with term limits.

For our friends and supporters to help us, by influencing policy decisions, they must first get elected. The ugly truth is that elections cost money. Like everything else, the cost of campaigns keeps going up.

The purpose of TREEPAC is to support candidates who support us. The more candidates we can help get elected, the more friends we will have in office. And that lessens the chance we find ourselves on the menu.

TREEPAC is funded by donations from members. Our members make it possible for us to be active in the campaigns. They are the voice of forestry in Florida politics.

Our seat at the policy-making table depends on your support of TREEPAC. Help ensure forestry continues to have a voice in the halls of the Capitol.

Learn more about TREEPAC and contribute online at FLForestry.org. •



WE MIGHT HAVE
GOTTEN THROWN
SOME CURVEBALLS,
BUT WE STAYED IN
THE GAME ...
AND WE HIT A FEW
OUT OF THE PARK
ALONG THE WAY.

Commitment Makes the Difference

By **CARLTON JONES**, Florida Forestry Association President

THE END OF the year is an exciting time for me. I appreciate the extra time to spend with family and friends during the holidays. I believe we all need to remember to take a moment to pause and think about the year that has passed. Furthermore, I always try to take advantage of the opportunity to consider the year ahead.

My youngest son plays baseball, and I love to watch his games. I couldn't help but notice that this past year has been a lot like baseball. We might have gotten thrown some curveballs, but we stayed in the game ... and we hit a few out of the park along the way.

As we gear up for 2022, the top slot on our agenda belongs to the state legislative session, which begins Tuesday, January 11. Advocacy remains a key priority for the Association, and we look forward to sharing the forestry story with our senators and representatives.

As always, we will work to protect Greenbelt, the Right to Farm Act and private property rights. These are all fundamental tenets for Florida's forest industry, safeguarding the right to grow and use forest resources.

We will advocate for other sound policies and programs that sustain our forest resources and vital forest products industry as well. We will also fight against any legislation that threatens

our sustainability. We want to help lawmakers understand the economic and environmental value that forestry brings to the table.

That has become increasingly important as the state's population centers continue to move south. Most of our forestland is in North and Central Florida, while most of the legislators represent districts in South Florida. Fortunately, the benefits that forestry provides reach all areas of the state.

We are proud to be the voice of Florida forestry. We fully believe in the industry we represent and the members we serve.

Ultimately, I believe that can make the difference between a good year and a bad one. When you are committed to what you do, challenges become opportunities, not obstacles. Curveballs are just another way to knock it out of the park.

In this new year, I hope that you will join us in proudly sharing the forestry story. Your support matters. Your actions make a difference.

In the words of the great philosopher Brad Paisley, "(January 1) is the first blank page of a 365-page book. Write a good one."

My family joins me in wishing you all the very best in 2022 and beyond. •



THE TALLAHASSEE TANGO: WHAT TO EXPECT IN 2022

By **JIM SPRATT**, Magnolia Strategies LLC



WITHOUT QUESTION THERE are many forces pulling at our country, our state and our industry. Too often these forces are exacerbated through politics. Large issues like vaccine mandates, inflation, supply chain disruptions and the continued fiasco at our southern border are all issues which can – and in many cases do – directly impact your business’s bottom line. In fact, as this article is being written, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis has already made the decision to call the

legislature back in November for a special session to address vaccine mandates.

If fall committee meetings are any indication, the start of the 2022 legislative session should be largely uneventful in the agricultural and environmental world. Clearly, there has been much accomplished for the agricultural and silvicultural industries over the past several sessions, not the least of which was the passage of SB 88 “Farming Operations” during the 2020 session.

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Looking holistically, the 2022 session may be the opportunity to protect the good policies we have in Florida while making progress on larger budget items. One such issue which has been terribly underfunded and underutilized is the Rural and Family Lands Program (RFL). Association members understand the value and benefit to RFL. While interest in the program remains high, funding for the program hovers between low and nonexistent. However, there has recently been more chatter among legislators about taking a serious look at funding the program at a level which is sustainable and allows progress to be made on the myriad of waiting projects.

Notwithstanding the influences of national politics, it is most likely this legislative session will be dominated more by the 2022 election cycle than by policy. For example, the legislature must complete the process of redistricting congressional, state senate and state house districts. This is a normal process which takes place every 10 years and is based upon the data gathered during the decennial census. As you might expect, there will be passionate debates about every single line drawn, jog made, and community of interest recognized or included as the new districts are drawn.

While redistricting might be a harbinger of changes in overall Republican and Democrats elected in Florida, the reality is that 2022 is poised to see epic election showdowns regardless of districts. In 2022 all four Florida Cabinet officials will be on the ballot: governor, attorney general, chief financial officer and commissioner of agriculture.

