

Fall/Winter 2024

# FLORIDAFORESTS

AN OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE FLORIDA FORESTRY ASSOCIATION

## **Pines, Politics, and Doing the Right Thing: A Profile of Association President Avery Roberts**

**FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS  
AFTER THE STORM**

**AI AND LASERS USED TO EVALUATE  
FOREST DAMAGE HELPS WITH RAPID  
RESPONSE AFTER HURRICANES**

**AWARD-WINNING FORESTRY**





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**Volume 28, Issue 2**  
**Fall/Winter 2024**



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Florida Forests is an official publication of the Florida Forestry Association  
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Florida Forests is published biannually by  
**NAYLOR**  
ASSOCIATION SOLUTIONS  
550 SW Second Avenue, Suite 200  
Gainesville, FL 32601  
Phone: 800-369-6220  
www.naylor.com

**Publisher:**  
Kimberly Hough

**Sr. Editor:**  
Michelle Harris Griest

**Layout and Design:**  
CloudberryCo.

*Please support the advertisers who made this publication possible.*

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PUBLISHED DECEMBER 2024/FOR-B0224

Cover Image: ISTOCK.COM/OLEG KOVTUN





AS WE LOOK AHEAD,  
LET'S REMEMBER  
THAT WE'RE NOT JUST  
REBUILDING FORESTS;  
WE'RE RESTORING A  
WAY OF LIFE.



# We Rise Together

By **ALAN SHELBY**, Executive Vice President

**AS A NEW** year unfolds, Florida's forestry community stands at a crossroads. We have faced some serious storms, both literal and economic. Part of Florida's wood basket has been hit by three hurricanes in 13 months. At the same time, we have encountered economic challenges such as increasing costs, shifting markets, and closing mills. Yet here we stand, stronger and more determined than ever.

Florida's forestry has a foundation built on grit. Over generations, this industry has grown deep roots in the Sunshine State. These roots anchor us. They give us the strength to weather storms, both natural and man-made. They remind us that we're not just caretakers of trees; we are stewards of tradition and guardians of the future.

Our Association's leadership team does not shy away from any challenge. They don't just see the damage left behind by hurricanes, they look for the potential for growth. They understand the struggles and are working to make sure Florida's forests, and the families and communities who depend on them, recover and thrive.

We also have another important resource: a membership that doesn't quit. Our members are more than participants. They are our backbone. They are loggers, mill operators, landowners, and industry partners who keep going despite the odds. They don't flinch in the face of adversity. They face it head-on. They know what it takes to build a future for the next generation, one that respects our natural resources while ensuring a thriving industry.

Recovery is not a simple path, though. Rebuilding after a hurricane is a massive task. To tackle these issues, the Association is putting real solutions into action. We're working with state and federal policymakers and agencies to access resources and support for replanting and recovery efforts. We're exploring new markets and opportunities for Florida-grown timber, ensuring our members can adapt and succeed in an ever-changing landscape.

This is an industry that knows how to work hard, adapt, and overcome. It's been tested by fire, flood, pests, and the shifting tides of the economy. And it always rises. Our members have met each obstacle with strength and resilience. They're determined to push through the hardships, and they know they are not alone. The Florida Forestry Association is here, supporting each member, ensuring that no one faces these challenges alone.

As we look ahead, let's remember that we're not just rebuilding forests; we're restoring a way of life. A legacy of hard work, of hands in the soil, of commitment to the land. We're making sure our forests – and our industry – are healthy and vibrant for those who come after us. This New Year, we renew that promise. We embrace the challenges before us, knowing they'll make us stronger.

Let's rise together for Florida forestry. Let's move forward with optimism rooted in reality, with hard work that honors the past and builds the future. The winds may blow, but this industry stands firm, deeply rooted, and ready for the year ahead. •



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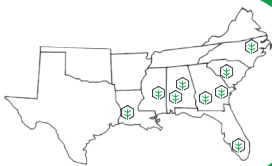


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# Pines, Politics, and Doing the Right Thing:

## A Profile of Association President Avery Roberts

By **LEE ANN FISCH**, Director of Communications, Florida Forestry Association



Association President Avery Roberts (center) and family.

**FORTY-FIVE YEARS AGO,** seventeen-year-old Avery C. Roberts began the daunting task of planting his first pine stand. The Union County teenager came from a long line of forestland owners, so he understood all the hard work that was ahead of him. But then as now, he did not turn away from a challenge. Then as now, he was determined to succeed.

And succeed he has.

### FROM TENACIOUS TEENAGER TO ACCOMPLISHED LEADER

Roberts' ancestors settled in Union County in the 1830s. His father, C.A. Roberts, grew timber and made turpentine, as well as raising cattle. He was active in the community and served multiple terms in the Florida House of Representatives in the 1950s and 1960s. He also served as president of the Florida Board of Forestry. Sadly, he passed away when Avery was only 11.

But, as the saying goes, the acorn didn't fall far from the tree. (Or in this case, perhaps it was a pinecone.) At 17,

Avery planted his first pine stand. At 18, he founded The Roberts Companies, which he continues to run with his son, C. Austen Roberts, and daughter, Amber Crawford. Today the business includes 38 enterprises. He also runs a cattle operation.

Roberts joined the Florida Forestry Association in 1986. Realizing how much of the work to protect property rights and keep forestry viable gets done behind the scenes, he became increasingly active in the Association. His leadership skills and innovative ideas were noted, leading to an appointment



on its Board of Directors and then the Executive Committee. In August of 2024, Roberts was installed as president of the Florida Forestry Association at the group's Annual Meeting.

### PINES AND POLITICS

Back in the late 1970s, there was a series of commercials with the famous tagline: "When EF Hutton talks, people listen." The same could be said of Avery Roberts. Roberts speaks with a quiet authority which has gained him the respect and the ear of prominent leaders in many walks of life, including the political realm.

"Avery has a vision to keep forestry moving forward," said Association Executive Vice President Alan Shelby. "He has a strategy. He knows the plays that need to be made and the players we need to make them."

Immediate Past President Jimmy Bielling, a longtime friend of Roberts, agreed. "Avery's contact list probably contains some of Florida's biggest movers and shakers, but you wouldn't know it from him," he said. "Avery doesn't drop names. He just picks up the phone and calls."

