

Spring/Summer 2024

FLORIDAFORESTS

AN OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE FLORIDA FORESTRY ASSOCIATION

Exploring NRCS' Conservation Programs

UF FORESTRY EXPERTS TEAM UP TO
DELIVER COURSE FOR LANDOWNERS

5 QUESTIONS FOR ASSOCIATION LOBBYIST
JIM SPRATT

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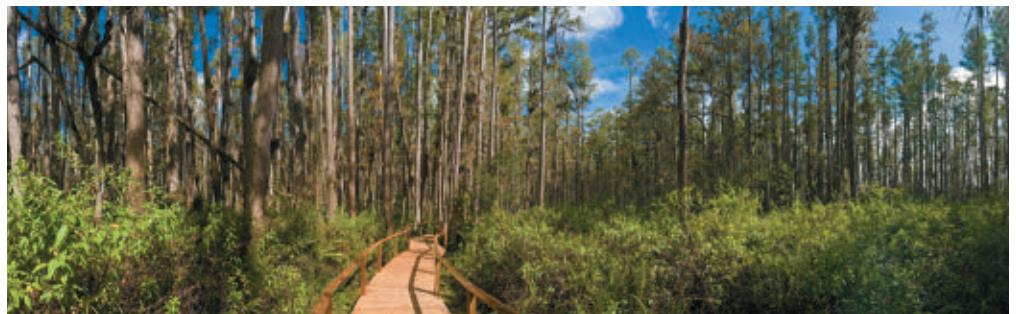
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WHILE OUR STAFF WORKS VERY HARD TO MAKE THIS THE BEST EVENT POSSIBLE FOR OUR MEMBERS, WE WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO PULL IT OFF WITHOUT THE SUPPORT AND GENEROSITY OF OUR SPONSORS.

Mark Your Calendars for Our Annual Meeting 2024!

By **ALAN SHELBY**, Executive Vice President

ANNUAL MEETING 2024 is on the horizon! Please mark your calendars now for August 27-29 and plan to join us at the Omni Amelia Island Resort in beautiful Amelia Island, FL.

The Amelia Omni is a longtime favorite among our members. Very nice accommodations, excellent ocean views, a separate conference center within easy walking distance, and several eating and entertainment options on property make it a great place to stay for a social group like ours.

As always, we have booked a full slate of topnotch speakers who represent the best in their fields. They will cover a wide variety of topics: federal programs, forest mensuration, market forecasts, taxes, tortoises, tree genetics and trucking regulations.

Networking is, of course, a key part of every Annual Meeting. In addition to our traditional receptions, the Women of Forestry Networking Brunch provides women who work in forestry – as well as the spouses of men who do – the opportunity to create positive connections in a casual and fun environment.

Anyone who enjoys networking on a golf course should register for the Timber Toppers Golf Classic. The Omni's Oak Marsh course is a classic, designed by golf legend Pete Dye himself. Meandering along salt creeks and through Amelia Island's famous heritage oaks, the course is a perfect fit for both serious golfers and those who just want to enjoy a morning out with friends and associates.

We also have another solid line-up of exhibitors this year for our trade show. This is a perfect chance for exhibitors to showcase their products and services to connect with existing and potential clients. It's a great place to learn more about all the technological advances that have been made in the past year and to see everything that is currently being offered, all under one roof. One-stop shopping at its best.

The silent auction is another perennial favorite. Hunting trips, vacation stays, forestry memorabilia, equipment, books, decorations, jewelry ... you never know what fantastic finds will be waiting for you there. Our live auction, introduced last year, is sure to be another hit in the meeting line-up.

The firearm raffle is quickly growing in popularity as well. You get one ticket per \$20 donation or six for \$100. One lucky winner will take their pick from a selection of equally great options. The drawing will be held on August 29. You don't have to be present to win, but it's more fun if you are!

While our staff works very hard to make this the best event possible for our members, we would not be able to pull it off without the support and generosity of our sponsors. They deserve a big show of thanks for their part in the success of this event.

If you are interested in exhibiting, sponsoring, donating to the silent auction, or buying raffle tickets, please contact our director of member services, Whitney Hough (850.222.5646 or Whitney@FLForestry.org).

To register for the meeting or book your hotel room online, please visit the Annual Meeting tab on our website, FLForestry.org. You can also find a list of current sponsors, exhibitors, auction donors and more there as well.

I look forward to seeing you all in Amelia Island! •



WHAT WE DO IS
IMPORTANT, AND I'M
PROUD OF THE LEGACY
WE ARE LEAVING.

Looking Back and Staying Close

By **JIMMY BIELLING**, President

ONE OF THE best parts of serving as president is the time I get to spend with our members from across the state. This spring I attended our regional membership meetings at Bradford Sportsmen's Farm (BSF) in Graham and at the Rex Lumber Cabin in Campbellton. I'm here to tell you that a good time was had by all!

I encourage you to take a look at pictures from the events in "Aiming for a Good Time" on pages 26 and 27 in this issue. The competitions proved that we have a lot of good shots and good sports in this Association!

But, to put a reverse spin on an old George Strait song, we're not here for a good time – we're here for a long time! When it comes to keeping forestry relevant in Tallahassee and Washington, D.C., we do not play around. Advocacy has been the foundation of our Association since its beginnings in 1923, and that's not changing.

2024 kicked off with the state legislative session. Association leaders gathered in Tallahassee to meet with our legislators and hear the latest on all the issues. By the end of the session, we saw some good bills pass, some bad bills die, and funding allocated for important programs like the Rural and Family Lands Protection Program and Florida's Future Forests Program.

In February, I had the honor of announcing the Association's endorsement of U.S. Senator Rick Scott in his bid for re-election at a rally in his honor. He has been a champion for the forestry community since his days as governor of our great state. As our senator in the aftermaths of Hurricane Michael and Idalia, he proved again that we can count on him when the storms come.

We need friends like that in high places because the storms are going to come. In the past year, forestry has been hit by hurricanes and multiple mill closures. But nobody gets into forestry because it's easy. We take the hits, adjust our strategy, and keep heading toward the goal line.