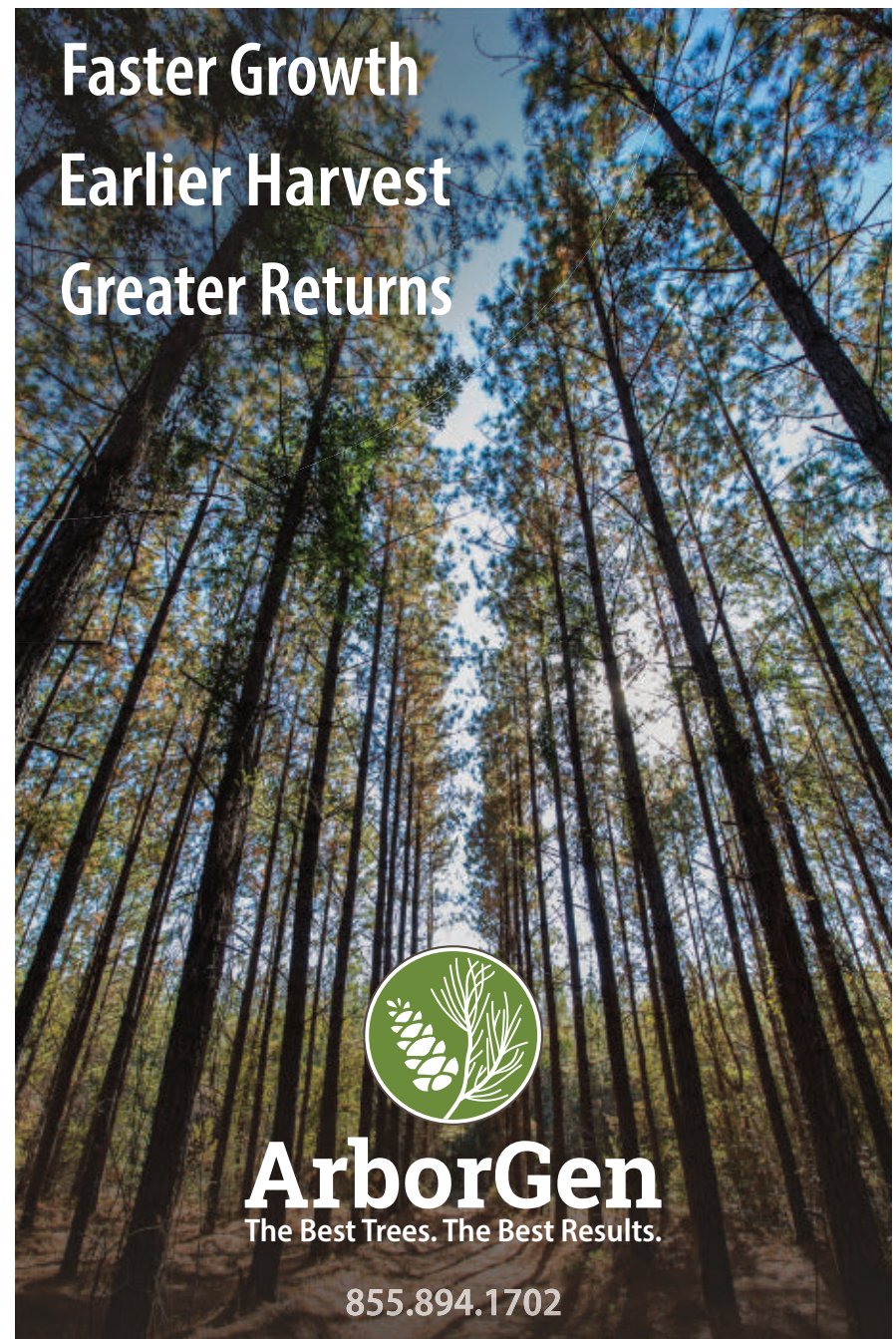
Unless you have been embargoed from all news sources, it is no surprise that we have challengers to Governor DeSantis. On the Democratic side are former Governor and current U.S. Congressman Charlie Crist, current Florida Commissioner of Agriculture Nikki Fried, and current State Senator Annette Taddeo. At this point, no other prominent Democrats have publicly thrown their names into the hat for the other cabinet races, but it is still early.

The cascading effect of Commissioner Fried's decision to challenge Governor DeSantis has opened the door for both


parties to seek the post of Commissioner of Agriculture. To date, Senate President Wilton Simpson (R) has been the only candidate actively seeking the job. President Simpson should be familiar to many Association members. A farmer himself, he is a previous recipient of the Association's Legislator of the Year award and a staunch advocate for the silvicultural and agricultural industries during his time in elected office.

Translation: It will be a busy spring and summer for the Association and its

members as new and old faces reach out to learn or get re-educated on the wood and wood products industry. Not to sound like a broken record, but 2022 offers a unique opportunity to introduce a candidate or current elected official to your business and the wood products industry. Building relationships early tend to pay dividends in the long run, and those relationships are easier to make when someone is seeking an elected office. •



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2022 STATE LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES AT A GLANCE



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PRESCRIBED BURN LIABILITY

Prescribed burning is critical for mitigating wildfire risks. It is a widely recognized land management practice in Florida. However, the rising prices of liability insurance are becoming cost-prohibitive for certified burners.

The Association supports the creation of new and better insurance options for prescribed burns.

RURAL AND FAMILY LANDS PROTECTION PROGRAM

The Rural and Family Lands Protection Program is an agricultural land preservation program designed to protect

important agricultural lands through the acquisition of permanent conservation easements. While there has been a lot of interest in the program, a steady, consistent funding source to match demand has never been secured.

The Association supports the creation of predictable and reliable funding for the Program.

WILDLIFE BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Florida's Wildlife Best Management Practices (BMP) program continues to be a successful model for species protection. It allows landowners to appropriately protect species on

THE ASSOCIATION SUPPORTS RENEWED FOCUS AND EFFORTS TO DETERMINE THE VALUE OF ECOSYSTEM SERVICES PROVIDED BY AGRICULTURAL AND SILVICULTURAL LANDOWNERS.

their land and recognizes the success of willing participants for the betterment of the habitat and the species. Recently, some groups have been pushing to make the voluntary Wildlife BMPs mandatory to obtain an exemption from filing for an incidental take permit during management activities.

The Association supports the continued use of Wildlife BMPs as a voluntary, incentive-based program.