Those connections could prove invaluable as the forestry community recovers from Hurricanes Idalia (2023) Debby (2024) and Helene (2024).



From left: Carlton Jones, Mike Branch, Jimmy Bielling and Roberts at the Capitol for the Association's legislative day.



From left: Association Executive Vice President Alan Shelby, Jim Karels, Senator Corey Simon, James Spratt, Jimmy Bielling and Roberts at a recent re-election fundraiser for the Senator.

"The Association has great working relationships with state and federal agencies and elected officials," Roberts explained. "We are working with them to get relief for our members who were impacted by the storms as quickly as possible."

Ever the straight shooter, he adds, "Those are taxpayer dollars we're talking about, so we want to make sure we do it in a way that is as smart and cost-effective as possible as well."

### BIGGEST CHALLENGES

Aside from hurricane recovery, Roberts' most immediate concern revolves around markets and mills.

"Florida has lost 2.5 pulp and paper mills and several chip-and-saw mills in the past few years," he said. "Shifting markets, the economy, regulations ... there are a lot of pieces to that puzzle, a lot of moving parts. We have to take all of them into account as we're working on the solution. We have to be creative and think both inside and outside that box."

"Again, we want to be smart about it," he said. "We've got a lot of families, companies, and communities that rely on forestry. We don't take the problem or our role in its solution lightly."

One specific angle the Association will take, said Roberts, is working with policymakers and partners on the federal level to address the issue of foreign imports, which compete with local mills, suppress lumber prices, and create a negative domino effect in the industry.

### STAYING SOLUTION-ORIENTED

New uses for forest resources are always on the horizon. As mass timber becomes more mainstream, the Association is working on related legislation and regulations to help the growth of its use in the Sunshine State. The alternative aviation fuels (aka sustainable aviation fuels) market is also trying to take flight but is still early in the launch process. The first satellite made with wood recently docked at the International Space Station, officially making the sky the limit with what you can do with trees.





*Roberts takes aim at a membership sporting clay shoot.*

One of the arrows in Roberts' quiver of ways to support the viability of Florida forestry is payment to landowners for the ecosystem services their forests provide. He admits it's a slow sell and most likely will not happen during his administration. However, he is eager to move the process along.

"We have been working on this for years and will probably be working on it for years to come," he said. "The overall concept is pretty straightforward, but the implementation details can get complicated. It's a lot for policymakers to wrap their arms around. But we're getting there step by step."

According to Roberts, the carbon sequestration market is another avenue that has been slow to develop but still holds a lot of possibilities.

"Industries have to evolve to survive," he said. "Evolution doesn't happen overnight. That shouldn't stop us from exploring possibilities, even slow ones. After all, we wait decades to

harvest trees to keep forestry sustainable. If it takes a few years for an alternative revenue source to fully develop, we can take the time. But you can bet we'll be working hard in other arenas, too, while they do."



*Alan Shelby, Michael Dooner, Roberts, Laura Bosworth, former Representative Bobby Payne, and Kathy and Jimmy Bielling at Rural Counties Day during the 2020 legislative session.*

## ALWAYS BE READY

On a day-to-day basis, Roberts' perspective is simple: Always be ready for the unexpected.

Whether it's new legislation or regulations, economic downturns, or other, unforeseeable issues, preparation and proactivity are the name of the game in Roberts' playbook. Outcomes are always better when you can come at them from a position of strength.

A big part of that plan is to keep the Association financially strong so that it can weather whatever storms – literal or figurative – it has to face. Roberts wants to find new streams of revenue for the Association as well as for its members, and he wants to continue growing its membership base.

"Jimmy (Bielling) did a fantastic job building the base," he said. "I want to continue to grow that. The bigger we are, the stronger we stand. No one in forestry should be standing alone right now. And thanks to the Association, they don't have to."

## COMMUNITY AND FAMILY

As busy as Roberts stays leading the forestry charge, he is also involved in his local community as well. Among other contributions, he serves on the Executive Board of the Foundation for Florida Gateway College and the Suwannee Valley Community Foundation Board. He is stepping down from his seat on the Northeast Florida





From left: Association Executive Vice President Alan Shelby, Austen Roberts, Mark Milligan, Carlton Jones, Bob Cook, Michelle Curtis, Jimmy Bielling and Phillip Pritchett with Roberts at a rally for Governor Ron DeSantis that Roberts helped orchestrate at Gateway College.

Economic Development Corporation Board, due to the time demands of his new role at the Association.

"I don't want to hold a position if I can't do it properly," he explained.

Roberts and his wife, Twyla, are also longtime members of the First Christian Church in Lake Butler. In addition to being proud parents, they are doting grandparents as well. Their daughter Amber and her husband Brian have two children, Titus and Angelie. Their son Austen and his wife Jenna have three, Ava, Vera, and Everly.

### DOING THE RIGHT THING

Roberts explained that after his dad died, he was blessed to have several older men in his life who played the role of mentor for him.

"They gave me sound advice and taught me important lessons. Work hard. Outwork everybody. Make decisions based on what's best for your children and their children. If you're about to make a decision you wouldn't want them to know about, make a different decision," he recalled. "Words to live by."

And he has lived by them.

"They say if you want something done, give it to a busy person. That's Avery," shared Association past president Lynetta Usher Griner. "If you want



Immediate Past President and longtime friend Jimmy Bielling passed the presidential gavel to Roberts at the Association's 2024 Annual Meeting in Amelia Island, FL, in August.

something done right, give it to a person of integrity. That's Avery, too."

### THE FUTURE OF FLORIDA FORESTRY

Despite current challenges, Roberts declares the future of Florida forestry is bright.

"We're going through a tough period right now, but we'll get through it like we always do – together," he said. "The forestry community is resilient. It's made up of people who believe the same things my mentors did. Hard work doesn't scare them because they're not just working for themselves. They're doing it for future generations. And so am I." •



The Florida Gateway College Foundation dedicated the School of Public Service on its Olustee campus to Avery and Twyla Roberts in 2021.

