

Fall/Winter 2022

FLORIDA FORESTS

AN OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE FLORIDA FORESTRY ASSOCIATION

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Features

8 AWARD WINNERS IN THE SPOTLIGHT

The people of Florida forestry are known for their excellence and passion for the land. This year we honor some very-deserving award winners who demonstrate the very best of Florida forestry.

11 LEADING THE ASSOCIATION FORWARD

Strong individuals lead the Association. Here's the full Executive Committee Members, Board Members and Staff for 2023.

13 RALLY FOR GOVERNOR RON DESANTIS

On November 3 the Florida Forestry Association, in conjunction with the Florida Trucking Association, came out in force to support Governor Ron DeSantis' re-election campaign.

14 NRLI: FINDING COMMON GROUND

Dr. J. Scott Angle discusses the National Resources Leadership Institute's program and the importance of finding common ground.

18 TIPS FOR YOUR 2022 TAX RETURN FILING

Each year, family forest owners pay more tax than the law requires. Here are a few items to be sure your tax professional takes into account regarding your forest land.

21 GOPHER TORTOISES IN THE NEWS

This fall the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced that listing the gopher tortoise under the Endangered Species Act is not warranted in Florida. How does that affect gopher tortoise regulations on the state level?

22 SHARING THE VALUE OF MEMBERSHIP

Two important concepts are vital to an association's success: strength in numbers and power of engagement. 2015 Tree Farmer of Year John Alter espouses these principles in his membership recruitment efforts.

24 TOMMY USHER MEMORIAL LOG A LOAD GOLF TOURNAMENT

A pictorial of the 2022 event, which raised more than \$46,000 for the Children's Miracle Network.



**FLORIDA
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ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

4
Executive Viewpoint

5
Presidential Profile

26
Snapshots

27
Noteworthy

28
Products & Services
Showcase

29
Classifieds

30
Index of Advertisers



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ECONOMIC AND
ENVIRONMENTAL
VALUE THAT FORESTRY
BRINGS TO THE TABLE.

Gearing Up for 2023

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

IN 1923, the state's forestry community formed the Florida Forestry Association. They banded together to promote and protect a way of life that, a century later, has become a cornerstone for the state's economy and environment. We look forward to celebrating our 100th anniversary, marking both the progress we have made and our excitement for the future.

We fully believe in the industry we represent and the members we serve. As we prepare to move forward into our next century, we are focused on becoming an even stronger voice for our growing membership. You can anticipate a new look, an increased focus on membership, and other upgrades to existing programs.

As we gear up for 2023, advocacy remains a key priority. We look forward to sharing the forestry story with our senators and representatives. We will continue to protect Greenbelt, the Right to Farm Act and private property rights. These each safeguard the fundamental 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.

In this new century, I hope that you will join us in proudly working to keep all the good things that forestry brings in the spotlight. Your support matters. Your membership makes a difference.

Our staff joins me in wishing you all the very best in 2023 and beyond. •



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“WITH FAITH,
ADVERSITY
IS NOTHING
MORE THAN
OPPORTUNITY.”

Another Day in Paradise

By LEE ANN FISCH, Association Director of Communications



Jimmy and his dog Pepper.

IF THE ASSOCIATION'S new president, Jimmy Bielling, is having a bad day, you'll never know it from him. Ask him how he's doing, and you'll most likely hear any one of a menu of positive responses, such as...

- "I never knew it could get so good so fast."
- "If I was any better, I'd be twins."
- Or, a personal favorite, "It's another day in paradise."

Jimmy's optimistic outlook overflows into everything he does. And he does a lot.

He works with his wife, Kathy, and their son, Jesse Bielling, at Bielling Site Prep and Reforestation, Inc. Jimmy hopes that his grandson, Jax, will follow in the family footsteps.

"I was born into stewardship," said Jimmy, who is also a forestland owner. "It's my responsibility to take care of the land, to protect it and to use it."

He fulfills a wide range of duties for the site prep business. Among other things, he drives trucks, operates machinery, conducts prescribed burns and oversees operations. In addition, he and Kathy have a small cow/calf operation and breed horses. Until recently, they also grew peppers for Tabasco®.

While he enjoys growing trees and all that comes with it, Jimmy admits forestry holds an even greater joy for him: working with his family on a daily basis for a common cause. Jimmy is the fourth generation of his family to make forestry their livelihood, beginning with his great-grandfather, who worked in the turpentine business.

"We know we are managing lands on loan from God," he explained. "We are careful to protect ecosystems and to promote sustainability."



Immediate Past President Carlton Jones (right) passed the gavel to Jimmy at the Association's 2022 Annual Meeting.



Jimmy testified before the Florida Senate's Agriculture Committee on the economic and environmental importance of forestry.



Jimmy spoke with students in Jefferson County for Florida Forests Week.

Despite a very busy schedule, Jimmy makes time to share the forestry story at every opportunity.

He hosts a yearly lab for the Forestry Operations class from the University of Florida's School of Forest, Fisheries and Geomatics Sciences. They visit working sites to watch equipment in action, understand vegetation management from a real-world standpoint and experience silviculture operations firsthand. He also talks to high school students, such as members of FFA® and 4-H groups. The Bielling farm has been part of the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services tours for agriculture teachers as well.