Fortunately, we have another friend in Commissioner of Agriculture and Consumer Services Wilton Simpson. He has rolled out \$37.5 million in relief for clean-up, site preparation, and reforestation for Hurricane Idalia. Applications for this assistance are being processed expeditiously, with approvals given out immediately in most cases. We are very appreciative of Commissioner Simpson and his office, as well as the Florida Forest Service, for their support and efficient processing. They continue helping people get back on their feet again.

Hurricane Idalia hit as the Association was geared up to celebrate our 100th anniversary at our 2023 Annual Meeting. Due to the tremendous financial loss we would have taken for breaking the hotel contract if we canceled, we had to move forward with the event. Needless to say, our hearts, thoughts, and prayers were with our friends in harm's way. It was not a true celebration without them.

As such, we will be celebrating again at our 2024 Annual Meeting! We hope you can join us August 27-29 at the Omni Amelia Island Resort. I will be turning over the gavel to incoming president Avery Roberts at the meeting. It's hard to believe that my term is already coming to a close – these past two years went by fast, and they have truly been a high point in my life.

Our members and staff are passionate about forestry, and it's always fun to work with people who care about the same things you do. What we do is important, and I'm proud of the legacy we are leaving. Even after I step down as president, I'm not going anywhere. For me, when it comes to the Association, I'm here for a good time AND a long time. •

EXPLORING NRCS' CONSERVATION PROGRAMS

USDA'S NATURAL RESOURCES Conservation Service (NRCS) offers federally funded, voluntary conservation programs to help farmers, ranchers, and private forest landowners protect and conserve the natural resources we all depend on, supporting healthy soil, cleaner air and water, and conserving wildlife habitats, while helping to mitigate the impacts of climate change.

NRCS conservation programs are incentive based and provide financial assistance to implement conservation practices. NRCS also offers free conservation technical assistance to help producers plan practices. NRCS accepts applications for conservation programs year-round, but applications are ranked and funded by funding cycles, which have state-specific application dates.

Following is an overview of the major programs available to forestland owners.



ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY INCENTIVES PROGRAM (EQIP)

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) offers technical and financial assistance for working lands, including field crops, specialty crops, organic, confined livestock and grazing, and non-industrial private forest land.

Rather than take land out of production, EQIP helps farmers maintain or improve production while conserving natural resources on working landscapes.

EQIP may provide many benefits, including improved water and air quality, conserved ground and surface water, increased soil health and reduced soil erosion and sedimentation, improved or created wildlife habitat, and mitigation against drought and increasing weather extremes.

For example, EQIP can help you:

- Reduce contamination from agricultural sources, such as animal feeding operations.
- Efficiently utilize nutrients, reduce input costs, and reduce non-point source pollution.
- Increase soil health to help mitigate against increasing weather volatility and improved drought resiliency.

HOW DOES EQIP WORK?

EQIP supports producers who improve and sustain natural resources on their operation by implementing structural, vegetative, and management practices. For example, if you want to use EQIP conservation practices to improve irrigation efficiency, renovate pastureland, or nutrient and pest management on your eligible land, NRCS

offers technical assistance, and EQIP offers financial assistance through a contractual agreement.

If you decide to work with NRCS, you will receive a one-on-one consultation from a local NRCS conservation planner to evaluate your current management system and assess natural resources on your land. You will then work with the NRCS conservation planner to develop a free conservation plan that addresses the identified resource concerns.

HOW LONG IS AN EQIP CONTRACT?

The length of an EQIP contract can vary depending on your goals and timeline. It cannot exceed 10 years.

EQIP ELIGIBILITY WHAT LANDS ARE ELIGIBLE FOR EQIP?

NRCS considers any land on which agricultural commodities, livestock, or forest-related products are produced as eligible land. That land can include cropland, rangeland, pastureland, non-industrial private forestland, and other farm or ranch lands.

EQIP has no minimum acreage requirement; however, EQIP is a competitive program that awards points based on resource concerns to be addressed and other factors.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO APPLY FOR EQIP?

Applicants may include individuals, legal entities, joint operations, or Indian Tribes that have control of the land and currently manage it for agricultural, forest and livestock production.

SPECIAL EQIP INITIATIVES

EQIP has a broad delivery system to put targeted conservation on the ground at the local level, across the entire country.

EQIP targets conservation through the following initiatives to address priority natural resource concerns on the most vulnerable lands and high priority watersheds:

- High Tunnel Initiative
- Organic Initiative
- Air Quality Initiative
- On Farm Energy Initiative

HISTORICALLY UNDERSERVED (HU) PARTICIPANTS:

Historically underserved participants are eligible for increased payment rates and advanced payments to help offset the costs of purchasing goods or services. HU participants include socially disadvantaged, beginning, veteran, and limited resource farmers and ranchers.

- Dedicated funds – at least 10% of EQIP funds are dedicated to socially disadvantaged and beginning farmers and ranchers.
- Higher payment rates – up to 25% higher than the standard practice payment rates.
- Veteran Preference – eligible veterans who compete in the beginning or socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers funding pools, receive preference points.

PAYMENTS

Under the general EQIP payment process, a producer is reimbursed after a conservation practice is certified as meeting NRCS standards and specifications. This process often means that producers must pay up front costs with

their own funds, unless the participant opts for the advance payment option.

CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM (CSP)

The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) offers technical and financial assistance to help agricultural and forest producers take their conservation efforts to the next level.

The program is designed to compensate agricultural and forest producers who agree to increase their level of conservation by adopting additional conservation activities and maintaining their baseline level of conservation. CSP is for producers who are passionate about conservation and environmental stewardship.

CSP may provide many benefits, including increased crop productivity, decreased inputs, wildlife habitat improvements, and increased resilience to weather extremes. CSP also encourages adoption of new technologies and management techniques. If you are already taking steps to improve the condition of the land, chances are CSP can help you find new ways to meet your goals.

HOW DOES CSP WORK?

CSP offers opportunities for producers to expand on existing conservation efforts by applying new conservation practices, enhancements, and bundles.

These new activities will help enhance natural resources and improve the operation.

If you decide to apply for CSP, the local NRCS conservation planner will have a one-on-one consultation with you to evaluate your current management system and the natural resources on your land. You will then work with the NRCS conservation planner to select new CSP conservation activities based on your management objectives for your operation.