LAKE CITY REPORTER



[illegible]

**WHEW! IT SURE** was a stressful summer with hurricanes for a lot of Florida. Whether this year or last, many of us had at least one hurricane come way too close. I hope most of you don't need to read this, but we need to talk about what to do if you had damage from the recent hurricanes or other natural disaster on your property. If you have a loss on your property, you may be able to recover some of the loss

Almost immediately after one of these events, the IRS issues extensions to taxpayers living in the affected areas. Once all the immediate needs have been attended to, you can turn to what happened to your timber. Many foresters are aware of the assistance available to forest landowners and can be a good resource at this time.

Before you do much else, document the situation. Make sure to keep records related to the casualty event. It is important to show what the event was that caused your loss, when it occurred, that the loss was directly related to the event, and whether you made any claims for reimbursement or salvage attempts. If you have any pictures from before the storm, get those together, along with any recent inventory information to show what the property and timber was like prior to the storm. Then take pictures or videos of the property after the storm. Take screen shots or download any information on the internet that indicates where the storm was to show it came through where your property is located. I recommend getting information from the National Weather Service which would show severity of the event and the radar images. All this documentation is to prove that a natural event came to your property and the extent of the damages.

If you have damage to your timber, you should have a forester visit the property and discuss with you whether a salvage sale is needed. Your time to conduct a salvage may be limited as the trees will lose quality due to decomposition. You are not required to salvage the timber from a tax perspective, but it may bring in needed cash





*When applying for assistance, be prepared with all the relevant information.*

flow. This is a little challenging as the mills have wood coming from previous purchases and now have many landowners trying to salvage. This will likely result in a lower-than-normal price in addition to the fact that what was a sawtimber tree yesterday may not be today after damage.

### APPLY FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Contact your local Farm Service Agency office about eligibility for the Emergency Forest Restoration Program (EFRP). This program provides cost-share payments up to 75% of the cost to implement approved restoration practices. Practices eligible for the payment include debris removal, site preparation and planting expenses, and restoration of roads, fire lanes and fuel breaks. When you contact the FSA, you should be prepared with information showing that you either own the property or have a rental/lease agreement on the property. If you have previously participated in a USDA program have your farm tract number available if possible. There may

also be additional funds made available in the coming months.

### TAX CONSIDERATIONS

It may be possible to take a loss deduction on your federal income tax return. There are three criteria for whether a loss is a casualty or not.

1. Sudden: was the loss sudden? For damage from hurricanes, wildfires, tornadoes, this is almost always a 'yes' as the winds and fire cause a swift (as opposed to a gradual) loss.
2. Unexpected: the loss must not have been anticipated or caused by an action of the taxpayer. While we know that it is a possibility each year that we will have these natural disasters, it could not be anticipated that it would occur on your property.
3. Unusual: Of course, it is not unusual for the South to have a hurricane, but it is unusual for an individual taxpayer to incur a loss due to those events on a recurring basis.

Most of our large weather events are the kinds of natural disasters that would meet those three criteria. A federal disaster declaration is only necessary for taxpayers who own property for personal use (no profit motive). The tax information presented here is focused on those with a profit motive, but the hurricanes that we've had in Florida have been issued federal disaster declarations. The IRS has also extended deadlines related to tax filings for those in the disaster areas. You can find that information on the IRS website.

The amount of loss that is eligible for deduction from a casualty event is the lesser of the adjusted basis or the decline in fair market value. This is why it is important to establish the



*Contact your local Farm Service Agency office about eligibility for the Emergency Forest Restoration Program (EFRP).*





FLORIDA FOREST SERVICE

*Aerial view of Hurricane Helene damage.*

basis in your timber. Unfortunately, for many landowners, the adjusted basis is often the lesser of the two numbers. Landowners who have inherited or purchased mature timber may have an adjusted basis that is higher than the change in fair market value but are limited to the lesser of the two numbers. Be prepared to prove the decline in value through past appraisals, inventories, photographs, etc. If you previously took the reforestation deduction (Section 194), there is likely zero dollars



FLORIDA FOREST SERVICE

*Hurricane Helene was estimated to have damaged almost 8.9 million tons of timber at a value of more than \$114 million.*





*In a matter of moments, hurricanes can damage forestland that members have invested money, time, and work into for decades.*

in your adjusted basis account which would result in no deductible loss.

It is important to note that determination of the value of the loss is usually done for each single identifiable property (SIP), which is usually demonstrated by your record-keeping unit. For small landowners this is often the entire property or by a single tract.

For those of you who have established basis accounts for your timber, the SIP will align with those accounts. For example, if you have a tract of 40 acres and you have a basis account for the land and one for the timber, that is your SIP. If you haven't set up basis accounts for your timber yet, that can be done retroactively, but make

sure you have a defensible logic behind how you set it up. The IRS is aware that taxpayers may retroactively set up the account to take advantage of a large SIP.

There will be expenses incurred with moving on from the natural disaster. Removal of debris to prepare for site preparation will be site preparation expenses and are either part of the basis of the new stand or may be deducted using the reforestation deduction. Expenses associated with determining the loss amount, such as appraisal, timber cruise or photography, are treated as operating expenses not a part of the casualty.

### TAX TREATMENT OF SALVAGE INCOME

Income received from a salvage sale that exceeds your adjusted basis is a taxable

gain and is reported as such. However, because the events were the result of an involuntary conversion (you didn't choose to harvest at that time), you can choose to defer the gain by purchasing qualifying replacement property within two years. Examples of replacement property include reforestation expenses, purchase of another tract of land (with or without standing timber) or controlling stock in a timber corporation. There are specific timing requirements on this tax provision so seek the assistance of a tax professional.

If you were the victim of a casualty event, make sure you contact a forester. The forester can be helpful in determining your options on the property going forward including whether or not to salvage. You may also need the assistance of a forester in determining your fair market value before the loss. An accountant can help you with determining what your loss limitation is for the event and assist you in filing the return.