On the legislative advocacy front, he has testified before the Florida Senate Agriculture Committee and is passionate about educating policymakers on the benefits and challenges of forestry.

All this considered, it's not a surprise that one of Jimmy's goals for his presidential term is to help people appreciate the importance of forestry, as well as to understand all that goes into it.

"You don't just go out and put trees in the ground," he explained. "There's research and development, best management practices to protect the wildlife and the waterways, reforestation, Master Logger training, and so much more. We call them 'managed lands'

because they are precisely that – lands that are carefully managed to protect the environment while producing important forest resources."

He wishes that the general public could see what a great job the forestry community does to protect the environment.

"They have found their heart and are living their passion," he said. "People who get out there and do what they do every day are the unsung heroes of our time."

Despite facing a string of challenges, such as Hurricane Michael, which hit the Panhandle as a Category 5 just three years ago, wildfires, high fuel prices,



The Biellings giving thanks before breakfast during an Association video shoot.

supply chain issues and a truck driver shortage, Jimmy declares Florida's forestry community "unbroken."

"We're the kind of people that run to the problems, not away from them. We pick everybody up in the trenches. We don't leave anybody behind. We are all in this together," he said.

"If we didn't have faith," he explained, "I don't think we could make it. With faith, adversity is nothing more than opportunity."

As president, Jimmy hopes to grow the Association's membership. He believes there is strength in numbers and wants the organization to be as strong as possible.

"In our businesses, we have to be competitive, but at the end of the day we are a family of colleagues who want to make the industry the best it can be," he said. "The more members we have, the louder our voice will be and the more we can accomplish for everyone."

Jimmy also wants the Association to show its members that they are appreciated and that, as part of an important trade association, their membership matters.

"Every day my objective is to get up and motivate somebody. Kind words and kind gestures change people's perspectives and help them make it a productive day," he said.

When you live with that kind of positive outlook and passion, every day can be another day in paradise. Just ask Jimmy. •



Jimmy working with ArborGen, Inc. on a video project.



From left: Jesse, Lynsi, Jax, Jimmy, Kathy and Betty Rees Bielling.

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.

JON GOULD OUTSTANDING TREE FARMER OF THE YEAR AWARD: ALBERT FULLER

"Albert Fuller demonstrates the very best aspects of Tree Farmers," said Association President Jimmy Bielling. "He reaches out to other forestland owners to share his knowledge and experience, helping them to achieve the same success that he has. He is building a long-lasting legacy that will benefit an untold multitude of people in many ways."

One of Albert's greatest joys is time spent on his 75-acre farm in Levy County, FL. His farm includes planted pines and natural stands of pines and hardwoods, as well as livestock, sugar cane and other crops. He maintains a



balanced focus on timber production, recreation, and wildlife for his Tree Farm, which takes up the majority of his land. Long term, he views his land as a legacy.

Before his retirement, Albert spent 42 years working in agriculture. Thirty-eight of those years were with the UF/IFAS Extension program.

Florida's Outstanding Tree Farmer of the Year Award honors the memory and legacy of Jon Gould, a respected member of Florida's Tree Farm Program State Committee and a proud Tree Farmer and advocate for forestry throughout the Southeast for more than 30 years.



FLORIDA LOGGER OF THE YEAR AWARD: DILLON STRATTON, III

“Winning this award seems to be a family tradition for the Stratton family,” said Association President Jimmy Bielling. “Dillon’s father earned the honor in 1995. We are proud to see the next generation taking its turn to achieve such a high degree of excellence.”

Dillon’s grandfather started the family logging company in 1958. From a young age, Dillon was working in the shop and on weekends alongside his father. When he became old enough, he started working on logging jobs. In 2013, he assumed leadership of the company. Together with his wife, Lisa, who runs the office, he has continued to grow the company many times over in a short period of time.

Dillon has a big heart for his fellow loggers, doing what he can to make the logging industry better by being involved. He is grateful for the hard work he knows his predecessors put into laying the foundation for a successful company.

The Florida Logger of the Year Award recognizes loggers who demonstrate exemplary contributions and exceed

industry expectations. The award was initiated in 1987 to spotlight loggers in the state who manage their operations in compliance with forestry best management practices, maintain safe highway and woods operations, use logging personnel and equipment effectively, develop unique business practices, and practice high business ethics.

2022 LEGISLATORS OF THE YEAR
Advocacy is at the heart of all that the Association does.

One of the challenges that the forest industry faces in Florida is that 80% of our working forests can be found north of Ocala but only 20% of our legislators represent that same area. We call that the 80/20 Rule. The 80/20 Rule makes it imperative that the forestry story reaches legislators outside of our geographical base.

For that reason, we are very pleased that both of this year’s legislative award winners hail from the central part of our state. Despite living far from the beautiful working forests that cover North Florida, they both understand and appreciate the value that our industry contributes to the state.