Once you choose the conservation practices or activities that best fit, and if your application is selected for funding, CSP offers annual payments for implementing these practices on your land and operating and maintaining existing conservation efforts. CSP also offers bundles where you can select a suite of enhancements and receive a higher payment rate.

CSP contracts run for five years, with the potential to renew for another five-year period if you successfully complete your first contract term, and if your renewal application ranks high enough (CSP renewals are a competitive process).

LAND ELIGIBILITY

Eligible lands include private agricultural lands, agricultural Indian lands, nonindustrial private forest land, farmstead,

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associated agricultural lands, and public land that is under the control of the applicant and part of their operation. There is no minimum acreage requirement. CSP enrolls your entire operation into the program, not just one specific field or tract. All land must be in compliance with USDA highly erodible land and wetland conservation provisions to be eligible for CSP.

Eligible lands must be actively used for producing an agricultural or forest product. Lands being cleared or prepped for future agricultural production are not eligible for CSP until an agricultural operation has been established and crops, food, or fiber have been successfully produced. Be sure to check with your local USDA service center before clearing any land to ensure that you will not violate the highly erodible land conservation or wetland conservation requirements. Failing to have NRCS complete proper determinations may impact your ability to participate in USDA programs.

STEWARDSHIP THRESHOLD ELIGIBILITY

Stewardship threshold is a term NRCS uses to determine if a CSP applicant is currently meeting or exceeding an adequate level of conservation criteria for a particular natural resource concern. CSP applicants must currently be meeting the stewardship threshold for at least two priority natural resource concerns on every land use included in the operation. They must also agree to meet or exceed the stewardship threshold for at least one additional resource concern by the end of the contract on at least one land use. Don't worry if you are unsure of your threshold; an NRCS planner will assist you.

PRACTICE ENHANCEMENTS AND BUNDLES

Conservation practices can improve soil, water, plants, air, wildlife habitat, and related natural resources. Each conservation practice must be performed using NRCS practice standards developed by each state.

Enhancements are conservation activities used to treat resource concerns and improve conservation performance.



Bundles are land-use specific and consist of at least three enhancements, for which implementation as a group improves conservation performance and addresses multiple resource concerns in a comprehensive and cost-effective manner.

Each bundle has three or more required enhancements. For some bundles, the applicant has the option to pick additional enhancements from a select list that addresses specific resource concerns.

Producers interested in implementing enhancements or bundles on their property can visit their local NRCS conservation planner to learn more about them.

CSP PAYMENTS

There are three types of payments available through CSP.

- Annual contract payments which are based on two components:
 - Payments to maintain the existing level of conservation based on the land uses included in the contract



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- o Payments to implement additional conservation practices and activities
- Supplemental payments for producers willing to implement a resource conserving crop rotation, improve an existing resource conserving crop rotation, or implement advanced grazing management.
- Minimum contract payments for most contracts.

NRCS makes payments as soon as practical after October 1 of each fiscal year for contract activities installed and

maintained in the previous fiscal year and completed before September 30.

REGIONAL CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM (RCPP)

The Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) is a partner-driven approach to conservation that funds solutions to natural resource challenges on agricultural land.

By leveraging collective resources and collaborating on common goals,

RCPP demonstrates the power of public-private partnerships in delivering results for agriculture and conservation. Potential partners are invited to propose RCPP projects where NRCS and partners co-invest in impactful and innovative solutions to on-farm, watershed, and regional natural resource concerns.

RCPP projects fall under two different categories: RCPP Classic and Alternative Funding Arrangements (AFA). RCPP Classic projects are implemented using NRCS contracts and easements with producers, landowners, and communities, in collaboration with project partners. Through AFAs, the lead partner must work directly with agricultural producers to support the development of new conservation structures and approaches that would not otherwise be available under RCPP Classic.

1. Impact: RCPP applications must propose effective and compelling solutions that address one or more natural resource priorities to help solve natural resource challenges. Partners are responsible for evaluating a project's impact and results.
2. Partner Contributions: Partners are responsible for identifying any combination of cash and in-kind value-added contributions to leverage NRCS's RCPP investments. It is NRCS's goal that partner contributions at least equal the NRCS investment in an RCPP project. Substantive partner contributions are given priority consideration as part of the RCPP application evaluation criteria.
3. Partnerships and Management: Partners must have experience, expertise, and capacity to manage the partnership and project, provide outreach to producers, and quantify the environmental outcomes of an RCPP project. RCPP ranking criteria give preference to applicants that meaningfully engage historically underserved farmers and ranchers.

RCPP CONSERVATION ACTIVITIES

RCPP projects may include a range of on-the-ground conservation activities implemented by farmers, ranchers and forest landowners. These activities include:

- Land management/land improvement/restoration practices



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A single RCPP project application can propose employing any combination of these eligible activity types as part of an RCPP project.

REGIONAL CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM EASEMENTS

RCPP offers two types of easements: U.S.-Held Conservation Easements and Entity-Held Conservation Easements. Both require Farm Bill eligible lands and landowners, but land uses and land cover are potentially less restrictive in RCPP than they are in other NRCS easement programs.

PARTNER ELIGIBILITY

Eligible organizations interested in partnering with NRCS on conservation projects can develop applications for the RCPP competition. The lead partner for an RCPP project is the entity that submits an application, and if selected for an award is ultimately responsible for collaborating with NRCS to successfully complete an RCPP project.

Once NRCS selects a project and executes an RCPP agreement with a lead partner, agricultural producers may participate in an RCPP project in one of two ways. First, producers may engage with project partners and delegate a willing partner to act as their representative in working with NRCS. Second, producers seeking to carry out conservation activities consistent with a RCPP project in the project's geographic area can apply directly to NRCS.

LAND ELIGIBILITY

RCPP projects must be carried out on agricultural or nonindustrial private forest land or associated land on which NRCS determines an eligible activity would help achieve conservation benefits.

Eligible conservation activities may be implemented on public lands when those activities will benefit eligible lands as determined by NRCS and are included in the scope of an approved RCPP project. •

Please contact your local NRCS office for more information about these programs. If you are new to working with USDA, you will also need to establish your Farm Record with the FSA office before applying for these programs. Find your local USDA service center at www.nrcs.usda.gov/contact/find-a-service-center/.