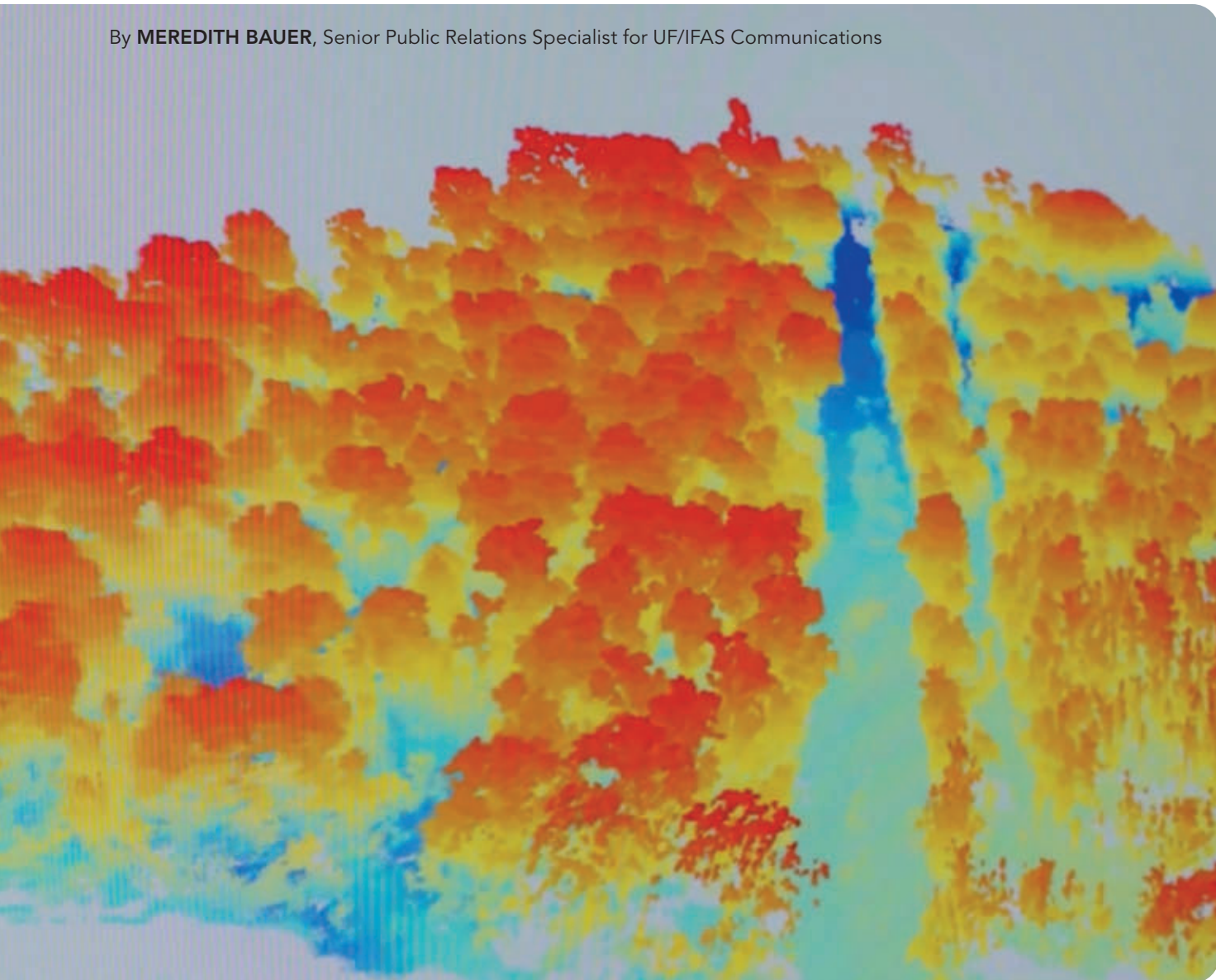
While none of this erases the frustration associated with the loss, hopefully it can help you recover some of your loss. •



*Hurricane Helene damage in Lafayette County, FL. Photo credit: Florida Forest Service.*

# AI AND LASERS USED TO EVALUATE FOREST DAMAGE HELPS WITH RAPID RESPONSE AFTER HURRICANES

By **MEREDITH BAUER**, Senior Public Relations Specialist for UF/IFAS Communications



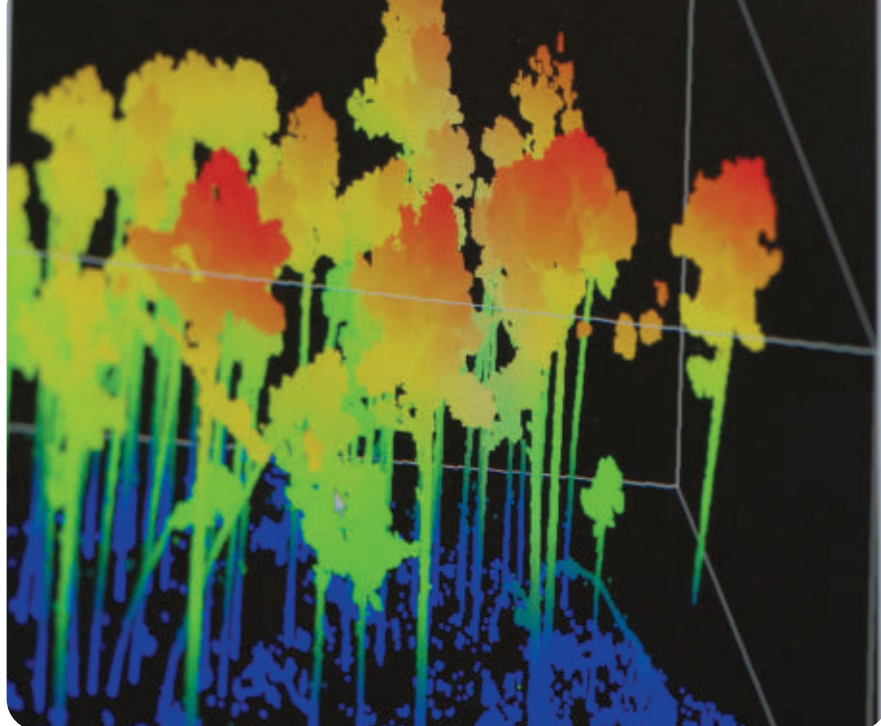
**WHEN HURRICANES CAREEN** through Florida, they not only damage homes and businesses, they also destroy forests and timber farms. Getting an accurate assessment for how much timber is damaged by hurricanes is essential for environmental management decisions, salvaging logging

operations, tree farms' insurance estimates and climate change studies, but so far, it's been a vexing puzzle.