ECOSYSTEM SERVICES

Ecosystem services are the benefits provided by the natural environment and healthy ecosystems, such as water filtration, air purification, carbon sequestration, wildlife habitat and green spaces.

The Association supports renewed focus and efforts to determine the value of ecosystem services provided by agricultural and silvicultural landowners. We further support the utilization of both private and public options to monetize these critical benefits.

SALES TAX EXEMPTIONS

Trailers used in the production of forestry, but not owned by the farmer, are not are not exempted from sales tax. This excludes loggers and other forest service providers from the benefit.

The Association supports legislation that would enact this exemption.

PRESUMPTION OF CONTAMINATION ON AGRICULTURAL LANDS

As a matter of common practice in real estate transactions, environmental assessments are conducted to ensure there are no environmental contamination issues. For most transactions on ag lands, a relatively simple "phase 1" assessment suffices.

Miami-Dade County's Department of Environmental Management (DERM) has recently implemented new criteria that presume all agricultural lands are contaminated. As such, they must complete a "phase 2" assessment which includes taking representative samples throughout the entire parcel for analysis.

The Association supports legislation which protects the normal and customary procedures for environmental assessments on agricultural lands. We further support unifying regulatory authority over site assessments for current or former agricultural lands by making the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) the sole authority for evaluating environmental conditions and assessing potential liability for the presence of contaminants on current or former agricultural properties.

IMMIGRATION REFORM

Over the past few years, there have been legislative proposals requiring employers to use the federal E-Verify system to verify the legal status of its workers.

The Association believes immigration reform is a national issue. It should be dealt with at the federal level.

PRIORITY BUDGET ISSUES:

Florida Forest Service:


Firefighting Aircraft	\$11 million
Firefighting Equipment Replacement	\$6.68 million
Firefighter Pay Increase	\$3 million
Rural and Family Lands Program	\$20 million

UF/IFAS:

Geomatics Education	\$1.1 million
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Department of Environmental Protection:

Springs Protection Funding	\$50 million
Florida Forever Funding	\$50 million



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2021 Legislators of the Year

Senator Jason Brodeur

Senator Jason Brodeur is a key “go-to” in the Florida Senate when issues arise. Though only a freshman, he was tapped to serve as the chair of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee and served on the critically important Appropriation Subcommittee for Agriculture, Environment and General Government.

During the 2021 session, he navigated challenging policy issues before his committee and saw passage of significant legislation of his own. Most notably, he sponsored SB 88, which strengthened and modernized Florida’s Right to Farm Act. SB 88 reinforces protections for customary practices such as burning, placing caps on attorney’s fees, and expanding the protections of the law to agritourism operations.

Senator Brodeur represents Seminole and Volusia Counties. His district includes timber and wood products manufacturing, farms and nurseries. He lives in Lake Mary with his wife Christy, and he is a proud alumnus of the University of Florida with a degree in Food and Resource Economics.

“Senator Brodeur has been a friend of forestry since he was first elected to the state House of Representatives,” said Association Vice President Alan Shelby. “We appreciate his ongoing leadership and support.”

Notably, Senator Brodeur is not only a member of the Florida Senate but also a member of the Florida Forestry Association.



Representative Jayer Williamson

Elected to the Florida House of Representatives in 2016, Representative Jayer Williamson has been a friend and supporter of Florida forestry from day one.

His commitment to silviculture was underscored in 2021 when he chose to sponsor legislation strengthening and modernizing Florida’s Right to Farm Act. Without question, this legislation sent a clear signal of the importance of silviculture in Florida by clarifying and reinforcing timber operations’ protection from nuisance lawsuits.

Representing Santa Rosa and parts of Okaloosa Counties, Representative Williamson’s district has a significant share of timber and other agricultural land uses. This drives his passion to strengthen silviculture and agriculture as key drivers of Florida’s economy.

“Representative Williamson acts as a strong and reasonable voice in the Florida House,” said Shelby. “We are glad to have him standing on our side when policy is decided, and laws are made.”

Representative Williamson lives in Pace, Florida, with his wife Linsey and their children Brooks and Rylin. •



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LEASE LIKE A BOSS:



THE ADVANTAGES OF LEASING OVER PURCHASING

By MICHAEL ANTHOS, CoBank

FOR ANY BUSINESS, the real value of equipment lies in using it, not owning it. Leasing offers another way to finance the assets you need to conduct business and provides benefits not typically associated with other forms of financing.

It's an excellent way to save costs, improve cash flow, avoid equipment obsolescence, free up capital, and gain tax advantages.

Leasing offers a wide variety of advantages:



TAX BENEFITS

Payments are generally 100% tax-deductible on income taxes for the life of the lease, which will allow you to write-off expenses quicker. This shorter period means a larger deduction each year, lowering your taxable income and decreasing your taxes.

NO DOWN PAYMENT

Leases usually don't require a down payment. Instead, you only make the first lease payment. This will give you greater flexibility in choosing your equipment and leave you needed cash for other parts of your business.

REDUCED MAINTENANCE COSTS

Older equipment usually costs more to operate. When you lease your equipment and update it regularly, you can always have reliable, low-maintenance equipment.

COST-EFFECTIVENESS

The biggest advantage of a lease is that it is usually less expensive, especially when interest rates are low.

CONVENIENCE

You can obtain approval more quickly than if you were purchasing the equipment. Typically, credit approval and paperwork are quick and easy, usually just 24 to 48 hours for smaller transactions. You can complete larger transactions in about a week.