All payments made to you by NRCS are reported to the Internal Revenue Service and should be reported as income on your tax return for the applicable tax year.



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UF FORESTRY EXPERTS TEAM UP TO DELIVER COURSE FOR LANDOWNERS

Real estate agents, property appraisers, and policymakers are signing up too

By **SUZETTE COOK**,

Extension Communications for the UF/IFAS School of Forest, Fisheries, & Geomatics Sciences

IT'S BEEN A YEAR since the new category "Forest Resources and Management" was added to the University of Florida IFAS Extension Online Learning Catalog.

That portal became a point of access to online educational content developed by UF extension faculty and staff in forestry and natural resource topics. The first offering: Forest Landowner Academy.

The Forest Landowner Academy is offered by the UF/IFAS School of Forest, Fisheries, & Geomatics Sciences (SFFGS). The course is delivered by nine UF forestry and wildlife topic experts who offer insight and resources to help landowners and managers of land, and even policymakers, understand the complexities of forest stewardship.

The course also helps landowners plan for the continued stewardship by future generations.

According to a 2016 report by UF/IFAS Extension, "Nearly two-thirds (66%) of Florida's forestlands are privately owned by industry, corporations, families, or individuals, while 17% are state owned, 16% are owned by the federal government, and 3% are owned by county and municipal governments."

Florida forests provide economic impacts in the form of recreation, hunting, contributions to biomass power, solid wood and paper products, and cellulose pulp used in the manufacture of countless goods we use every day

— such as cell phone screens. And, in turn, that adds up to thousands of jobs.

Just as important are the non-marketed environmental and ecosystems services that forests provide. From surface and groundwater storage to air purification, atmospheric carbon storage, plus the mitigation of floods and droughts, generation and preservation of soils, and control of agricultural pests.

What forest landowners do with their property has an impact on neighbors both near and far.

Dr. Michael Andreu, associate professor at UF's SFFGS specializes in forest management, restoration ecology, silviculture, and ecosystems services. Andreu, along with SFFGS Florida Land

IMAGE COURTESY OF UF/IFAS SCHOOL OF FOREST, FISHERIES AND GEOMATICS SCIENCES (SFFGS)

Steward Extension Program Manager Chris Demers are the lead instructors of the course.

The invitation to take the course reads, "Forest landowners, and others in need of forest management information, are encouraged to enroll to connect with forest management experts at the University of Florida and receive quality core educational content on forestry and multiple-use stewardship concepts."

According to Demers, the course launched in January 2023 and so far, 77 people have taken it.

"The purpose of the course is to provide quality core educational content on forestry and multiple-use stewardship concepts," said Demers.

Forest landowners, and others interested, are gaining comprehensive knowledge and skills related to forest

resources and active management that they can use in their land management and planning. The course also provides important background knowledge and context on topics discussed in more detail at Florida Land Steward Program and other partner events and webinars offered each year.

Dr. Andreu notes a change in generational shift in forest land ownership over the last 30 years.

"In the past, landowners often lived and worked on the land itself and experienced it directly," he said. "But today, increasingly, landowners are no longer directly tied to the land. They often live in another part of the state. We needed to create a way to provide this new generation of landowners with the information they need to sustainably manage their lands while living in urban areas, and juggling a job and family."

Demers and Andreu selected a team of SFFGS experts to piece together the online course. In addition to Demers and Andreu, that team includes: Assist. Professor of Forest Business Dr. Tamara Cushing, Assist. Professor of Wildlife Ecology and Conservation Dr. Marcus Lashley, Assoc. Professor of Silviculture Dr. Pat Minogue, Forester at UF's Austin Cary Forest Scott Sager, Program Manager of SFFGS Cooperative Forest Genetics Research Program Manager Dr. Andrew Sims, Professor of Forest Pathology Dr. Jason Smith, and Associate Professor of Forest Ecosystems Dr. Jason Vogel.

Participants can take the course at their own pace and jump around to topics that are particularly relevant to them at that moment in time.

Forest Landowner Academy is made up of seven modules that cover key forest resource, management, and stewardship

University of Florida School of Forest, Fisheries, & Geomatics Sciences Instructors



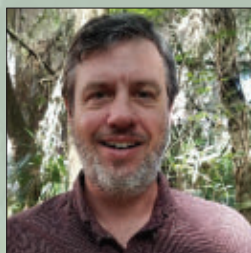
Dr. Michael Andreu
Assoc. Professor

Forest management, restoration ecology, silviculture, ecosystem services



Dr. Tamara Cushing
Assist. Professor

Forest business, taxes, succession planning, cash flow analysis



Chris Demers
Coordinator

Florida Land Steward Extension Program Manager



Dr. Marcus Lashley
Assist. Professor

Wildlife Ecology and Conservation



Dr. Pat Minogue
Assoc. Professor

Silviculture



Scott Sager
Forester

UF's Austin Cary Forest



Dr. Andrew Sims
Program Manager

SFFGS Cooperative Forest Genetics Research Program



Dr. Jason Smith
Professor

Forest Pathology



Dr. Jason Vogel
Assoc. Professor

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topics, including: understanding your forest resources, developing your management plan, timber management, marketing forest products, other forest enterprises such as pine straw and hunting leases, wildlife management, and planning for the future.

The course is delivered via a combination of video presentations, readings, resource connections, and assessment questions that will help landowners begin the process of developing a land management plan.

These course modules can be viewed in any order. So, if you are interested in succession and estate planning and conservation easements, you can learn about those topics in Module 7.

If you are interested in leasing acreage for hunting, Module 6 addresses wildlife habitat and how to integrate wildlife with forestry.

Dr. Andreu added that anyone interested in forests in Florida should consider enrolling, including landowners, high schoolers, teachers, county commissioners, real estate agents, property appraisers, bankers.

The following is a summary of each module:

MODULE 1: UNDERSTANDING YOUR FOREST RESOURCES

Getting to know your forest resources through inventory and tree identification.

This module taught by Dr. Andreu offers the basics in tree identification, forest inventory, types of forest ecosystems, and a field guide to common Florida tree species.