Carlos Silva, assistant professor of quantitative forest science in the UF/IFAS School of Forest, Fisheries and Geomatics Sciences and director of the forest biometrics, remote sensing and AI lab, said

the key is to use a combination of remote sensing and artificial intelligence technologies, to create pre- and post-hurricane 3D maps of forests to evaluate forest loss. He uses satellites and LiDAR – a technology that uses lasers to collect data and which stands for Light Detection and Ranging – ground equipment to achieve this.





*LiDAR is an active remote sensing technology that uses pulse of lights to measure trees in 3-D.*



*Data on the damage severity can help make better management decisions and restoration plans.*



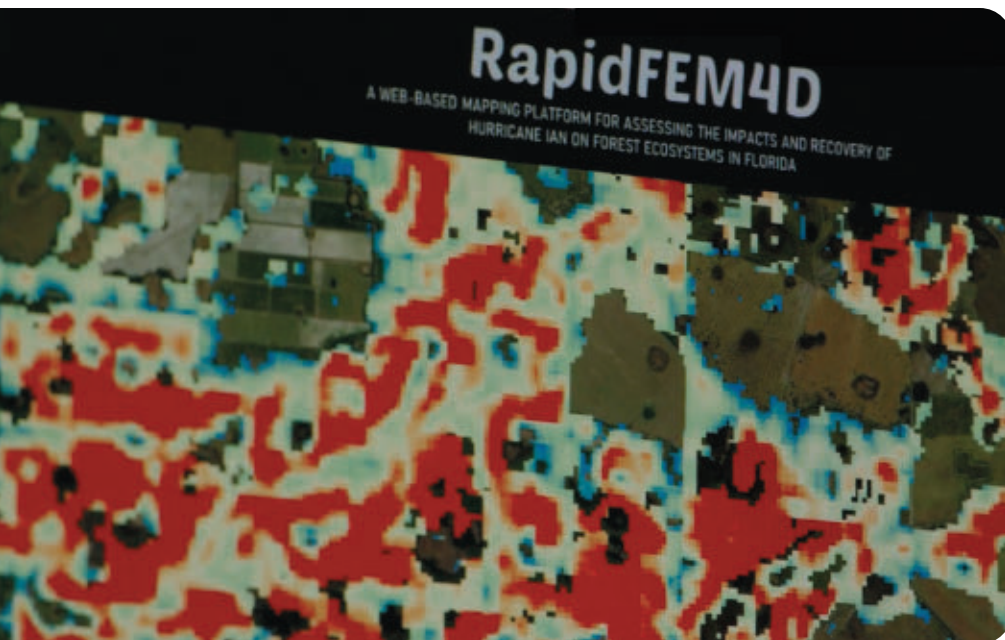
*Dr. Silva's team collects data from sensors in the space being studied, which allows them to analyze the structure of the forest.*

THE LIDAR AND IMAGERY DATA FROM SATELLITES AND GROUND-BASED SENSORS ARE ALL COMBINED INTO A WEB-BASED MAPPING PLATFORM THAT SHOWS A COMPREHENSIVE PICTURE OF IMPACTS TO FOREST ECOSYSTEMS FROM HURRICANE IAN. THE MAP IS AVAILABLE ONLINE AT [RAPIDFEM4D.SILVALAB-UF.COM](https://RAPIDFEM4D.SILVALAB-UF.COM) FOR ANYONE TO USE.

"Hurricanes pose a fundamental challenge for us in Florida," Silva said. "The traditional way to assess the impact of hurricanes is basically going to the field, establishing plots and measuring trees. But if we're thinking about large areas, it's really time-consuming, therefore the traditional way of assessing impact of hurricanes on forest ecosystems is not efficient."

"We are in a new era for monitoring forests, thanks to these innovative remote-sensing and AI methods," he said.

Data help emergency managers and environmental managers make fast, smart decisions in the aftermath of a hurricane, he said. These data help them know which areas were most affected and need help immediately, as well as which would benefit from specialized action at a later time – such as where to do salvage logging operations.



*As part of the RapidFEM4D Project, the Silva Lab is developing a web-based mapping platform for assessing the impact of hurricanes here in Florida.*

Kody Brock, a senior in Silva's lab, said the maps can help forest managers and landowners alike react quickly to hurricane damage.

"Hurricanes are only going to get worse and more frequent," she said, "and we realize that in the field of forestry. Those are ecosystems we're losing."

Silva said he and his lab use NASA satellites, specifically the Global Ecosystem Dynamics Investigation (GEDI) satellite and the Ice, Cloud and land Elevation Satellite (ICESat-2), to scan trees on the ground with a laser pulse that sends back data on the structure of the forest.

Additional data are collected with ground-based LiDAR scanners



*Dr. Silva analyzes data from remote sensors.*





Dr. Silva goes into the field to collect data to validate the products the team is getting from the sensors in space.

attached to all-terrain vehicles and a backpack apparatus to make high-resolution 3D maps of the forest.

The LiDAR and imagery data from satellites and ground-based sensors are all combined into a web-based mapping platform that shows a comprehensive picture of impacts to forest ecosystems from Hurricane Ian. The map is available online at [rapidfem4d.silvalab-uf.com](http://rapidfem4d.silvalab-uf.com) for anyone to use.

The data coming back from these sources includes the weight of trees before and after hurricanes, as well as 3D images of trees that can spot small changes like individual broken tree limbs, he said.

"There was no way to combine data from different sources – until now," Silva said of his lab's innovations.

Silva's research is funded by a USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) through

the Rapid Response to Extreme Weather Events Across Food and Agricultural Systems program.