CONTROLLED CASH FLOW

You can match lease payment schedules to suit your needs – even if you have uneven cash flow patterns. Payment schedules can be customized based on a monthly, quarterly, semi-annual, or annual basis, or even based on your harvest season. You can skip or defer payments, or step them up as needed.

CAPITAL PRESERVATION

You can maintain financial flexibility and stability by preserving working capital. Leasing can provide 100% financing, including soft costs, with no down payment required, so you can keep more cash on hand. Benefit from fixed rate financing and mitigate rising rates in the future. Leasing can also help manage

loan covenants and be another source of financing. A lease also frees up working capital and keeps existing lines of credit open for other purposes.

ESTATE PLANNING

Leasing can effectively help transition ownership of an asset to the next generation at the end of the lease term.

OBSOLESCENCE AVOIDANCE

Have access to the latest and greatest vehicles and equipment now and in the future. Trade in and upgrade your assets as technology keeps advancing.

EQUIPMENT LEASING OPTIONS

Lending institutions offer an assortment of ways to structure an equipment lease contract.

A capital lease is like a loan in that you get to keep the equipment at the end of the lease period. Lease payments may be higher than those of a true lease. Capital leases are sometimes called conditional sale leases.

A true lease is more like a rental. It's the type of lease you'd receive on a



personal vehicle. True leases allow you to use the equipment during the lease's term. At the end of the term, you may be able to purchase the equipment, turn it back in to the leasing company, or possibly renew the lease. These types of leases are also known as operating leases.

Before choosing which type of lease is right for you, you should review your business goals, cash flow situation, and tax picture. It is also advisable to consult an accountant about which type of lease is right for you.

The type of lease you select may depend on the structure of your business. Asking yourself a few questions might help you identify the best option:

Are you able to use the tax benefits of accelerated depreciation? If not, by leasing the asset, your lending institution may be able to take the tax benefit and pass the savings along to you at a lower rate.

Do you need financing for complex, multi-vendor projects with multiple progress payments? Your lending institution can streamline these types of transactions for you.



Do you need equipment that other lenders can't finance? Your lending institution can provide lease financing for an extensive variety of equipment.

What type of flexibility is desired at lease end? Terms are based on expected use and the life of the equipment you're leasing. Terms can average from 36 to 84 months. They may run longer for special circumstances.

Ultimately, you know the ins and outs of your business and what makes it tick better than anyone. Working with a lending institution that you trust will help you weigh all your options and find what works best for your company. •

Michael Anthos is a Relationship Manager for CoBank Farm Credit Leasing. More information can be found at FarmCreditFlorida.com.





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AWARD WINNERS IN THE SPOTLIGHT

MAYBE IT IS the spirit of the people who are drawn to forestry. Maybe it is the passion that the land can ignite in those with a heart so inclined. Or maybe it is the nature of the work that accustoms people to long hours and hard labor and to getting things done no matter what.

Whatever the cause, the people of Florida forestry are known for their excellence. They are well acquainted with the principle of sowing and reaping, and they give 100% to all that they do.

Each year, we are privileged to shine the spotlight on some very-deserving award winners and to thank them for all they do for Florida forestry.

ABOVE & BEYOND: Ryan Pavlik

Ryan Pavlik is the Agency President for AssuredPartners in Monticello. His office specializes in logging, forest products, trucking and agricultural risks in the Southeast. With 15 years in the insurance industry, he has become a trusted adviser who tries to understand all aspects of an operation before presenting comprehensive risk management solutions. He has achieved the Certified Insurance Counselor designation.

Pavlik is a graduate of the University of Florida in Food and Resource Economics. He is currently representing forestry in Class 11 of the University's Wedgworth Leadership Institute.

Pavlik is a current member of the Association's Board of Directors, a past member of the Executive Committee, and a graduate of the Forestry Forward leadership development program. He has volunteered as a trainer for the Master Logger continuing education programs for many years and was active in the development of the College of Central Florida's Timber

Harvesting Equipment program. He serves on the boards of Team Safe Trucking and the Southeastern Wood Producers Association as well as the advisory council for the North Florida Community College CDL school.

"Ryan never hesitates to go the extra mile," said Association Vice President Jimmy Bielling. "He is the kind of volunteer every group needs and wants. He has the knowledge, experience and enthusiasm that get the job done every time."

Pavlik is a family man who enjoys spending time with his wife Jennifer and their three boys ages 9, 7 and 4. They like to hunt, fish, explore, play and coach sports and travel.

DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD: Mike Gaff

Mike Gaff retired from Georgia-Pacific in 2019 after a 45-year career devoted to Florida forestry. His service to the Association includes chairing the Environmental Committee, serving multiple terms on the Executive Committee, and



Ryan Pavlik (left) accepts the "Above & Beyond" Award from Association Vice President Jimmy Bielling.



Mike Gaff (right) accepts the Distinguished Service Award from Association President Carlton Jones.

ultimately leading the organization as its president for two years. Even after retirement, he remains a valued member of its Board of Directors.

During his career, Gaff served on numerous task forces, covering a broad spectrum of issues such as prescribed burning, cypress management, biomass and BMPs. He has been a member of the Florida Forestry Council, Florida Silviculture BMP Technical Advisory Committee and Florida's Working Forests Partners, among others.

His influence was not limited to Florida, however. He was also a member of the Georgia Forestry Association's Board of Directors.