SENATOR WILTON SIMPSON

Senator Wilton Simpson was elected to the Florida Senate in 2012. He hit the ground running for Florida forestry and agriculture and has been involved with all the significant agricultural legislation that has since passed the Senate. While there are many items on the Simpson highlight reel, most recently he spearheaded needed updates to Florida’s Right to Farm law and successfully obtained record funding for the Rural and Family Lands program. These are two great examples of the tireless work he has undertaken during his legislative tenure.

“Senator Simpson has been a friend of Florida forestry for many years,” said Association Executive Vice President Alan Shelby. “Since he was first elected, he has never backed down from championing legislation to promote, protect and enable Florida’s agricultural industry to remain a key pillar to the state’s economy.”

With an eye toward outcomes and problem solving, Senator Simpson has a proven record of fighting for Florida’s hardworking families and small business owners, protecting property rights, and

taking a stand against government overreach and job-killing regulations.

Senator Simpson led his chamber as its president from 2020-2022. In November, he was elected as Commissioner of Agriculture & Consumer Services with the Association's endorsement. He and his family live in Trilby, FL, where he owns and operates a large-scale egg-laying operation.

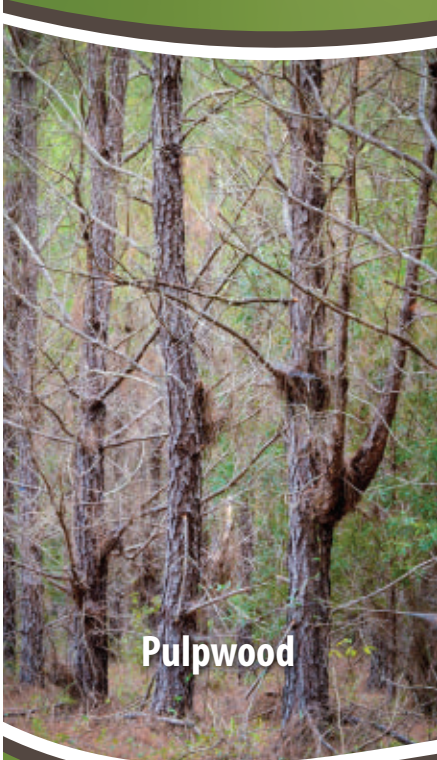
REPRESENTATIVE JOSIE TOMKOW

Since being elected to the House in 2018, Representative Josie Tomkow has been a steadfast advocate for Florida business, especially Florida's forestry businesses.

Over the previous two sessions, Rep. Tomkow has served as the chair of the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Appropriation Committee. In this role,



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she has been a key advocate for strong funding with the Florida department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, and the Florida Forest Service, including for equipment and resources needed by our wildland firefighters. She continues to be a huge proponent of the Rural and Family Lands program and was pivotal in keeping her house colleagues in line and supporting the significant investment the legislature made during 2022 session.

"Representative Tomkow has been a friend of Florida forestry since Day One," said Association Executive Vice President Alan Shelby. "Her family tree has deep roots in Florida, and she understands how vital forestry and agriculture are to our state. She is a passionate and respected advocate for our cause."

Representative Tomkow represents the Florida House of Representatives' 39th District. As a student at the University of Florida, she served as an intern during the legislative session. After graduation, she successfully ran for the House during a special election in 2018 and proudly continues to hold that seat today.

Representative Tomkow has quickly learned to apply her common sense and business acumen to state government, consistently advocating for less regulation, lower taxes, and a quicker response from Tallahassee to help citizens and businesses thrive. •

LEADING THE ASSOCIATION FORWARD



President: Jimmy Bielling
– Bielling Site Prep and Reforestation, Inc.



Vice President/President Elect: Avery Roberts
– The Roberts Companies



Secretary-Treasurer: Ann Hutchinson Duff
– WestRock



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John Dooner – Southern Forestry Consultants

Environmental:

Russ Hannon – Great South Timber & Lumber

Government Relations:

Wesley Carter – Loncala

Leadership/Nominations:

Carlton Jones – Robbins Manufacturing

Steering:

Jeremy Sapp – Sapp's Land & Excavating

TREEPAC:

Mark Milligan – F4 Tech

At Large

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Jim Karels – Karels Forestry & Fire Consulting

Ryan Pavlik – Assured Partners Stoutamire-Pavlik & Associates

John Sunday – Georgia-Pacific WFS LLC

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Rally for GOVERNOR DESANTIS

ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 2022, the Florida Forestry Association and several of its members co-hosted a rally and fundraising reception with the Florida Trucking Association for Governor Ron DeSantis. Held at Gateway College in Lake City, the event attracted 1,200 people in support of the Governor's re-election campaign.

Association Vice President Avery Roberts, a key organizer of the event, officially announced the group's endorsement of Governor DeSantis when he spoke at the rally.

"The power of forestry's grassroots was definitely felt today," Roberts said after the event. "Governor DeSantis's policies support Florida forestry, and forestry really came out in force to show their support for him. The Association is proud to endorse him and we are looking forward to four more years under his leadership." •



DESANTIS CAMPAIGN

From left: Alan Shelby, Austen Roberts, Jim Spratt, Mark Milligan, Carlton Jones, Bob Cook, Governor Ron DeSantis, Michele Curtis, Jimmy Bielling, Phillip Pritchett and Avery Roberts.