Silva's team also included Inacio Bueno and Caio Hamamura, post-doctoral researchers, and Monique Schlickmann, a Ph.D. student. •

#### ABOUT UF/IFAS

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# AWARD-WINNING FORESTRY

## LEGISLATORS OF THE YEAR SENATOR JENNIFER BRADLEY

Since her election in 2020, Senator Jennifer Bradley has been a powerful ally of Florida's wood and wood products industry. Her early role as Vice-Chair of the Senate Agriculture Committee and position on the Appropriations Committee for Agriculture, Environment, and Natural Resources set the stage. Partnering with then-President Wilton Simpson, she strengthened Florida's Right to Farm laws and secured funds for the Rural and Family Lands Program.

Most recently, she championed relief legislation for agriculture and timber in the wake of Hurricane Idalia, bringing hope to communities hit hardest.

Representing Florida's "wood belt," Senator Bradley stands as a pro-business, pro-forestry advocate, and the Florida Forestry Association is proud to recognize her dedication.



## REPRESENTATIVE STAN MCCLAIN

Representative Stan McClain has been a friend and champion throughout his tenure in the Florida House. He has served on the Ways and Means Committee for most of his time in the Legislature, including the previous two years as the Chair. In addition, he spent a term on the prominent State Affairs Committee.

Time and again, Representative McClain has demonstrated his support for the wood and wood products industry through his support of legislation strengthening property rights, making needed updates to the Right to Farm Act, and working on sales tax and other fiscal policy issues which have benefited industry businesses, specifically those impacted by Hurricane Idalia.

It is for these and many more reasons that the Florida Forestry Association recognized Representative McClain's hard work and tireless efforts on behalf of the men and women of Florida forestry.



## ABOVE & BEYOND

Jared Beauchamp has worked for the Florida Forest Service since 2005. He graduated from the University of Florida School of Forest Resources (now the School of Forest, Fisheries and Geomatics Sciences) in 2012 and took on the duties of County Forester. He currently serves Lafayette, Dixie, and Taylor Counties in the Perry District, and has since discovered a special passion for assisting landowners and mentoring students in the FFA forestry discipline.



From left: Avery Roberts, Commissioner Willton Simpson, Jared Beauchamp, and FFS Director Rick Dolan.

Zach Butler has worked for the Florida Forest Service since 2018. He serves as the County Forester of Madison County in the Perry District. Zach graduated from the University of Florida School of Forest, Fisheries and Geomatics Sciences in 2018. Zach too has a special passion for mentoring students in FFA in both the land judging and forestry disciplines.

During the Hurricane Idalia Silviculture Recovery Program application period, these two gentlemen helped 216 landowners submit applications requesting a total of more than \$20 million to reforest almost 18,000 acres in the impacted area. Thanks to them, forestland that was devastated by Idalia can be replanted. By going above and beyond, they offered hope and help at a very difficult time for those in the Perry district.



Zach Butler with Roberts, Simpson, and Dolan.

## DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD

Dan Roach began his career with Rayonier in 1979 as a technical forester. He steadily moved up the ranks, ultimately retiring as the manager of forest environmental systems, based right down the road in the company's office in Fernandina Beach.

He was responsible for all forest environmental related activities throughout the eastern US. He managed forest sustainability implementation and worked with the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI). And he assisted in policy related to environmental and regulatory issues at the federal, state and local levels.

For the Association, he has always willingly served as a walking encyclopedia on all things forestry. His knowledge of forestry runs both wide and deep, and he is always there to help. His expertise has been invaluable when dealing with BMPs (Best Management Practices), the ESA (Endangered Species Act), TMDLs (Total Maximum Daily Loads) ... and the rest of the regulatory alphabet.

No matter the issue, Dan has always been willing and able to dive in on the Association's behalf. He is a respected voice for the industry, and he is known for his reasoned approach. He is a trusted and valued resource. In his quiet and steady way, he has been both a guardian and a warrior, protecting and advancing Florida forestry throughout his career.



Dan Roach (right) with Immediate Past President Jimmy Bielling.





### JON GOULD OUTSTANDING TREE FARMER OF THE YEAR AWARD

Floyd Vanzant's 400-acre property, family-owned since the early 1800s, exemplifies sustainable land management. Focused on timber and livestock, Floyd and his wife, Mary, have increasingly embraced innovative practices like silvopasture.

With a deep commitment to stewardship, he balances timber, water, and wildlife conservation on his land. The property is certified by the Florida Tree Farm Program and also by Florida Forest Service's Forest Stewardship program. It was recently used for a silvopasture workshop conducted by the Florida Forest Service and sponsored by the Florida Tree Farm Association.

Active management of his property has led Floyd to take advantage of various cost share programs to assist him in reforesting harvested areas or afforesting additional acres on his property. He is also mindful of water quality, best management practices, and wildlife on his property.

Floyd takes his role as a good steward of his property very seriously and believes that multiple use land management enhances sustainability of timber, livestock, water quality, wildlife, and recreation.

A community leader, Floyd has contributed to his community and forestry, serving as a county commissioner, member of the Hilliard Town Council, mayor of Hilliard, and as the vice president of the Nassau County Farm Bureau. In the past, he has also served on the Forestry Committee with the Farm Bureau.

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

### REGIONAL OUTSTANDING LOGGER OF THE YEAR

D.M. Stratton, LLC was named the Forest Resource Association's 2024 Southeastern Region Outstanding Logger of the Year earlier this year.

Founded in 1958, D.M. Stratton, LLC is currently a third-generation, family-owned business based in Green Cove Springs, FL. The Strattons are the quintessential logging family, with Dillon (III) taking ownership of the business from his father (Dillon M. Stratton Jr.) in 2015. The company received the Florida Logger of the Year Award in 2022.



*Dillon Stratton (right) with his wife Lisa and Avery Roberts.*



### SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY OF THE YEAR AWARD

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

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



Mike Bell and Beth Alvi, Senior Director of Policy for Audubon Florida.



From left: Commissioner Wilton Simpson, FFS Chief of Field Operations Jenn Hart, Mike Weston, FFS Director Rick Dolan, and Avery Roberts.

### JIM STEVENSON RESOURCE MANAGER OF THE YEAR AWARD

Mike Weston is the Resource Administrator for the Caloosahatchee Forestry Center. The Caloosahatchee Forestry Center manages two state forests, Picayune Strand State Forest (74,138 acres) and Okaloacoochee Slough State Forest (32,370 acres). Together, these forests cover almost

110,000 acres. Mike has been working with the Forest Service since 2004, where he has served in various capacities. He has been serving as the Resource Administrator since 2017.