While Gaff certainly has an impressive list of professional accomplishments to his credit, they do not begin to paint the whole picture. He is a committed family man, and he and wife Diane have been married for 17 years. Their family includes two daughters, two sons, and five grandchildren. He is engaged in his faith and his community as well. He is active in his church and volunteers for various other Christian organizations, including going on international mission trips. Gaff has also been part of school liaison committees and the Dixie County Chamber of Commerce.

"Mike is an exemplary leader whose lifetime achievements have positively impacted the trajectory of Florida forestry," said Association President Carlton Jones. "He has undoubtedly earned the respect and admiration of the Association and all those he has influenced during his career."

JON GOULD OUTSTANDING TREE FARMER OF THE YEAR: Ben & Louann Williams, Wetland Preserve (Putnam County)

The Florida Tree Farm Committee selected Ben and Louann Williams of Wetland Preserve as this year's award winner for a laundry list of reasons. To name just a few of them:

- involvement with innovative ways to increase prescribed fire on private lands;

- involvement in research to advance biological understanding of local wildlife and plant species of interest;
- active removal of non-native plant and animal species, while maintaining the ecological balance of nuisance species such as coyotes, as an important part of the natural ecosystem;
- extensive involvement with outreach and community education; and
- eagerness to coordinate recreational use of their property via the Florida Trail and for wounded veteran hunting events.

The Williams came to forestry later in life. Having spent 35 years in the seafood business previously, they understand the value of clean water and how the water cycle relates to their land management practices.

"Wetland Preserve exemplifies the Williams' passion for land management and their desire to leave a lasting legacy," said Bielling. "They are known for their innovation, involvement in outreach and community education, and pride in promoting the stewardship organizations they belong to."

NATIONAL LOGGER OF THE YEAR: Jerry Gray, Gray Logging

Jerry Gray and his team at Gray Logging operate 14 logging trucks and semi-trailers, working with a number of mills within a 100-mile radius of Madison. In addition to the logging operation, Jerry is very active in his community. Among many other accomplishments, he was instrumental in launching North Florida College's Commercial Driver's License program and also provided a logging truck and trailer for training.

"Jerry Gray embodies the essence of logging at its best," said Bielling. "He is known for his extensive knowledge, his strict adherence to professional practices, and his passion for the industry. All of those qualities are reflected through his outreach and education efforts in his local area."

Gray was honored at the Association's 2020 Annual Meeting as the Florida Logger of the Year. He previously won that award in 2010 and the regional award in 2011.



Ben and LouAnn Williams accept the Jon Gould Outstanding Tree Farmer of the Year Award from Association Vice President Jimmy Bielling (left).



Jerry Gray (center) was recognized by the Forest Resources Association's Clay Altizer (left) and Association Vice President Jimmy Bielling for receiving FRA's 2021 National Outstanding Logger Award.



Forestry Firefighter of the Year David Sechrist (center) was joined by family and colleagues at the 2021 Fire Service Awards at the Capitol in September.

Although the Forest Resources Association presented this national award to Jerry earlier this year, the Florida Forestry Association wanted to recognize his notable achievement as well!

2020 FORESTRY FIREFIGHTER OF THE YEAR: David Sechrist, Florida Forest Service

David Sechrist was among the nation's first Incident Management Team members to respond to a wildfire during the COVID-19 pandemic. Sechrist and his team were instrumental in re-evaluating fire line safety procedures to include CDC guidelines and developing daily protocols to ensure effective implementation. This commitment to a critical new component of the mission resulted in a successful first deployment with no positive COVID-19 test results.

Sechrist helped build the Florida Forest Service's first Critical Incident Stress Management Team (CISM) and frequently takes a lead role to ensure FFS personnel and partner agencies have a safe and supportive environment.

He is a nationally certified Division Supervisor, serving on the FFS State Blue Incident Management Team. Additionally, he is actively involved in training and mentoring firefighters within his home district, serving as an instructor with the Southern Area Engine Academy.

"David Sechrist has always demonstrated strong leadership, and his willingness to support his fellow firefighters goes above and beyond the call of duty. I commend David on this well-deserved honor and thank him for his selfless commitment to serve," said Erin Albury, State Forester and Director of the Florida Forest Service.



Florida Forest Service County Forester Ashlee White was honored as the 2021 Glen Harris Tree Farm Inspector of the Year.

2021 GLEN HARRIS TREE FARM INSPECTOR OF THE YEAR: Ashlee White, Florida Forest Service

Ashlee White has served as County Forester for Santa Rosa County since 2016 and is very active in assisting private landowners who are pursuing sustainable forest management for multiple benefits, certification in the American Tree Farm System, and many other efforts.

She has built relationship with consultants, partner agencies, landowners, and community members through management planning assistance and involvement in outreach programs for a variety of audiences. She has conducted educational outreach programs for school groups, Boy Scouts, civic groups, private landowners, and the general public. Of significant note, she has leveraged University of Florida IFAS Extension resources to plan and conduct very successful educational tours for private landowners with a variety of partners on both private and public lands.

"Ashlee is driven to serve," said Tony Grossman, President of the Florida Tree Farm Program. "She is a 'go-to inspector' we can always count on for high-quality management planning assistance and outreach."

White promptly completes all plans, inspections, and communications with the Florida Tree Farm Program Committee. Between 2018 and 2021 she completed a total of 33 inspections. She has written more than 10 management plans for Tree Farmers and actively participated in the 2019 American Tree Farm System Audit. •

WHATEVER THE CAUSE, THE PEOPLE OF FLORIDA FORESTRY ARE KNOWN FOR THEIR EXCELLENCE. THEY ARE WELL ACQUAINTED WITH THE PRINCIPLE OF SOWING AND REAPING, AND THEY GIVE 100% TO ALL THAT THEY DO

UF/IFAS NAMES NEW DEAN



By **J. SCOTT ANGLE**, Vice President University of Florida Agriculture and Natural Resources

THE NEW DEAN of University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences Extension is a forestry expert.