MODULE 2: DEVELOPING YOUR MANAGEMENT PLAN

This module provides an overview of plan development. The information presented can be used to define your goals and build short and long-term plans.

Demers discusses goals and objectives to consider through topics such as How important is wildlife habitat? Did you want game species? Songbirds? Rare plants? Regenerated hardwoods, food plot, mixed pine and hardwood stand?

He also goes into detail on the legal description of property and the



importance of resource assessment, identifying the trees and wildlife, mapping, and activity schedules (what takes place where), important contacts, and acquiring aerial photos.

MODULE 3: TIMBER MANAGEMENT

This module provides an extensive overview of best practices for timber management. UF's Austin Cary Forest Manager Scott Sager talks about planning, site prep and maintenance of your forest.

Sager goes into detail on dozens of topics from prescribed burning to road access for timber hauling trucks to fertilization and harvesting.

Dr. Andrew Sims, program manager for SFFGS Cooperative Forest Genetics presents on genetic improvement of forest trees.

"Genetic gain is when you select parent trees that yield offspring with better performance-based genes," Sims said.

MODULE 4: MARKETING FOREST PRODUCTS

Sager addresses how to sell timber and market forest products. Important logistics such as the importance of road layout for timber harvest. And on the business side, he talks about water and wildlife impacts of harvesting, not making handshake deals but dealing with contracts, and understanding the ways to get paid.

Will you take a lump sum? Or pay-as-you-cut contract? There is advice on the bidding process as detailed as keeping track of the trucks by taking note of the scale tickets.

MODULE 5: OTHER FOREST ENTERPRISES SUCH AS PINE STRAW, HUNTING LEASES

This module provides an overview of non-timber forest products that can add value to your investment.

Demers opens up the discussion about a land management plan and brings up options for selling pine straw and discusses topics such as silvopasture which combines forage, livestock and trees.

"The management plan is a guide for where you are and where you want to be," Demers said.

He also discusses the pros and cons of hunting leases, palmetto berries, and carbon markets.

MODULE 6: WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

This module provides an overview of wildlife habitat and how to manage your land in harmony with the needs of important Florida wildlife and game species.

UF Wildlife Ecology and Conservation Assist. Professor Dr. Marcus Lashley goes in-depth about what wildlife needs and what you can provide: food, water, cover, space. Will you create a niche habitat catering to deer or turkey?

This will require deliberate management of the land's structure of vegetation because the arrangement of that vegetation influences species and ecosystem success, said Lashley.

MODULE 7: PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

This module provides an overview of legal considerations when planning for the future of your land.

Dr. Tamara Cushing, assistant professor at SFFGS is an expert in forest business, taxes, succession planning, and cash flow analysis.

Her presentation addresses what the current and future plans are for the forest property.

"If you are passing land to the next generation, you're going to have to relinquish control," Cushing said.

She advises keeping deeds, conservation easement paperwork, cost share agreements, any contract that puts restrictions on the property and a copy of your Forest Stewardship Plan in a secure place.

"A will is a great start, but what if your kids don't get along?" Cushing asks real questions and notes that she recently went through the process with her parent's estate.

She suggests families meet on the property and "walk and talk as they go through the woods."

"If you are donating it, have that conversation ahead of time," Cushing advises. "Or are you splitting it one third for each kid?"

In this module, Demers adds a presentation about conservation easements as well.

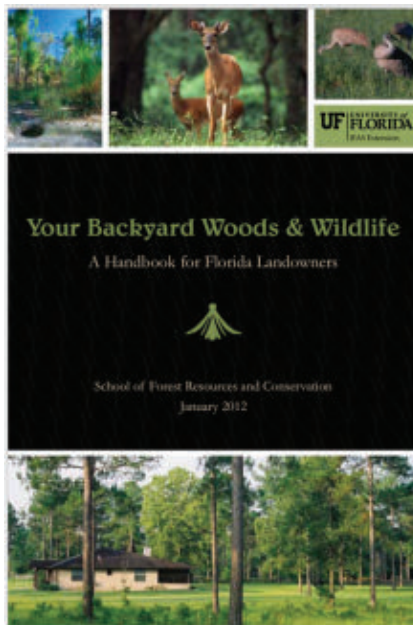
COURSE FEEDBACK

Citrus County Property Appraiser Lori Olson took the course for professional and personal reasons and said she was surprised by the amount of information the Forest Landowner Academy offers.

"I process and inspect agricultural properties that have an Agricultural Classification (Greenbelt) as well as new applicants," Olson reported. "I saw the Forest Landowner Academy course was available and approached my management about attending. I felt if I was inspecting timber tracts, I needed more information and education and saw this course as a great opportunity to learn. Management agreed for me to take the course.

"I had no idea the different aspects that relate to timber, from all the different soil types, species of trees, disturbances, how a forest inventory is conducted and why it is important," she said.

"I do not personally own timberland but have family who may in the future convert their 30 acres of grazing into timber and this course was extremely informative for present and future use. I highly recommend this course for present and future landowners who are interested in owning timber."



Private landowner Brad Pollitt owns 60 acres in Alachua County. He said the course helped him discover his options.

"Our property backs up onto the Lake Alto Swamp on the west and Santa Fe Swamp is across the highway to the east," he said, noting that

a third of the property is basin swamp, a third is planted pines on transitional flatwoods, and the balance is old blueberry field circa 1970 that he plans to convert to longleaf pine.

"This course helped me to learn more about the types of forest, different options for management and more about the timber industry. As a result, I have also begun to develop annual plans for management practices."

ENROLLING IN THE COURSE

As of early April, 77 people have enrolled in the Forest Landowner Academy. The cost of the course is \$150 but there is a discount of 30% with the use of the promotion code: K1UZ17.

Visit <https://programs.ifas.ufl.edu/florida-land-steward/> for more information and to enroll in the course which is now available for group purchasing. The book *Your Backyard Woods & Wildlife* is included in the course cost.