The Picayune Strand Restoration Project (PSRP) was launched in 2007 to restore the natural hydrology of the forest and associated ecosystems. It is expected to be completed in 2024. This project is critical for restoring the sheet flow of fresh water to Florida Bay. Mike has been involved in the PSRP almost since its inception in various capacities. Thanks to Mike and his team's steadfast efforts, many endangered plants and animals that call Picayune Strand home, including the Red-cockaded Woodpecker, the Florida Panther, and the ever-elusive and rare Ghost Orchid, have been protected.

Among many other responsibilities and achievements, Mike also holds the position of Chairman at the Prescribed Fire Council in South Florida. The council's primary objective is to promote the use of prescribed fire as a critical tool for managing the region's ecosystem. •

*The Jim Stevenson Resource Manager of the Year award is bestowed annually to a representative from the Florida Park Service, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and Florida Forest Service for excellence in the field of natural resource management.*



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# FLORIDA FOREST SERVICE POSTS RECORD YEAR FOR PRESCRIBED FIRE

By **TIM BROWN**, Florida Forest Service Communications Manager



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

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

In the past fiscal year – which ran from July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2024, the Florida Forest Service set a new annual

record by treating 277,818 total State Forest acres with prescribed fire. That more than doubled last year's prescribed fire total of 131,628 acres treated, surpassing the previous annual record of 246,104 acres from 2014-15. Additionally, FFS set a new monthly record for prescribed fire this year, totaling 94,087 acres in February.

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

Because of Florida's fire-dependent ecosystems and year-round fire season,

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

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

PHOTO PROVIDED BY FLORIDA FOREST SERVICE



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# A Run Through the Woods at the Flatwoods 5K

By **SUZETTE COOK**, Extension Communications and Project Coordinator,  
UF/IFAS School of Forest, Fisheries, and Geomatics Sciences

The sounds of nature and the feel of leaves and pine needles under your feet were a bonus for runners who took part in the University of Florida School of Forest, Fisheries, and Geomatics Sciences (FFGS) annual Flatwoods 5K event.

One hundred and seventy-two runners took off just after sunrise on Saturday, October 26, on a trail around the Austin Cary Forest (ACF), a 2,632-acre teaching and research forest northeast of Gainesville.

The forest is not usually open to the public. It serves as a space for FFGS faculty, staff, and students to put into practice the theories and principles of its academic subjects such as silviculture, forest ecology and conservation, timber management, genetics, and prescribed burning.

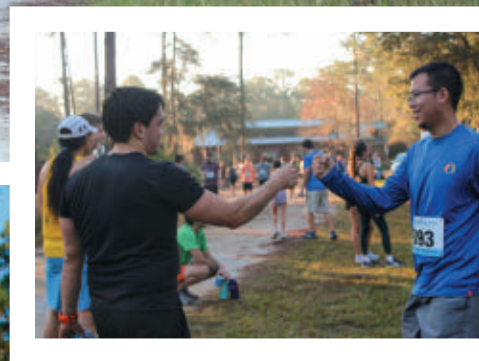
FFGS Professor of Ecotourism Taylor Stein organized the event. His research efforts focus on exploring the benefits of nature-based recreation and tourism and how to best integrate the recreation use of conservation lands into natural resource decision-making and planning.

"You will not find a more scenic race than the Flatwoods 5K," Stein said. "The Austin Cary Forest is not open for general use, so this is the rare chance people get to experience one of the prettiest forests in the state."

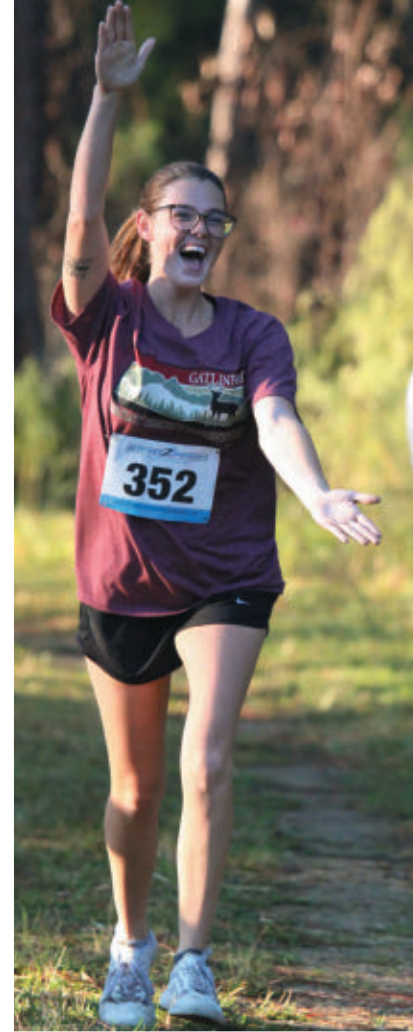
Scott Sager, FFGS assistant director of undergrad programs, facilities, and forester at ACF agrees. "It's a low-key, fun event in a beautiful setting," he said. "You run past open pine forests and cypress domes, and around the deepest lake in Florida."

Runners were presented with trophies made from native longleaf, loblolly, and slash pinecones.

Race proceeds support forestry education and outreach to help sustain Florida's natural heritage. •









## Changes at Rayonier Inc.



Mike Bell

**T**his past fall, **Mike Bell**, Vice President of Public Affairs and Communications at Rayonier Inc., retired after 23 years of dedicated service to the Company.

Since joining Rayonier in 2001, he has been instrumental in building strong relationships with stakeholders, advocating for responsible forestry practices, and positioning Rayonier as a leader in the industry. Mr. Bell played a key role in developing and growing Rayonier's public affairs and communications teams, fostering positive relationships with communities where Rayonier operates, and advocating for the forestry industry through various public policy initiatives at the local, regional, and national levels.