Dr. Andra Johnson has a bachelor's, a master's and a Ph.D. in forestry, and for 13 years was an associate professor of urban forestry. He's also been a research assistant for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service (USDA).

He is a member of the Society of American Foresters and the National Arborists Association. At a previous land-grant university, Dr. Johnson recruited students into the forestry field. He secured USDA funding to research how to use agroforestry to increase landowners' revenue.

Dr. Johnson will be serving stakeholders in 300 commodities, but as you can see, you won't have to start from scratch with him when it comes to your business. He and I only ask that you bring him up to speed on *Florida* forests.

Dr. Johnson will be good for forestry in at least two senses. First, although his background is more in urban forestry, he has an appreciation for the importance of outreach to all forestry producers. Also, forestry will be top of mind as he pursues a second priority – connecting city dwellers to the agricultural producers of their food and fiber. He sees it as part of Extension's job to educate urban

residents on how agriculture bolsters the economy, protects the environment and even provides climate solutions.

Here's why I've been telling production agriculture he's good news for you.

He's an aggie. During his interviews, Dr. Johnson presented a vision for modernizing Extension that includes an expansion of service to production agriculture. He grew up in rural Louisiana in a family that raised cattle, cotton, corn and wheat. Florida ag leaders supported his candidacy.

He wants your agent to stay your agent. Dr. Johnson wants to mitigate or remove university-created drivers of attrition. He plans to beef up support, so agents are not bogged down in administrative duties instead of the programming they'd rather be doing. He'll advocate for higher salaries to retain high-performing agents. And he'll work to improve the promotion process that ultimately gives an agent freedom to determine, in concert with stakeholders, how best to serve the local community as well as job security to build years-long relationships.

He's a triple threat. He not only has experience in each of the major land-grant mission areas – teaching, research and Extension – but he has also skillfully integrated them. For example, he has

used classes in agricultural Extension as a training ground for future agents.

I expect that Dr. Johnson will follow the path I have so recently traveled – attending the Florida Forestry Association (FFA) annual convention, visiting people like Mack Glass and Jimmy Bielling, and staying in touch with Alan Shelby.

Forestry experts were already well represented in UF/IFAS leadership. Senior associate dean for UF/IFAS research John Davis came to administration from a faculty position in our School of Forest, Fisheries & Geomatics Sciences (SFFGS). Associate dean for UF/IFAS research Damian Adams had been director of ProForest, a regional initiative focusing on scanning the horizon for threats to forest health and marshaling resources to mitigate those threats.

Dr. Johnson's arrival, and the continuing stakeholder-service-oriented approach of Red Baker at SFFGS ensures that forestry will continue to be top of mind at UF/IFAS. •



J. Scott Angle is the University of Florida's Vice President for Agriculture and Natural Resources and leader of the UF Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS).

NEW CARBON SEQUESTRATION PROGRAM

Aids Landowners in Planting Efforts



By **JIMMY ROBERTS**, Chief of Forest Management, Florida Forest Service

INCREASING AND MAINTAINING healthy forests in Florida is part of the Florida Forest Service mission. Forests provide value beyond what many people see, including carbon sequestration, clean air and water, wildlife habitat, recreation opportunities, and raw materials for wood products.

As Florida's population continues to increase and the public's awareness and interest in environmental issues grows, it is more important than ever to maintain our productive and healthy forest lands. Recent data from the USDA notes that the nation's forest land is understocked. Some of the understocking can be contributed to initial establishment costs, such as site preparation and planting, among other factors. Many years will pass before landowners see a return on their investments.

Historically, few assistance programs have been available to help landowners conduct reforestation activities in Florida. Those that do have been federally funded, until now. The 2021 Florida Legislature approved funding for the

Sequestering Carbon and Protecting Florida Land Program, which supports landowners conducting reforestation and creating new forests by converting other types of open lands, such as pastures or fallow fields. \$2 million was allocated to this new statewide tree planting program, totaling \$10 million over the next five years (pending available funding).

Studies have shown healthy forests are among the best tools for carbon sequestration while also creating ecosystem and economic benefits. America's forests, and the wood products that come from them, offset more than 14% of the nation's carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions while current growth of Florida's forests offset about 20% of the annual CO₂ emissions from within the state. The new program is designed to help landowners make the long-term investment required to establish or maintain their forest while offsetting carbon emissions.

This year, the program was open to any private non-industrial Florida

landowner, local and county governments, and non-profit organizations planning to reforest between 20 and 250 acres. Eligible species included loblolly, longleaf, sand and slash pine. Reimbursement rates are based on planned site preparation practices, seedling type, planting density and planting method, all with approval from their local County Forester.

The public showed a high level of interest, submitting a total of 168 applications and requesting more than \$4 million dollars in reimbursements. Unfortunately, not all projects could be funded, but we are looking forward to a successful first year and expect to aid 94 planting projects covering over 6,500 acres of forest land.

We, at the Florida Forest Service, are committed to ensuring our state's forests and the subsequent benefits are sustainable and available for generations to come. *The Sequestering Carbon and Protecting Land Program* is one of the ways we can accomplish this feat. •

PROFOREST:

UF's Program on Forest Health and Resilience



PROFOREST IS A team of academic, government agency and non-profit personnel working to protect the nation's forest resources and their ecosystem services and to foster resilience by identifying emerging threats and providing potential management solutions. We are based at the University of Florida IFAS School of Forest, Fisheries, and Geomatics Sciences.