Questions about the course can be directed to Demers (352) 846-2375 or by email cdemers@ufl.edu. Or contact Dr. Michael Andreu at mandreu@ufl.edu or (352) 846-0355. •



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SEVENTEEN HUNDRED PEOPLE ARE CURRENTLY REGISTERED TO LOBBY THE FLORIDA LEGISLATURE. WHAT MADE YOU WANT TO BE ONE OF THEM?

I was absent on career day... In all seriousness, I am not sure that I ever dreamed of being a "lobbyist," yet when the opportunity presented itself, I took the chance.

Interestingly, I look around at how much Tallahassee has changed and at the people who advocate today and there just aren't many who grew up in rural Florida or rural anywhere for that matter. It concerns me to think decisions which impact agriculture and our rural communities are being made by people who can't find Hosford on a map or have never heard of Chumuckla, Bascom, Wewahitchka, Two Egg, or Providence.

Certainly, I am not suggesting they don't care about Florida, but what works in Miami-Dade County probably does not work in Union County. I don't point this out to disparage people who lobby or who work in government, nor am I trying to be braggadocios; I simply think Florida is unique and is changing very rapidly (some for the good and some for the worse).

Truthfully, I believe that I am very fortunate to be from a small town, to have grown up around agriculture, to have an idea of the differences between urban and rural Florida. It is certainly humbling and

5 QUESTIONS

for Association Lobbyist
Jim Spratt

IMAGES COURTESY OF THE SPRATT FAMILY



working on ideas and identifying potential issues for next session begin almost immediately after session adjourns.

On a personal note, once session ends, I try to spend as much time as I can with my family, whether it's softball, baseball, horse shows, cow shows, or just working around our farm.

YOUR GRANDFATHER AND FATHER WERE BOTH LEGISLATORS, AND YOU HAVE WORKED ON SEVERAL SUCCESSFUL LEGISLATIVE CAMPAIGNS. LOOKING INTO YOUR CRYSTAL BALL, DO YOU SEE YOURSELF RUNNING FOR OFFICE ONE DAY?

I am very proud of the public service of both my grandfather and my father. In their own ways, they both left indelible marks on the state of Florida and Florida's agricultural industry. Yet there

rewarding to have the opportunity and ability, by choice of profession, to share those agricultural and small community perspectives and values with which I was raised.

WHAT, IN YOUR OPINION, IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING THAT HAPPENED IN THE STATE CAPITOL THIS YEAR?

The legislature adjourned and left town!

WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN THE LEGISLATURE IS NOT IN SESSION?

Play golf and attend cocktail parties in between vacations – isn't that what everyone does?

But seriously, after the legislature adjourns, the work really begins. There is always work to do with the governor's office regarding merits and demerits of policy and budget items. In addition, some legislation requires rulemaking, which means working with the appropriate agency to help explain a perspective or position on a piece of legislation.

There are also legislative wrap-up reports and presentations to clients or other groups highlighting the good, the bad, and the ugly of session. Furthermore, there is time set aside for meeting new candidates who are running for office, as well as the unending invitations to fundraisers and events for incumbents seeking reelection. Additionally,





are several reasons I do not see myself ever putting my name on a ballot.

First, I made a promise to my lovely wife just before we got married. Secondly, I sincerely believe I can have more influence on the “process” and provide greater benefit to those whom I work for by being an advocate. My current role allows me to educate and

advocate on both sides of the aisle for Florida’s agricultural industry. I am also able to have a front row seat to identify and recruit new candidates for office who understand and support the issues which ensure Florida agriculture and silviculture remain pillars of the economy.

YOU AND YOUR WIFE, SHARON, HAVE 11-YEAR-OLD TWINS, LAURA AND JAMES. CARE TO SHARE ANY “PROUD DAD” MOMENTS?

This is certainly the type of question which is bound to get me in trouble. I am amazed every day that we were blessed with twins or, as they are affectionately referred to, “The Spratties.” My wife and I are doing our very best to raise well-rounded, respectful, and productive members of society. They both enjoy sports, both still enjoy music (Laura plays piano and James plays guitar), and both continue to demonstrate their knowledge of animal agriculture and excel in the care, handling, and

understanding of their 4H dairy projects. I am even more proud of their commitment to being a Christian and honestly, although somewhat embarrassingly, they can both put me to shame with the number of Bible verses that have learned.

Not to single one out over the other, but my daughter was in a pretty serious accident last summer and she truly handled the entire event with the poise, toughness, and determination of a person three times her age. From her time in the hospital to spending all summer in a wheelchair and through the physical therapy, her smile and focus to get back to normal was amazing to witness. As parents, we are supposed to set the example, yet, after watching my daughter, I can only hope to have the mental and physical toughness she demonstrated during that difficult time. She has recovered and has resumed all her activities, including softball and equestrian, but what a story she will forever be able to tell. •




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PROTECT YOURSELF: HAVE A CONTRACT

By **DR. TAMARA L. CUSHING**,
Extension Forest Business Specialist, UF/IFAS School of Forest, Fisheries & Geomatic Sciences

I HAVE BOUGHT and sold a few houses in my career (well, more than a few, 7 actually!). Each time we've entered that large transaction, we have had a written contract. Of course, you say that's common sense. Those transactions have almost all been six figures, so a relatively large amount of money is involved. We

wanted to protect ourselves, as did the other parties in the transaction.

I would argue that many transactions or agreements in forestry need to be solidified in the form of a contract. You have invested time and money into the property and want to protect your investment. For a timber sale, there is a lot of money

involved. I'm going to explain my thinking and talk about some of the main provisions within a contract.

A contract is an agreement between two parties, usually with a remedy in case one party breaks the agreement. The document will detail the responsibilities of each of the parties. If it satisfies certain

requirements, it will be enforceable in a court of law. It is good practice to have an attorney review the document to ensure it will be enforceable and that all needed provisions are included. There are four basic requirements for a contract:

1. **Agreement:** an offer by one party (the offeror) and an acceptance of the offer by the other party (the offeree). The signatures on the document (in ink or online) are proof of agreement.
2. **Capacity:** the legal competency to be a party to a contract. This means that when you signed the document you knew what you were doing and were capable of understanding the decision you made. It is possible to temporarily lose capacity, lose it permanently, or not have gained it yet (youth).
3. **Consideration:** the giving up of a legal right. This is the payment of money or property for a good, service, or other property.
4. **Legality of purpose:** meets local, state, and federal laws. This speaks for itself – it has to be a legal transaction.