NRLI: FINDING COMMON GROUND

By J. SCOTT ANGLE, Vice President University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS)



IN HIS FIRST session as a member of the current class of the UF/IFAS Natural Resources Leadership Institute¹ (NRLI), Jay Vogel's takeaway was that the program aims to get people to stop suing each other.

NRLI takes a two-track approach to finding common ground: First, survey the ground; go to the site; listen to the players; and deeply consider

where their interests intersect. Second, develop skills – conflict management, openness to divergent viewpoints, active and empathetic listening – that can lead others to that common ground.

Vogel, the Pasco County-based environmental services division manager for Natural Resources Planning Services², spent his first two-day NRLI session at Apalachicola Bay learning

about restoration. The next month, he spent two days south of Tampa visiting the Piney Point reservoir that made headlines for the leak of phosphate-laden wastewater last year. At each session, Vogel heard from stakeholders with widely varying views on what to do about each issue.

NRLI Director Jon Dain³ models a civil back-and-forth that suggests the

possibility of discovering shared needs and interests, or at least persistent good faith efforts to bring potentially adversarial parties together. A NRLI session makes the setting for conflict management a conference room, not a courtroom.

NRLI fellows encounter difference of opinion not just among the stakeholders and issues they study. Dain had current class members anonymously submit what they consider grave Florida natural resource threats. One wrote: "deforestation." Instead of bristling at the implication of reckless land management, Vogel is embracing the NRLI ethic of trying to understand such a viewpoint and to leverage the relationships he's forming to help others understand his.

This network of non-foresters may be the greatest long-term benefit for Vogel and for the association. He will likely finish NRLI in the spring with personal friends and a professional network of those who might otherwise be foes or who have no exposure to the industry.

That kind of understanding is going to be necessary as Florida's public and private foresters continue prescribed burns. We don't want to end up with California-style apocalyptic wildfires or a backlash against planned burns when things go wrong like in New Mexico. Wetlands logging and forestry best management practices will continue to be contentious.

Florida is so diverse geographically, ecologically, and even culturally that the various commodities that comprise agriculture in Florida are often misunderstood, said Florida Forestry Association executive committee⁴ member John Dooner⁵, a senior forester at Southern Forestry Consultants⁶ and a 2018 NRLI graduate.⁷

The forestry industry's concentration in North Florida is distant from the largest citrus, cattle, ornamental, fruit and vegetable operations and their commodity associations' headquarters. And, at least in his class, the roster was dominated by public agency employees. Dooner believes it's important for the association to be represented in future NRLI classes to contribute



WHEN DOONER WAS IN NRLI, HE FOUND HIMSELF THE ODD MAN OUT, A PRIVATE SECTOR PROFESSIONAL AMONG AGENCY OFFICIALS; A FORESTRY INDUSTRY GUY AMONG FOLKS FROM DIFFERENT SECTORS.

private-sector perspectives to the class discussions.

NRLI, an Extension program of the UF/IFAS School of Forest, Fisheries, and Geomatics Sciences⁹, is an opportunity not just for individual association members but for the industry to tell its story. Dooner helped arrange for the last class to spend three days in March talking timber.

In a session titled, "Disaster and Recovery: Sustaining Florida's Forests," private, public and non-profit organization professionals visited the Vanlandingham family's natural and planted timberland holdings and witnessed the devastation visited upon them by Hurricane Michael.

It was by the account⁹ of some class members "heartbreaking," and that can't help but lead to empathy for the challenges the forestry industry faces. But the session was also an introduction to the importance and the economics of timber and forest commodities in Florida.

Through Dooner's participation as an alumnus, the forestry industry got a cohort of emerging natural resource leaders to pay attention to the forestry industry and begin to understand its importance.

When Dooner was in NRLI, he found himself the odd man out, a private sector professional among agency officials; a forestry industry guy among folks from different sectors. To Dooner, that's the whole point. "That's where real collaboration begins. That's where we begin to find common ground rather than allow our perceptions of one another to thwart progress," said Dooner. For him, the takeaway from NRLI was getting comfortable being uncomfortable.

Already, NRLI has strengthened Vogel's conviction that the Florida Forestry Association offers a productive way to address natural resource conflicts, and he has resolved to become more active as a member of the organization his father has served as president.

Dooner was an active association leader before entering NRLI, but the experience has framed his approach to the challenges to industry he expects will intensify with the pressure of population

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growth. The industry will need to explore new and better ways to collaborate and solve problems. He says NRLI is the best experience he's had in developing the skills and outlook to achieve that.

Dooner wants to see more association members apply for NRLI. Beyond Vogel and Greg Driskell (also of Natural Resource Planning Services), there have been few private-sector forestry professionals who have taken advantage of the opportunities offered by what is now a 24-year-old program.

Early next year NRLI will start accepting applicants for the next class. Visit nrl.i.fas.ufl.edu/apply.shtml for word on when you can apply to take advantage of the opportunity to learn and to bring visibility to forestry in important ways.

This program has my full support. I've attended a two-day session myself, and I make a point of speaking at NRLI graduations to celebrate the commitment of the participants to finding common ground and solutions for Florida's future. I hope I'll get to meet a few of you at the 2024 ceremony. •

J. Scott Angle²⁰ is the University of Florida's Senior Vice President for Agriculture and Natural Resources and leader of the UF Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS).