WHAT WE DO

- Conduct research that predicts emerging pests and threats to forest resilience.
- Provide formal education to the next generation of forest professionals through a *Graduate Certificate in Forest Health and Resilience*.



- Conduct training on forest health and resilience for professionals on a regional scale.

WHY DO WE EXIST? FORESTS ARE ESSENTIAL.

Forests are a major economic engine in the U.S. producing over \$300 billion in timber and forest products annually and employing 950,000 workers. In addition, forests provide innumerable critical services to our society, for example, 60% of the country's freshwater

flows from forests. *Forests are under threat.* According to the USDA Forest Service, across the nation more than 8.6 million acres of forests were dying due to insects and diseases in 2017. *Without a response from society, the scientific community expects these threats to grow in frequency and severity.*

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Hurricane Michael impacts on a forest stand.
 PHOTO CREDIT: DR. AJAY SHARMA

Adams and Jason Smith. Since then, we've strategically grown new partnerships. Partners include University of Florida, Southern Regional Extension Forestry, Clemson University, USDA Forest Service, Florida Forest Service, Florida Land Steward, and The Nature Conservancy. Our current director is Dr. Jason Vogel, associate professor of forest ecosystems science at the UF/IFAS School of Forest, Fisheries, and Geomatics Sciences; our co-director is Dr. Aditya Singh, assistant professor of remote sensing at the at the UF/IFAS Department of Agricultural and Biological Engineering. •





OUR MISSION:

To proactively protect forest ecosystems and their services by fostering forest resilience and managing emerging threats.

OBJECTIVES:

- Predict and proactively manage emerging pests and diseases
- Promote collaboration and dialog between researchers and forest land-owners, managers and users
- Further the understanding of the impacts of global change on forest ecosystems and their services
- Provide policy recommendations that facilitate managing forests for resilience and economic sustainability
- Develop and transfer innovative solutions to support forest management decisions
- Develop novel concepts and techniques to promote forest resilience
- Train new generations of forest health professionals

FOCUS AREAS:

- Economics and policy
- Restoration, management and silviculture
- Emerging threats to forests
- Tree health genetic resources
- Remote sensing and spatial analysis

MEMBERS:

Jason Vogel (Director)
Forest Ecosystems Science
University of Florida

Aditya Singh (Co-Director)
Ecological Health Modeling
University of Florida

Sarah Tobing(ProForest Coordinator)
University of Florida

Jason Vogel (Director)
Forest Ecosystems Science
University of Florida

Damian Adams
Natural Resource Economics & Policy
University of Florida

Michael Andreu
Forest Systems
University of Florida

Emily C. Bell
Invasive species
UF/IFAS Invasive Species Extension
Coordinator; Florida Invasive Species
Partnership Coordinator

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Regional Extension Forestry
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Tree Health Genetic Resources
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Jiri Hulcr
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Daniel Johnson
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Tim Martin
Tree Physiology
University of Florida

Tania Quesada
Forest Genetics and Pathology
Forest Biology Research Cooperative

Ajay Sharma
Applied Forest Ecology
University of Florida

Carlos Alberto Silva
Forest Biometrics and Remote Sensing
University of Florida

Jason Smith
Forest Pathology
University of Florida

Katherine Smith
Molecular Biology
USFS

Andrés Susaeta
Forest Resource Economics and Policy
University of Florida

For more information, contact: Sarah Tobing, program coordinator tobing@ufl.edu.

Rebuilding Community Canopies: **FFS ASSESSES THE LOSS OF TREES IN TOWNS HIT BY MICHAEL**



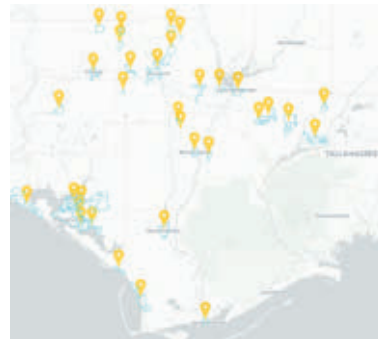
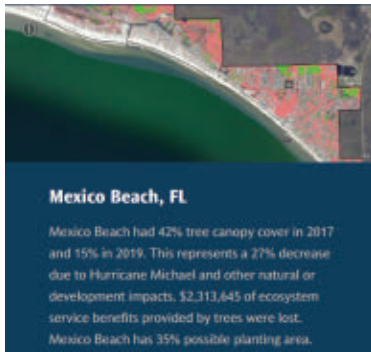
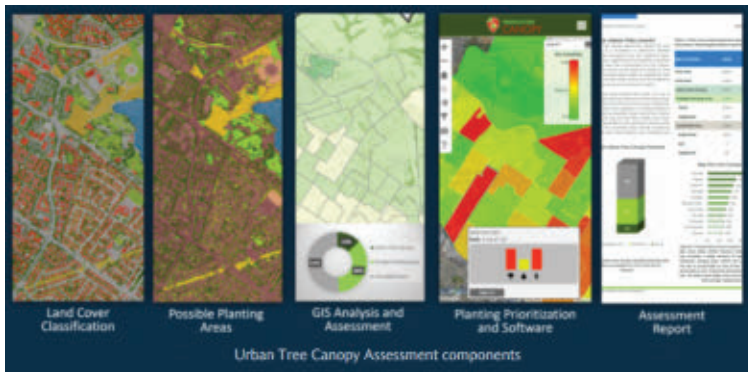
By **WILL LINER**, Urban and Community Forestry Program Manager

WHEN HURRICANE MICHAEL made landfall in October of 2018, millions of trees across the Florida Panhandle were destroyed in a matter of hours. Over the past three years, there has been a lot of discussion about the catastrophic damage the storm caused to forests and the impact it had on forest landowners – and rightfully so. Forestry represents a

major sector of the region's economy and is a vital component of long-term storm recovery.