Development of a contract isn't always necessary. If you are working with another business or a busy contractor, they probably already have a standard contract they use. Look that contract over well and ask questions if you don't understand something. Just because they have an existing contract doesn't mean you can't ask for a change.

If you are working with someone who doesn't have a standard contract, look for sample contracts online or use a previous contract as a starting point. Ask yourself, what do I need this contract for? Is it to sell your timber or for someone to do manual labor on a temporary basis? This is a great time to at least talk to an attorney. You want the contract to be clear and communicate expectations. It is important, though, to think about the contractor as well. A contract is supposed to protect both parties. If you develop the contract, give the contractor adequate time to look it over and to suggest changes.

Horror stories about logging jobs and contract work usually involve several common items of contention that frankly could have been avoided with a well-constructed contract:

- **Start and end dates.** The contract should detail when work can start and when it must be completed by. If there are dates when no work should be done on the property, it is important to include that in the contract. Harvests are often conducted over multiple weeks and, in some cases, months. Think about whether you need to halt work during turkey season when you have a family hunt on the property. Or during that special week in mid-July when all the grandkids are visiting.
- **Method and timing of payments.** This is a big one. Anything related to money is a candidate for disagreement. Make sure the contract is clear about how you will be paid (or pay). The longer the contract period, the more important this may be. Think about a harvest in which loads are going out every day for weeks. When will you be paid? How much? Are you paying the logger, or is the mill cutting the check to the logger from the proceeds? If the sale is lump sum, by when must payment be received in order for the transaction
- to proceed? If you are selling pay-as-cut, include agreed upon prices in the contract.
- **Performance standards.** You don't want surprises at the end of a logging job. A good conversation ahead of time will help you understand what the property will look like afterward. However, the contract should specify that the site should be left reasonably free of debris other than natural materials. If the slash from the harvests is to be piled, spread out, etc., that should be stated. For a thinning, indicate how trees will be marked for cutting if applicable. If the contract is for spraying of herbicides, there will need to be language about what is considered acceptable allowance for damage to non-target species. For tree planting, there should be specifications for the planting job; you should also mention that the planting will be evaluated to ensure a quality job was completed.
- **How to resolve disputes.** While you hope that the work on your property goes off without a hitch, occasionally there are disputes. Include in the contract a section about how disputes will be handled. You might state that the contractor will have so many days from notification of an issue to correct the problem before they are in violation of specific provisions. Or you may simply state that the contract may be terminated for specific violations. In some cases, it will be preferable for both parties to seek a trained mediator before resorting to legal action. These steps should be included in the contract.
- **Insurance and liability.** It is always good practice to get statements in the contract about having the appropriate insurance coverage and protection from liability. Make sure you actually check on this as just having a piece of paper doesn't mean it is paid and current.
- **Suspension of operations.** There may be certain conditions which would dictate that operations should cease. A statement should be included to the effect that the owner of the property may halt operations for violations of the contract or that either party may stop operations if conditions dictate (wet weather conditions during which logging would damage roads).



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- **Subcontractors.** Include in the contract whether the other party may use subcontractors; if so, under what conditions (notification would be appropriate).

You may not think contracts are important, but there are good reasons to have one. With many transactions there is a chance for misunderstanding between parties. A good contract will lay out details to minimize misunderstanding. Another good reason is to protect the parties involved. Unfortunately, there are folks out there who are bad actors. A contract will serve as proof of the transaction terms. In our community we like to assume everyone is acting fairly, but that isn't always the case. A contract provides the terms of the agreement and can be enforced in a court of law if that is needed.

I will also argue hard for a written contract. I have talked to more than a few landowners who operate on a handshake agreement. I understand that many times you are working with someone you may know or maybe even be related to! A written contract is a good idea for both

of you. If you've raised kids, you have had the conversation where one party remembers things differently than the other (this usually involves some bargain over a chore or a treat). The same thing can happen with business agreements. It may only be a minor detail, or it could be a major issue where each party thought they had agreed to something different. This is where deals go south rapidly, and old friends become enemies. How upset would you be if you thought you were getting paid as the harvest was happening, but the logger said he told you that it would be at the end? A written contract should include that detail. There are no memory issues and fewer misunderstandings with a written contract.

It is possible to go too far with a contract. Discussions up front with contractors will allow them to decide if they are willing to accept some of the conditions you may place on the job. When advertising a timber sale, include major conditions, so that potential buyers will be aware prior to bidding on the sale. With a timber sale, lots of special requests or conditions may

result in fewer or lower bids as contractors factor in these conditions.

There are many other pieces that should be in a contract. Regardless of the operation described in the contract, it is important to have a full property description, including relevant indicators of boundaries. For some operations it will be important to be clear about road access. You may include special sections describing location of any new roads, landings, or deck areas. I would recommend making it clear that you and your forester have the right to inspect the area at any time. This will allow a check, especially during a thinning, to ensure everything is going to plan.

Of course, this is just an introduction to some of the specific items you may want to include in your contract. If you are developing one yourself, make sure to have it read over by an attorney. Each type of transaction may have special provisions that should be inserted into the contract to protect you and your property from harm. So, protect yourself and get it in writing! •

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Visit FLForestry.org/Annual-Meeting for details.





Dan Schelberger from John Deere/Beard Equipment Company (left) and 2022 Logger of the Year Dillon Stratton gave students a real-life perspective on operating forestry equipment.



Did you know more than 5000 items we use every day are made from forest products? Joe Mackenzie and Rachel Kyle from the Florida Forest Service found fun ways to highlight a variety of "Goods from the Woods."

FORESTRY CAREER DAY AT PROMISED LAND FAMILY MINISTRIES

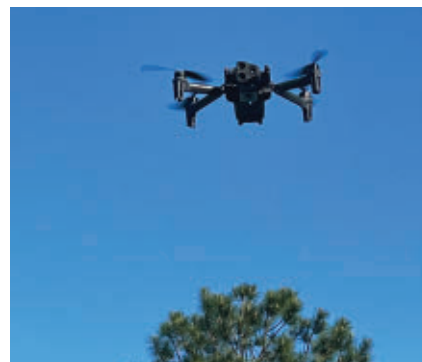
IN THE HEART of Union County, Florida, lies a growing new enterprise: Promised Land Family Ministries (PLFM). Founded and operated by John and Rebecca Hall, PLFM seeks to connect young people to God by teaching them about agriculture and the great outdoors.