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TIPS FOR YOUR 2022 TAX RETURN FILING

By **TAMARA L. CUSHING**, Extension Forest Business & Economics Specialist · University of Florida



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TAX PROFESSIONALS LIKE to say that there's no obligation for any citizen to pay more taxes than the law requires. But every year, many family forest owners overpay because they or their accountants don't understand how the tax code applies to forests. If you don't use all the provisions available to you when you file

your taxes, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) will not fix that for you. So it's up to you to make sure you don't give Uncle Sam more than his due.

Nearly every time I give a talk, as I'm discussing these money-saving strategies, I hear at least one person (and sometimes many people) in the room

gasp and say, "Oh my gosh, I wish I would have known about that before I did my taxes." The following are several suggestions for keeping your tax bill down as you file your 2022 Federal income taxes in the next few months.

As you prepare to file your taxes this year, bear in mind:

1. **If you sold timber or land, make sure you report the income as capital gains rather than ordinary income.** In general, if you held the land and timber more than one year and sold standing timber, it qualifies for capital gains treatment. This is important because it results in a lower tax rate and does not trigger self-employment tax.
2. **Don't forget to subtract a portion of your basis from timber sale proceeds.** The tax rules allow you to reduce your gain by a proportionate amount of what you paid for the timber. This implies that you have allocated part of the purchase price to the timber if you bought it. If you received it as a gift or inheritance, there is also a basis in the property and should be allocated between land and timber. When you report the sale income, you will need to calculate your depletion deduction to determine the amount allowed to use to reduce the gain on the sale. Check the resources below for help in allocating basis or calculating depletion.
3. **Make use of the reforestation incentive.** If during the tax year you conducted site preparation, tree planting, or had other expenses related to natural regeneration of your forest, you are most likely eligible for the reforestation incentive. The incentive allows up to a \$10,000 deduction as well as the ability to write off the remaining expenses above \$10,000 over 84 months.
4. **Don't forget to calculate the amount of cost-share dollars that can be excluded from income.** Through the Farm Bill and other programs, the Federal government and some state governments provide financial assistance to landowners who undertake conservation measures such as protection of wetlands, creation of wildlife habitat or reduction of stand density to improve forest health. You may be able to exclude part or all of this money from income through the Section 126 exclusion calculation.

I HOPE THESE STRATEGIES WILL, AT THE LEAST, KEEP YOU FROM BEING THE PERSON IN THE ROOM WHO EXCLAIMS "IF ONLY I HAD KNOWN... "

5. **Remember to deduct expenses related to forest management.**

Maintenance expenses related to the business of growing trees are usually deductible on your tax return. Such expenses include the costs of fertilization, herbicides, road maintenance, prescribed burns, and hiring a forestry consultant. If you are considered an investor, the ability to deduct expenses has been restricted by the suspension of miscellaneous itemized deductions. It will be necessary to capitalize expenses other than property taxes. These expenses will be available to deduct from timber sale revenue in future years. Property taxes can still be deducted if you are itemizing deductions. If not, property taxes can also be capitalized and recovered in the future.

Moving forward:

6. **Make sure to document your activities.** Keep a log of the time you spend on your property conducting activities such as fire line inspections, meeting with advisors, marking sale boundaries, etc. This log will help prove you are actively managing your property for tax purposes. The alternative is that the IRS considers you to be passively involved in your land or consider this a hobby, which potentially opens the door for additional taxes!
7. **Keep your records for the appropriate period of time.** Officially, records should be kept a minimum of three years in case of an audit. The IRS can audit that far back without any justification – but there are some cases where the IRS can reach back six years for an audit. Also, for



the purchase of land, buildings or anything that would be capitalized (for example, the construction of a permanent forest road), you should retain those records until the asset is sold – plus three years (the audit period for the sale of the asset).

8. **Think ahead to make the most of tax incentives.** The reforestation incentive is currently available each tax year. You can stagger operations to use the \$10,000 deduction in back-to-back years on the same property. For example, by conducting site preparation in the fall of one year and then planting in the early part of the following year, you can deduct up to \$20,000 of reforestation-related expenses on one reforestation project.
9. **Don't allow tax strategies to undermine good business sense.** You can easily get caught up in schemes that will save tax dollars, but you should first make sure those tax strategies make legal and financial sense. For example, you can usually save on taxes by waiting until after you have held timber for one year to harvest it (thus qualifying for capital gains treatment). However, if there is a hot timber market before that year is up, it may be worth it to cut, get great prices, and pay ordinary income rates. The only way to know is to run the numbers.

10. **Choose your advisors wisely.** I regularly hear from landowners about their accountant declaring timber sale proceeds as ordinary income on the landowners' tax forms or who failed to use the reforestation incentive. These mistakes are usually the result of the accountant's lack of knowledge about the tax code sections that are specific to timber. Clearly, not all tax preparers and attorneys are experts on forested properties. This is a niche market. If you really like your current advisors, help them by passing along information about forestry-specific tax rules. Or you can look for new advisors who are knowledgeable about forestry. How do you find those advisers? My best advice is to ask other landowners.