However, the devastation to the region's trees didn't stop at municipal boundaries. Urban and community trees are critical pieces of local infrastructure and provide valuable benefits that make our cities and towns healthier and more enjoyable places

to live. To fully understand the magnitude of Hurricane Michael's impacts on community forests, the Florida Forest Service partnered with PlanIT Geo, a trees and technology consulting firm, to conduct a canopy change analysis, assessing how much area was covered by trees before and after the storm in 32 municipalities throughout the impact zone.



SUCH AN EXTREME LOSS IN CANOPY OVER SUCH A SHORT TIME HAS UNDOUBTABLY RESULTED IN HIGHER SUMMER TEMPERATURES IN THOSE COMMUNITIES AND AN INCREASE IN THE AMOUNT OF STORMWATER RUNOFF AND FLOODING OCCURRENCES DURING RAIN EVENTS.

Using high-resolution aerial imagery from 2017 and 2019, PlanIT Geo was able to estimate how much tree canopy was lost due to Hurricane Michael. The percentage of canopy loss varied from community to community, but the combined loss was approximately 17,000 acres of tree canopy coverage, which represents a decline of about 24 percent from 2017 to 2019. Such an extreme loss in canopy over such a short time has undoubtedly resulted in higher summer temperatures in those communities and an increase in the amount of stormwater runoff and flooding occurrences during rain events.

In addition to the canopy change analysis, PlanIT Geo used the same aerial imagery to identify potential planting spaces for new trees and census data regarding economic vitality and racial diversity to prioritize future tree planting projects. These two categories of census data were selected as a way to identify historically underserved communities and because they tend to have an inverse correlation with tree canopy coverage. By combining information about where trees were lost, where new trees can be planted and census data, areas within these 32 communities can

be prioritized for reforestation at a census block level. This highly detailed data will prove to be invaluable as these communities continue to recover from the storm and will help identify the areas within each community with the high-level of need.

PlanIT Geo created a story map and a final report to share their results with the Florida Forest Service and have made

individual community reports available for each of the 32 assessed communities. The project story map is available online at FDACS.gov/UrbanForestry. •

To read the final report or view an individual community report, email Florida Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry Program Manager Will Liner at William.Liner@FDACS.gov.

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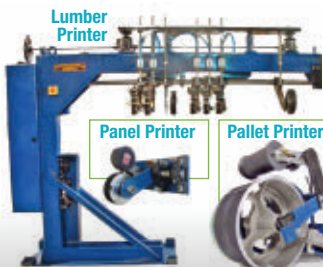
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Florida State Forests, State Parks Featured in Condé Nast Traveler

Condé Nast *Traveler* shines the spotlight on Florida forests with its feature, *11 State and National Parks in Florida Everyone Should Visit*.

Included in the list are Point Washington State Park, Apalachicola National Forest, Big Cypress National Preserve and Silver Springs State Park.

You can see the complete list on the publication's website, cntraveler.com



Griner Honored As "Florida Icon"

Florida *Trend* recently honored Association Past President Lynetta Usher Griner as a Florida icon. In the autumn of 2021, she was included in their list of the state's Top 500 most influential business leaders.

"I've heard a lot of people say that the last crop we'll grow in Florida is a house, and I just don't want that for our state," says Griner. "I want to maintain our wild lands as they are."

Griner has previously been honored as Florida's Woman of the Year in Agriculture and the Florida Farmer of the Year, among many other awards.



Dr. Wayne Smith, UF/IFAS

Wayne Smith to be inducted into Florida Agricultural Hall of Fame

Dr. Wayne Smith, Emeritus Professor and past Director of the School of Forest Resources and Conservation, UF/IFAS, was selected for induction into the Florida Agricultural Hall of Fame in 2020. Unfortunately, the induction banquet had to be cancelled due to Covid-19-related concerns.

We are excited to share that the induction ceremony for both 2020 and 2021 inductees will be held at the Florida State Fair's Agricultural Hall of Fame Banquet on Tuesday, February 15, 2022. Tickets will go on sale January 1, 2022.

Learn more on the Ag Hall of Fame website at floridaaghalloffame.org



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New Faculty at UF/IFAS School of Forest, Fisheries & Geomatics Sciences

Tammy Cushing works with landowners, foresters and financial professionals on issues such as taxation and succession planning, as well as teaching forest economics.

Cushing comes to Florida from Oregon, but she is no stranger to southern forest management. She earned her bachelor's degree from UF, as well as graduate degrees from Mississippi State and the University of Georgia.

She is married with two children, and outside of work is usually cheering for the Gators or attending her kids' marching band performances.

Carlos Alberto Silva focuses on developing statistical frameworks and tools for processing remote sensing data and monitoring forest resources, with particular interest in using LiDAR data combined with multi- and hyper-spectral data and statistics to answer questions about forest structure, function, and composition at a variety of scales.

In addition to his research program, he teaches the undergraduate forest mensuration course.

Silva, originally from Brazil, most recently lived in Maryland before moving to Gainesville. He is married and has one son.. •



Tammy Cushing: Forest Business



Carlos Alberto Silva: Quantitative Forest Science

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