In April, PLFM hosted its first forestry career day. Almost 100 students and educators from across the area came to learn about forestry and the variety of jobs it provides.

Many thanks to the Halls and to everyone who made this event possible:

American Forest Management
Bielling Site Prep and Reforestation, Inc.
First Coast Technical College
Florida Agriculture in the Classroom
Florida Farm Bureau
Florida Fish and Wildlife
Conservation Commission
Florida Forest Service

Florida Forestry Association
John Deere/Beard Equipment Company
Rayonier, Inc.
Southeastern Wood Producers
Association
Tri County Metals
UF/IFAS Extension •



A drone from First Coast Technical College, operated by Dr. Stacy Strickland of UF/IFAS Extension, could be seen flying around and taking video throughout the event. Dr. Strickland later talked to students about the opportunities and requirements of piloting drones.



Florida Forestry Association President Jimmy Bielling talked to the students about sustainable forestry and how important it is to the environment and the economy.

For more information about Promised Land Family Ministries, please visit PromisedLandFM.org



Members of the Florida Forest Service team conducted a prescribed burn while the students watched from a safe distance. Team members then discussed the importance of the burns and the protective measures they take while working them.



Robbie Teele of Tri County Metals operated a portable mill on site. Throughout the event, students could watch as logs were transformed into lumber that will be used to construct a new learning center on the PLFM campus.



PLFM co-founder John Hall and daughter Haleigh welcomed students and educators to the forestry career day.



Representatives from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) helped students understand what the agency does and described some potential jobs there.



Rebecca and John Hall with their children Haleigh (2) and Titus (4).



UF/IFAS Extension Agent Jim deValerio demonstrated how math is used to determine how much wood can be derived from logs.



UF/IFAS Extension agent Alicia Halbritter helped students identify trees and plants in the forest around them.

Aiming for a Good Time

What is better than a regional membership meeting? A regional membership meeting and clay shoot! Making a good time even better, this spring the Association added the opportunity for our members to show off their skills at the Bradford Sportsmen's Farm and at Rex Lumber's lodge in Campbellton.

Many thanks to everyone who participated in the shoots and to our meeting sponsors, ArborGen, Farm Credit of Florida, and Farm Credit of Northwest Florida! •



Shayne Baggett (left) and David Harrelson



Ryan Pavlik



Matthew Stokes



John Dooner



Tim Stuhr



Rex Lumber's wobble trap shooting station



Avery Roberts



Trey Bird



Alan Shelby



Wesley Carter



Paul Byrd



Eric Handley



Tim Odom



Jimmy Bielling

D.M. Stratton Honored as 2024 Southeastern Region Outstanding Logger

The Forest Resources Association (FRA) and STIHL, Inc. honored D.M. Stratton, LLC of Green Cove Springs, FL, as the 2024 Southeastern Region Outstanding Logger award winner at FRA's Southeastern Region Meeting in Wakulla Springs, FL, in March.

Dillon graciously accepted the award on behalf of his family and the entire D.M. Stratton team. Dillon acknowledged that his employees, faith, and family were the reason for his company's success.

D.M. Stratton, LLC was founded in 1958 and 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.

D.M. Stratton, LLC received the 2022 Florida Logger of the Year Award at the Florida Forestry Association's Annual Meeting. •



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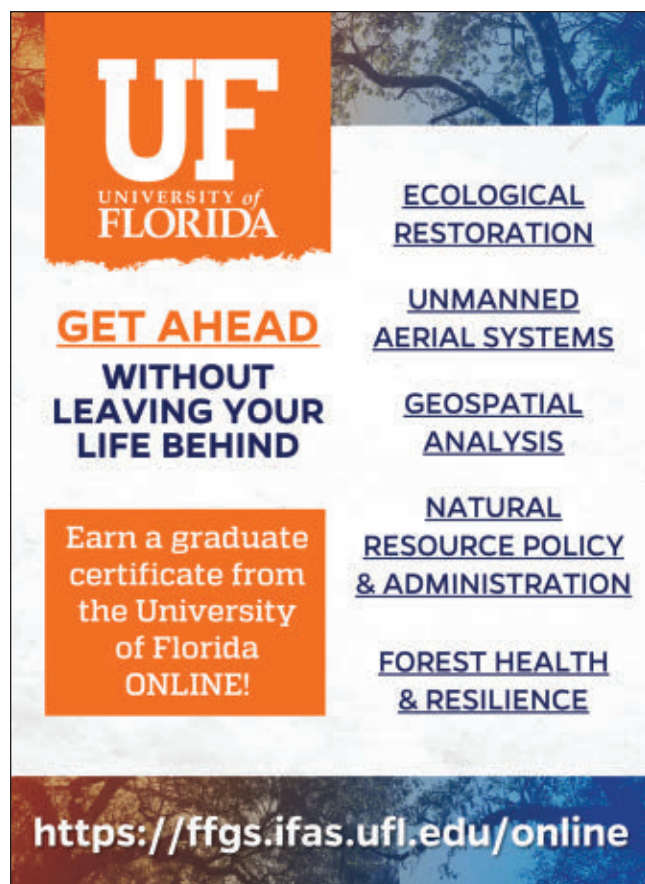
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ALL POINTS BULLETIN ISSUED BY THE FLORIDA FOREST SERVICE

BE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR THESE INVASIVE BEETLES



AN APB ON ALB

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 or call (352) 363-9111

ALB Florida Pool Survey & How You Can Help

- Inspect your pool filter for any Asian longhorned beetles.
- Take a photo of any ALB suspects. Focus on the insect's back.
- Email your photo to 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.
- Mail a printed image to:
Forest Health Section, 1911 S.W.
34th St., Gainesville, FL, 32608
- Freeze the insect in a plastic bag or container until you hear back from us.



Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
Commissioner Wilton Simpson