There are publications and presentations about timber tax provisions from Extension faculty (such as myself). I've listed a few below as resources for you. There are also foresters who have experience with other landowners and have knowledge about tax provisions. Your goal should be to learn enough about these provisions, so that you can bring them to the attention of your tax advisers. If you are preparing your own tax return, there are example tax forms in the Forest Landowners Guide to the Federal Income Tax.

Following these suggestions won't guarantee that you will reduce your tax bill, and you should always consult a qualified tax professional for advice about your particular circumstances. But I hope these strategies will, at the least, keep you from being the person in the room who exclaims "if only I had known..." •

REFERENCES

- *Woodland Stewards Webinar Series: Forestry Taxes: This is a 5-part series recorded in 2022 on taxes related to forests with a strong focus on Federal income taxes. <https://forestrywebinars.net/webinars/basics-of-timber-basis-re-setting-the-table/?sr=wp~upcoming>
- *Forest Landowners' Guide to the Federal Income Tax. Produced by the U.S. Forest Service, this publication gives a good overview of timber tax provisions with which you should be familiar. As with any tax publication, it can quickly go out of date so verify any numbers. I am currently on a team updating this guide so stay tuned for an announcement when it is published (not in time for you to file 2022 unfortunately). It's available on the web at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/research/treesearch/42921>
- *Forest Landowners Tax Council: Website at www.fltc.net; videos on forestry tax incentives, taxation of forestry income and other topics at <https://www.youtube.com/user/TheFLTC>

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GOPHER TORTOISES IN THE NEWS

ISTOCK.COM/TURTLETRAX



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GOPHER TORTOISES ARE not new to the Sunshine State. Native to the Southeastern United States, they make their homes throughout Florida, usually in upland habitats in forests, pastures, and yards. They dig deep burrows for shelter, which is how they earned their name. They share their burrows with any of more than 350 species, including frogs, rabbits, owls, snakes and other forest animals.

According to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), gopher tortoises can be found in all 67 counties in the state.

Due to a general population decline across its habitat range, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has been considering adding federal protections for the reptiles. However, this fall the agency announced that listing the gopher tortoise as a threatened or endangered species under the Endangered Species Act is not warranted in Florida.

The decision makes three determinations:

- Listing the gopher tortoise as threatened or endangered throughout its entire range is not warranted.

- The eastern and western portions of the gopher tortoise’s range meet the criteria of Distinct Population Segments (DPS). An estimated 149,000 reported gopher tortoise individuals are distributed across their range with most found in the eastern segment and only 8% in the western segment.
- The eastern DPS – which includes Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, and most of Alabama – does not require protection. The western DPS in Western Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana will retain its threatened status.

“This was an important victory on the federal level,” said Association Director of Forestry and Regulatory Affairs Brittany Varn. “It’s also a testament to the critical role that private forest landowners play, providing both habitat for the tortoise and information and data to the USFWS. Their engagement was and continues to be key.”

Varn noted that on the state level gopher tortoises will continue to be listed as threatened and existing protections will remain in place. Therefore, Florida Wildlife Best Management Practices will remain the same.

“Under state law, both the tortoise and its burrow are protected,” Varn explained. “Landowners must still get a permit from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission and relocate gopher tortoises before they clear land.” •

ISTOCK.COM/TURTLETRAX



SHARING THE VALUE OF MEMBERSHIP

JOHN ALTER OF Alter-Bevis Tree Farms in Malone, FL, is not shy about expressing his passion for forestry or his belief in the value of membership in the Florida Forestry Association.

Florida's 2015 Outstanding Tree Farmer of the Year, Alter has also received the Association's "Above & Beyond" Award for the many ways he has contributed to the organization as a Board member, a communications committee member and an advocate for forestry on both state and federal levels.

In November 2022, Alter came out front in the Association's membership campaign contest. He used his platform as a former Tree Farmer of the Year to reach out to other area landowners regarding the benefits of belonging. In his letter to the potential members, he specifically addressed the work the Association had accomplished in the wake of Hurricane Michael, which left a wide swath of destruction through the region's forestland in 2018.

"John is very proactive in his support of the Association and its work," said Whitney Hough, Director of Membership Services. "He consistently invites people to our membership meetings and creates other opportunities to reach out to potential members. His excitement is contagious."

According to Hough, Alter understands two important concepts that are vital to an association's success: strength in numbers and the power of engagement.

"Obviously associations need members – the more the better," she explained. "We also need those members to be actively engaged. There



are so many good reasons to join our Association. It takes time and effort to share them, but everybody comes out ahead when you do."

"As everyone knows, I believe in the power of associations," said Alter. "I particularly believe in the power of this one."

For his efforts in recruiting the most membership dues, Alter was awarded a \$250 gift card donated by FLAG Credit Union.

Encourage others to join you and fellow members of Florida's only association dedicated to a sustainable forest community:

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We know the challenges that members of Florida's forest community face. We invite everyone to join the 1,400+ members of the Florida Forestry Association, so that no one has to face those challenges alone!

Share the membership application on the next page with someone who might be interested in joining! •



MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

We will use the contact information provided below for our Membership Directory. All other information is kept confidential.

