



## 2023 LEGISLATIVE SESSION



Florida's legislative session began on Tuesday, March 7. While the Association is tracking a wide variety of issues that impact the forest community, below are

summaries of legislative priorities as designated by the Governmental Relations Committee:

### Prescribed Burn Liability

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

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

### Foreign Ownership of Ag Lands

Due to concern over providing unfriendly foreign governments control over our nation's food and fiber supply as well as access to neighboring military bases, legislation has been introduced in Florida, among other states, to restrict the purchase, acquisition, lease, or holding of controlling interest in agricultural land by "nonresident aliens, foreign businesses and corporations, or foreign governments."

**The Association will closely monitor this legislation as it moves through the process and it becomes clearer how any unintended consequences will be addressed.**

### Sales Tax Exemptions

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

**The Association supports legislation that extends exemptions to logging trailers and other forestry service providers.**

### Mass Timber

The 2021 International Building Code recognized mass timber as an appropriate material to be used in new construction projects. However, as the Florida Building Commission conducted its normal and customary rule development process to update the state Building Code, mass timber was not included in the updates.

**The Association supports legislation directing the Florida Building Commission to include mass timber as an approved material in the state building code.**

### Ecosystem Services

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

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

### Carbon Sequestration Cost-Share Programs

The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services successfully secured funding to assist timber landowners with reforestation and land management activities. This program, which focuses on the Carbon Sequestration benefits of trees, received roughly \$8 million to assist landowners. The Florida Forest Service accepted applications and awarded nearly \$5 million of the \$8 million available.

Unfortunately, the timing of the grant awards did not match the timing of planting season or other management activities. Due to the way the program funding is currently laid out, this gap could put landowners' abilities to receive their awarded monies at risk.

**The Association supports continued investment in this program. We also request that the Legislature hold the unencumbered balance of the 2022 funds harmless so that landowners may utilize these funds in an effective, efficient, and appropriate manner.**

### Immigration Reform

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

**The Association believes immigration reform is a national issue and should be dealt with at the federal level rather than on a state-by-state basis.**

### Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS)

PFAS are a complex family of chemistry which are critical in many of the products we use to power our lives. Not surprisingly, all PFAS are not created equal, and each chemistry has its own unique structure and use. Recently, legacy PFAS have shown up in locations such as airports, military bases and fire training centers, most likely due to PFAS use in many commonly used fire suppression foams. Both US EPA and the state Department of Environmental Protection have contemplated new regulations and water quality standards which would include criteria for PFAS.

**The Association supports a measured and scientifically defensible approach to the creation and adoption of any PFAS standards. Further, any standards must take into consideration the technical and economically feasibility as well as the attainability of any proposed metrics or numeric criteria for PFAS.**

### PRIORITY BUDGET ISSUES:

#### Florida Forest Service

Wildfire Equipment	\$11.4 M
Aviation Equipment	\$ 6.4 M
Carbon Reforestation Program	\$ 5.0 M
Rural and Family Lands Program	\$300 M

#### UF/IFAS

Workload	\$3.9 M
Ecosystems Services	\$1.4 M
Center for Applied	
Artificial Intelligence	\$2.0 M

#### Department of Environmental Protection

Springs Protection Funding	\$ 50.0 M
Florida Forever Funding	\$ 75.0 M

## FORESTRY DAY AT THE CAPITOL AND RELATED EVENTS

The Wedgworth Leadership Institute hosted an alumni reception at the Association office on Wednesday, followed by the Taste of Florida agricultural reception and dinner at the Governor's Club. On Thursday, the Board met at the Goodwood Museum and Gardens. The meeting included a discussion with Commissioner of Ag Wilton Simpson. Afterwards, a group went to the capitol where they were briefed on issues and visited with legislators.



## COMMISSIONER WILTON SIMPSON ANNOUNCES APPOINTMENT OF RICK DOLAN AS DIRECTOR OF THE FLORIDA FOREST SERVICE



Florida Commissioner of Agriculture Wilton Simpson has appointed Rick Dolan as State Forester and Director of the Florida Forest Service (FFS). "With his decades of experience, and proven leadership and emergency management skills, I am confident that (Rick) will successfully lead the Florida Forest Service into the future," said Commissioner Simpson. "Failure is not an option when it comes to protecting the state. It's a critical job and Rick's servant leadership and team-oriented approach make him perfect for the job."