Rayonier appointed **Andres Villegas** as the new Vice President of Public Affairs and Communications. Mr. Villegas previously served



Andres Villegas

as President and CEO of the Georgia Forestry Association (GFA), advocating for the forestry industry and advancing policies that support sustainable forestry practices. In his new role, he will leverage his extensive experience to increase stakeholder engagement and develop bipartisan advocacy strategies, influencing policy decisions and promoting Rayonier's goals. •

## Wilford Carroll Retires After 55 Years



**W**ilford Carroll of North Florida Timber Co, Inc. has retired. At the age of 77, Mr. Carroll has dedicated 55 years of his life to this profession, with his wife alongside him. His commitment keeps him on the fence about retiring, but he does plan to slow down and enjoy life.

Mr. Carroll's journey into forestry and logging began when he worked alongside his father in the woods. Despite his early aspirations to pursue a career in music, he prioritized his family when a recording manager presented him with a pivotal choice to which he already knew the answer. This act of selflessness, choosing family over personal ambition, speaks volumes about his character and values.

Even though his first career choice had to take a backseat, Mr. Carroll's passion for the industry he has devoted his life to remains undiminished. His favorite singer, Hank Williams Sr., continues to inspire him, and his love for the outdoors has always been a driving force in his life. His mother's wise words, urging him to work while he can, have become a guiding principle that has shaped his work ethic and determination.

Mr. Carroll believes in working diligently to fulfill one's needs and aspirations, never settling for anything less. This admirable philosophy has earned him respect and an esteemed reputation in the forestry industry. Mr. Carroll's legacy will always be remembered as a man of high integrity. He is highly respected among fellow loggers and foresters. •

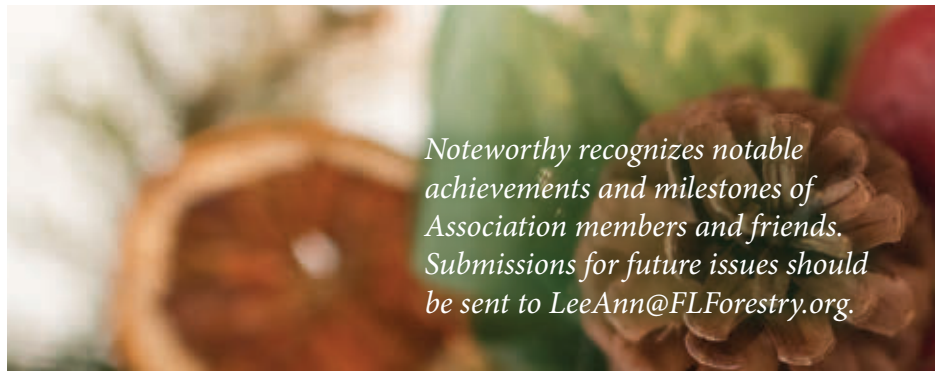
# Harvard Promoted



Krista Harvard



**K**rista Harvard has been promoted to Director of Business Operations at the Florida Forestry Association.

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




*Noteworthy recognizes notable achievements and milestones of Association members and friends. Submissions for future issues should be sent to [LeeAnn@FLForestry.org](mailto:LeeAnn@FLForestry.org).*


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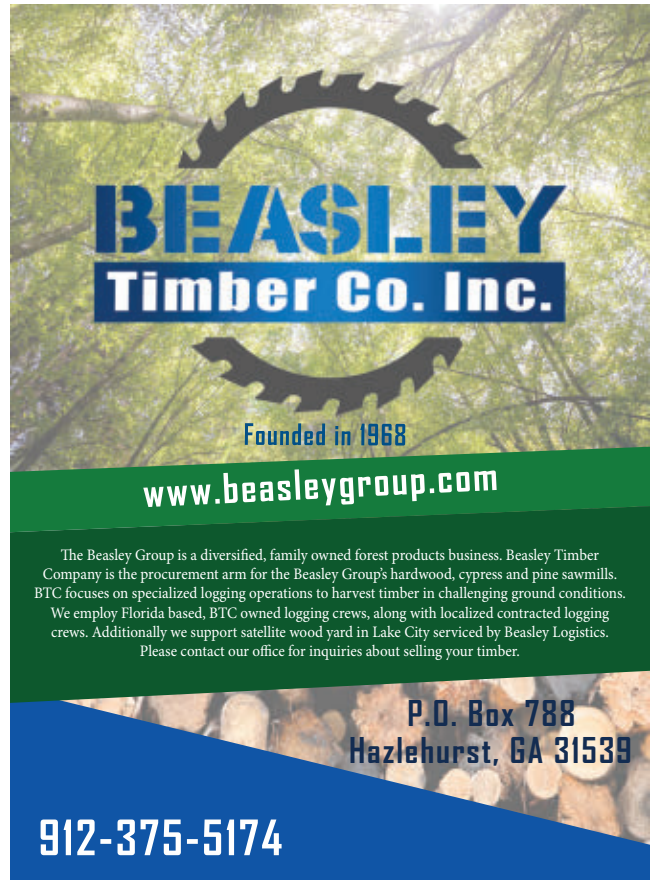
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Asian longhorned beetle (or ALB) is a destructive wood-boring invasive species that feeds off and can kill hardwood trees such as maple, birch, elm, ash, and willow. The beetle is native to China and Korea and was first discovered in Brooklyn, N.Y., in 1996. Since then, the beetle has appeared in five other states: Illinois (1998), New Jersey (2002), Massachusetts (2008), Ohio (2011), and South Carolina (2020).

Adult beetles have bullet-shaped bodies from  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch to  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches long, shiny black with white spots, and long striped antennae that are  $1\frac{1}{2}$  to  $2\frac{1}{2}$  times the size of its body. If you own a pool in Florida, please check your pool filter for any signs of ALB.

If you think you see this beetle in Florida, please take a picture and email it to:  
[ForestHealth@FDACS.gov](mailto:ForestHealth@FDACS.gov) or call (352) 363-9111

### ALB Florida Pool Survey & How You Can Help

- Inspect your pool filter for any Asian longhorned beetles.
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- Email your photo to [ForestHealth@FDACS.gov](mailto:ForestHealth@FDACS.gov), subject heading "ALB Pool Survey."
- Text the image to (352) 363-9111, and type "ALB Pool Survey" in the text's body.
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Commissioner Wilton Simpson