Recommended for membership by _____

How did you hear about us? _____

Your Name _____

Company Name (if applicable) _____

Mailing Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Phone (____) _____ Cell (____) _____

Email _____

Membership category (see below) _____

If Associate/Vendor, please indicate type of business _____

Please indicate the amount of all the factors below that apply to calculating your membership dues:

Sales _____ Base _____ Employees _____ Trucks _____

Acreage _____ Production _____ Consumption _____ MCF treated _____

Total Dues Amount Paid _____

Please mail this form to:

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402 East Jefferson Street
Tallahassee, FL 32301

Check enclosed - Payable to Florida Forestry Association.

Please bill me - You may also email this form to: Info@FLForestry.org.

Credit Card Payment - Pay online: Community.FLForestry.org or call 850-222-5646.

MEMBERSHIP DUES CATEGORIES & RATES

Associate/Vendor: Bank; Finance/Lending; Insurance; Law Firm; Nursery; Real Estate; Retail; and any other affiliated businesses —

Based on gross sales to the forest industry as follows:
up to \$500,000 sales = \$345
\$500,001-\$2.5M sales = \$475
over \$2.5M sales = \$1,050

Chemical Manufacturer — \$500

Consulting Forester — \$335 base (includes 1-owner), plus \$80 per technical employee

Contract Trucking Company —
1-10 trucks = \$135
11+ trucks = \$320

Forest Equipment Supplier —
Based on gross sales to the forest industry as follows:
up to \$10M sales = \$500
over \$10M sales = \$2,000

Hunting Club —
up to 3,000 acres = \$70
over 3,000 acres = \$200

Landowner —
up to 500 acres = \$95
501-1,000 acres = \$210
1,001-5,000 acres = \$520
5,001-10,000 acres = \$980
over 10,000 acres = \$420 base plus \$.083/acre on total acreage

Logger/Timber Dealer/Chipper/Fuel Wood Supplier/Chip Mill/Exporter —
Production/Exports: \$210 base plus \$.0067/ton

Mulch Processor — \$1,630 per facility

Pine Straw —
up to 1M bales = \$230
over 1M bales = \$690

Plywood Plant/Pole & Piling Producer/Sawmill/Veneer —
Production: \$210 base plus \$.020/ton

Pulp & Paper/Oriented Strand Board/Utility/Bioenergy/Biofuel/Wood Pellet Producers —
(Base + Consumption of Florida wood + Acreage)
With no production: base = \$2,875

With production: base = \$8,325 per company +
consumption of Florida wood = \$.0067/ton +
acreage owned/leased = \$.083/acre on total acreage

Silvicultural Contractor (Applicator/Herbicide Distributor/Planting/Site Prep) —
Based on the total # of acres where any application is applied as follows:
up to 10,000 acres = \$210
over 10,000 acres = \$500

Treating Plant — \$.62/MCF on all treated products

Other — If you don't feel that the above categories are appropriate for you, please call us at 850.222.5646 to determine if you qualify as a **Friend of Forestry, Legacy Landowner** (Association Landowner heir), **Retired** (retired forest industry employee) or **Student/Teacher** (full time).

TOMMY USHER MEMORIAL LOG A LOAD GOLF TOURNAMENT

THIS FALL, THE Tommy Usher Log-a-Load for Kids Golf Classic returned for its 26th year. Over 160 golfers – a record-breaking number for the event – hit the greens at the Chiefland Golf & Country Club in October to raise money for the Children’s Miracle Network and UF Health Shands Children’s Hospital.

“The Children’s Miracle Network is at Shands in Gainesville, and there is a large amount of people here that have had some kind of impact, because of Shands, because of their children,” Eric Handley, one of the event organizers, said in an interview with *The Chiefland Citizen*. “My wife and I lost triplets last year, so we saw the impact that organization can have on families when they are in the worst of places.”

The event raised more than \$46,000. •





Log A Load For Kids¹ is a nationwide giving campaign through which the forestry community contributes to local hospitals affiliated with the **Children's Miracle Network (CMN)** to provide medical care to children whose families cannot pay for treatment. Children's hospitals affiliated with the Children's Miracle Network are pledged to provide services regardless of a patient's ability to pay. Contributions through **Log A Load For Kids** help meet the financial deficits that can be created by fulfilling this pledge.

One hundred percent of all contributions go to local CMN Hospitals. **Log A Load For Kids** is one of the top major CMN Hospitals contributors.



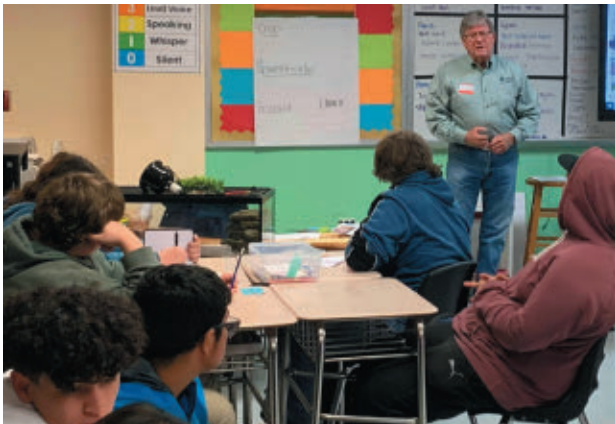
REFERENCE

¹ Log A Load for Kids. <https://logaload.org>

Florida Forests Week was celebrated October 23-29, 2022. This annual statewide awareness campaign offers the perfect opportunity for everyone to share the forestry story.