Dolan began his career at the FFS in 1993 as a Forest Ranger in the Perry District. He was promoted to Senior Forest Ranger at Goethe State Forest in 1996 and in 1999, Dolan became the first Forest Area Supervisor for the newly created Wildfire Mitigation Team located in Bunnell, Florida. In 2000, Dolan transferred to a traditional Forest Area Supervisor position covering Alachua and Gilchrist counties. Dolan was promoted to the Operations Administrator position in 2010 and has been the Waccasassa Forestry Center Manager for the last 9 years. Dolan has been on the Florida Red Incident Management Team for 20 years, working his way up from Division Supervisor trainee to Incident Commander Type 1. He has led the team nationally on wildfires in Oregon, Washington, North Carolina, and numerous in-state assignments including hurricane responses.

## MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS AND SPORTING CLAY SHOOT

Our first Membership Meeting of 2023, held March 23 at Bradford Sportsmen's Farm in Graham, FL, was a resounding success, with over 85 members and guests from across Florida in attendance. Sponsored by AborGen, Inc., and Farm Credit of Florida, the event featured networking opportunities, a delicious lunch, and a legislative update from our Executive Vice President, Alan Shelby. The highlight of the day was a fun-filled Sporting Clay Shoot, with Farm Credit of Florida generously donating gift cards for the top performers.

On Thursday, April 6, crowd of around 50 members gathered at the beautiful Bascom Schoolhouse for the Association's second and final regional meeting of the year. Many thanks to our sponsors, Farm Credit of Northwest Florida and ArborGen, Inc., and to our hosts, John and Elizabeth Alter.



## 2023 MEMBERSHIP CONTEST

The 2023 Membership Contest is in full swing. Our friends at FLAG Credit Union, a division of Bay Credit Union are giving away a \$250 Visa Gift card to the top recruiter for the 2023 calendar year.

Every \$1 in dues generated = 1 point

Example: Friend of Forestry member dues @ \$70 = 70 points

The recruiter with the most points (250 minimum) on 12.31.23 wins!

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

## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

At the Association, we truly believe that no one should stand alone! We are excited to welcome several new members into the Association this quarter:

Blountstown Pines LLP  
Butler, Robert  
Carver, William  
Coley, Cleveland  
Cox, James B.  
Crapps Timber Farms, LLC  
Eldridge Family Trust  
Every, Langford  
FMMPOML VIP Lease  
Grimes, Larry & Stephanie  
Harrell, J C  
Highsmith, Samuel  
Ingka Investments Management LLC  
Joe Lilly Hunt Club  
Lake Ocklawaha Hunt Club  
Leonard, Sue  
McCombs, Elizabeth  
McCroan Farms Inc.  
McDaniel, Larkin  
McGowan, L. R.  
Melvin, Phillip  
Miller Troiano, P.A.  
Montague, Hu  
Mossy Horn Hunt Club  
Nathe, Chad  
Nathe, Charles  
Osborne & Francis  
Peacock, John M.  
Phillips Hunt Club  
Pittman Hunt Club  
Ponsse North America, Inc.  
Price, Ross  
Purvis Gray  
Sharon C. Richardson Family Trust  
Simmons5, LLC  
Southern Sibz LLC  
TGG Hunt Club  
Triple S Farm  
Turner, Janet C.  
Two Gate Hunting Club  
Watermelon Pond Hunt Club  
Watkins, Thomas & Patti  
Wilkin, Stuart  
Windstone Group, LLC

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Contact Whitney Hough for details:  
850.222.5646 or Whitney@FLForestry.org



FLORIDA  
FORESTRY  
ASSOCIATION  
ANNUAL MEETING

**AUGUST  
29-31  
2023**

SANDESTIN GOLF AND  
BEACH RESORT  
MIRAMAR BEACH, FL

MORE INFORMATION:  
FLForestry.org/Annual-  
Meeting



# SAVE THE DATE

## MASTER LOGGER TRAINING SCHEDULE



### 2023 CLE Workshops:

July 20 – Virtual  
November (TBD) – Field Training  
December 7 – Virtual

### 2023 Initial Core Training\*:

May 4th – Gateway College in Lake City  
October 12th - Virtual

\*Please note that this is now a one-day class.