This year, school visits were a big highlight of the week. In Jackson County alone, 425 fourth graders were able to learn about all the good that forestry does for Florida and the world during Florida Forests Week.

Many, many thanks to everyone who participated in this very important week! •



Association President Jimmy Bielling took the forestry story to Jefferson County students.



UF School of Forest, Fisheries and Geomatics Sciences' Scott Sager led students in hands-on learning activities.



Jackson County Forestry in the Classroom presenters met at Rex Lumber for a planning session. Pictured from left: Matt McGaughey, Danny Duce, Lesia Andrews, Caroline Dauzat, project leader John Alter, and Carly Montuani.

Lynetta Usher Griner Named 2022 Agricultural Environmental Leader

Lynetta Usher Griner of Usher Land and Timber, Inc. has been honored with the 2022 Agricultural Environmental Award by Commissioner of Agriculture Nikki Fried.

The program, created in 1994, highlights environmentally innovative farming practices across different parts of Florida's agricultural industry.

The nominations for the award were evaluated by a committee of representatives from the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and key Florida agricultural groups.

"Lynetta's passion for forestry and agriculture shows in everything she does," said Association Executive Vice President Alan Shelby. "It's gratifying to



see her recognized for the strides she has taken to lead forestry on all fronts."

Rayonier Named University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences Industry Partner of 2022

Rayonier was honored to receive the 2022 Industry Partner award recently at the University of Florida's IFAS (Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences) Dinner of Distinction. Senior Vice President Doug Long, a UF graduate, accepted the award on the company's behalf.

UF/IFAS is a federal-state-county partnership dedicated to developing knowledge in agriculture, human and natural resources, and the life sciences. The Dinner of Distinction celebration recognizes the commitment of individuals and organizations to the UF/IFAS mission of teaching, research and Extension.



Robert Gilbert, UF/IFAS Dean for Research and Director of the Florida Agricultural Experiment Station, presented the award to Doug Long, VP of Forest Resources for Rayonier. PHOTO CREDIT: TYLER JONES, UF/IFAS COMMUNICATIONS

Florida Project Learning Tree Announces 2022 Award Recipients

Each year, Florida Project Learning Tree (FL PLT) recognizes a partner, facilitator, and educator who have made exceptional contributions to the program. This year, awardees

include **Friends of MacArthur Beach State Park, Partner of the Year**; **Tish Roland, Facilitator of the Year**; and **Irene "Trini" Johannesen, Educator of the Year**.

Awards were presented at the 2022 FL PLT Facilitator & PLT School Coordinator Retreat held at the University of Florida's Austin Cary Forest, November 5, 2022. •



Noteworthy recognizes notable achievements and milestones of Association members and friends. Submissions for future issues should be sent to LeeAnn@FLForestry.org.

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INDEX OF ADVERTISERS

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Lanigan & Associates, P.C. 12
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CONSULTING FORESTERS

A.W. Powers Forestry, Inc.29
 American Forest Management.....28
www.americanforestmanagement.com
 Larson & McGowin, Inc.20
www.larsonmcgowin.com
 Southern Forestry Consultants, Inc..... 12
www.soforest.com

CONTAINERIZED PINE SEEDLINGS

Advantage Forestry Container Pines, LLC..... 17
www.containerpines.net

CREDIT UNIONS

FLAG Credit Union30
www.flagcu.com

EQUIPMENT RENTAL & SALES

Bear Equipment Company Inside Front Cover
www.beardequipment.com

HERBICIDES

Red River Specialties, Inc. 16
www.rrsi.com

LAND & TIMBER MANAGEMENT

B & B Dugger, Inc29
 Wiregrass Land & Timber Co.29
www.choctawlandandtimber.com

NURSERIES

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 Container Nursery Inside Front Cover
www.blantonscontainernursery.com

REAL ESTATE COMPANIES

American Forest Management.....28
www.americanforestmanagement.com

SAWMILLS

Rex Lumber, Bristol, LLC.....20
www.rex-lumber.com

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& CONSERVATION**

UF/IFAS School of Forest Resources
& Conservation28
www.sfrc.ufl.edu

SEEDLINGS

Arborgen.....10
www.arborgen.com
 International Forest Company 16
www.ifcoseedlings.com

SILVICULTURE CONTRACTORS

Mizell Development30

TIMBER BUYERS

The Beasley Group29
www.beasleygroup.com
 T.W. Byrd's Sons, Inc.....29
 Harley Forest Products, LLC.....29

TIMBER PRICE REPORTING

TimberMart-South.....29
www.timbermart-south.com

VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

Nutrien Ag Solutions.....28
www.nutriensolutions.com

WILDLIFE CONSULTANTS

Southern Forestry Consultants, Inc..... 12
www.soforest.com

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