Registration information can be found online at  
FLForestry.org/Programs/Master-Logger

If you have any questions, please contact Krista  
Harvard at 850.222.5646 or Krista@FLForestry.org.

## WANT MORE BUCKS?



Saving money is always a good thing! Partnering with Outdoor Underwriters, Inc., the Association offers our members special reduced rates for liability insurance for hunting leases and timberland. Contact our office for more information (850.222.5646 or Info@FLForestry.org).

## BIELLING HONORED BY UF/IFAS SCHOOL OF FOREST, FISHERIES AND GEOMATICS SCIENCES



The UF/IFAS School of Forest, Fisheries and Geomatics Sciences presented Association President Jimmy Bielling with its Distinguished Service Award at its recent Spring Celebration.

“Over the past 45 years, Jimmy Bielling has been a leader in the forestry community, a successful businessman, and a staunch supporter for the School,” said SFFGS Director Terrell “Red” Baker. “Despite having earned a bachelor’s degree from Florida State University, Jimmy’s service to our School is extensive.”

Baker shared that since 2011 Jimmy has hosted the Field Operations course, where he generally allows students to climb all over his equipment and ask questions about his business. This includes during COVID in 2020 when he was “featured” in a virtual field-trip. His company has donated countless hours of both staff- and machine-time for site-preparation on the Austin Cary Forest. He has made time in his schedule to support the School at meetings and events, such as the IFAS Annual Review and re-accreditation site-visits.

“Most importantly,” said Baker, “Jimmy has been a source of counsel and good judgement – when navigating a thorny issue, when we need to understand technical issues, or when we’re trying to find a contractor who can support a research project or a guest lecturer who can address a topic, we inevitably call Jimmy, and Jimmy helps us succeed.”

## FLORIDA FORESTRY TEACHERS’ TOUR: SPONSORS NEEDED



The Florida Forestry Teachers’ Tour is an annual event that provides an excellent opportunity to share the forestry story with educators from around the state. Teachers take back the information and insights they learn in this four-day hands-on experience and incorporate them into their curriculum during the school year. This year’s tour will be held June 13-16, based in Fernandina Beach, FL.

Sponsors are vital to the success of this program! Each \$500 sponsorship allows one teacher to participate at no cost to him/herself beyond travel to and from Fernandina Beach. To become a sponsor, contact Krista Harvard ([Krista@FLForestry.org](mailto:Krista@FLForestry.org) or 850.222.5646) or simply send your check, payable to the **Florida Forestry Foundation**, to 402 East Jefferson Street, Tallahassee, FL 32301.

## FORESTRY FORWARD GETS THE BUZZ ON BEES



Members of the Association’s Forestry Forward leadership program toured the UF/IFAS Honey Bee Research and Extension Lab to learn how important bees are to our forest ecosystem.

Honey bees play a more important role than just satisfying our sweet tooth. They pollinate flowering plants, making them very important to the reproduction of native plants in our forest ecosystem. Tree stands provide the ideal shade and protection for bees. Hives can be a natural structure such as a tree cavity or an artificial structure, as is the case with domesticated honey bees. So the next time you see a busy bee, think about their fascinating world, and the critical role they play in ours!

## PRT GROWING SERVICES LTD. ACQUIRES INTERNATIONAL FOREST COMPANY

PRT Growing Services Ltd. has announced its acquisition of International Forest Company (“IFCO”) based in the U.S. Southeast.

“We’re pleased to welcome a talented, innovative team that shares our passion for supporting customers’ forest regeneration and sustainability efforts,” said Randy Fournier, Chief Executive Officer, PRT. “This transformative acquisition brings together two great companies to establish the only pan-North American forest seedling supplier. Together, we are excited to continue to provide premium-quality products and services to enhance the resiliency and diversity of our forests.”

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