

LEGISLATIVE WRAP-UP

by Jim Spratt, Magnolia Strategies, LLC



On Monday, June 30, Governor Ron DeSantis signed the budget, with his associated line-item vetoes bringing closure to a clearly long and arguably contentious legislative session. It was just a few weeks ago when the Senate and House were finally able to conference and pass a budget on day 105 of 60. While the session headlines focused on the “personalities” and different approaches to leadership demonstrated by the Governor, Senate President Ben Albritton and House Speaker Daniel Perez, it bears noting that the budget ultimately passed by the legislature was \$3.9 billion smaller (year over year) than the 2024-25 budget. That is certainly not an easy task, especially when the population continues to rise and the state’s economy, albeit slower, is still healthy.

Adding to the reduction in spending, Governor DeSantis exercised his constitutional powers, trimming roughly \$1.3 billion (\$576 million in line-item vetoes) in additional dollars from the budget. Certainly, all of this translates into a couple of pretty clear themes:

- 1) Securing funding from the legislative process is getting extremely more competitive and, quite frankly, harder to secure, and
- 2) As we look towards proposals on broader sales tax reductions, as well as property tax relief and other proposals to lower residential property tax burdens, we may find ourselves in a spot where nonresidential property uses have to carry the water.

Notwithstanding the budget realities, on the whole, many of the programs and funding items which are important to Association members fared very well.

Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services/ Florida Forest Service:

The proposed budget allocates \$250 million to the Rural and Family Lands Protection Program. A key priority for Commissioner Wilton Simpson, the forestry industry, and the ag industry at large, these funds allow for the less-than-fee purchase of agricultural properties to ensure those properties remain in production. The budget also allocates \$13.9 million for Florida Forest Service equipment with a priority placed on wildfire suppression equipment and updating the oldest equipment in the fleet.

In addition, the budget allocates \$28 million for land management activities and an additional \$4 million for reforestation efforts.

University of Florida/ Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS):

The Association has always maintained a strong working partnership with our friends at UF/IFAS. We recognize and appreciate the critical roles teaching, research, and Extension play in the preservation and growth of our wood and wood products industry. This budget maintains the appropriation of \$1.1 million for the Forestry Education Program. The budget also allocates \$3.5 million to UF/IFAS workload, as well as \$2.5 million to the Center for Artificial Intelligence in Agriculture and \$5.6 million to update the 4-H Camp Cherry Lake facilities in Madison County.

Florida Department of Environmental Protection:

The legislature allocated \$50 million for springs and springs restoration projects. In addition, there is roughly \$18 million allocated for acquisition of environmentally sensitive lands and roughly \$51 million for the acquisition of three specific parcels of land, bringing the total investment in Florida Forever to roughly \$75 million.

During session we periodically updated members on myriad policy issues of interest to the industry. One such example is SB 700, an act relating to the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, also known as the Florida Farm Bill. The Florida Farm Bill addresses multiple areas throughout the agriculture and consumer services parts of the department. Most notably, the bill, which has already been signed into law by Gov. DeSantis, contains statutory updates to the Timber Recovery Program as well as to the Agriculture/ Aquaculture Disaster Loan Program.

In addition, the legislation increases the private property rights protection from harassment by drones. Additionally, it eliminates Environmental, Sustainability and Governance (ESG) provisions from agricultural lending and provides critical language allowing for the construction of agricultural worker housing on agricultural lands.

The legislature also passed HB 1215, Ad Valorem Tax Exemptions. This legislation proposed an amendment to the Florida Constitution to exempt all agricultural lands from being subject to the Tangible Personal Property taxes (TPP). Having passed both the Senate and House by the required two-thirds vote, this language will now appear as a proposed Constitutional amendment on the 2026 general election ballot.

MYFLFOREST.LAND – FILMS FOR YOU, ABOUT YOU

By John Dooner, Southern Forestry Consultants



It is great to be a forester in Florida, and it’s great that we have the Florida Forestry Association that allows us to meet, exchange experiences, and learn new tricks. But what about the thousands of forest landowners and stakeholders

in the state that are not a part of our community yet? Where should they learn? How can we facilitate their growth as both stewards of the land and members of the forestry business community?

In Florida, there are an estimated 215,000 family forest ownerships that collectively own 4,020,000 acres. This large number of stakeholders is far beyond the reach of traditional networking and educational styles. How do we reach them?

The answer is: fun online films! While educational organizations are just beginning to use film as a medium for educating clients and members, film is of course a dominant element of the multi-billion-dollar entertainment industry. Because of the unique resonance with human senses and emotions, film offers the capacity to educate, change attitudes and induce action better than almost any other medium.

The Association has worked together with the University of Florida Forest Entomology lab (pitchtube.org), Southern Forestry Consultants (soforest.com), and a documentary film company Untamed Science (untamedscience.com) to produce a unique series of short documentary movies about you, and for you – the Florida forest landowners.

Watch and share the films! (myflforest.land)

Do you sometimes feel that your concerns and your joys are nowhere to be seen on the Internet? You are right. The goal of this project is to give Florida’s forestry community a voice that is currently missing, using modern, fun, fast-paced media. More than entertainment, however, today’s forestry community, particularly the younger members, have different learning preferences from past generations. In a survey, forest landowners in Florida indicated that attractive video is the most desirable educational delivery medium. That is new even to most university educators! The COVID-19 pandemic has shifted the delivery of educational content. Person-to-person

[continued on next page>](#)

interactions such as workshops have become rare, and instead, many people are comfortable with information online. More than ever, educational resources need to be available online.

Creating the film content was not easy. Just selecting the topics was a triage. Forest landowners are navigating increasingly complex issues. New forest health threats, the volatile financial and regulatory landscape, and management objectives are all evolving. This is why, rather than relying on our own knowledge, we have enrolled experts from the University of Florida, the Florida Forest Service, and the vast ranks of the forest landowners themselves to share with us much of the specialized information in this series.

Associations, agencies and universities need to build online media infrastructure to stay relevant to their stakeholders. In this project, we hope that we are paving the way for widespread adoption of professional filmmaking, modern storytelling, and online delivery in our forestry community. We are grateful to the Florida Forest Service for supporting the project using funds from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

You can play an important role: watch and share the films! Use them in your own outreach and educational efforts! This is ultimately what they are for.

MASTER LOGGER TRAINING SCHEDULE

Core Training

October 16 – Virtual

CLE Training Workshops

October 2 – Virtual

December 11 – Virtual

For more information and to register, go to bit.ly/LoggerTraining



GET INVOLVED!



The success of any organization depends on an engaged membership. An easy and effective way to be active in the Association is through our committees: Government Relations, TREEPAC, Environmental, Steering and Communications.

To join a committee, go to bit.ly/FLForestryCommittees

ASSOCIATION ADDRESS

The Association has phased out the use of its P.O. Box. Please use our street address instead:

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WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS!

We are excited to welcome these businesses and individuals who have joined us this spring:

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Riels, Danny

Southern Earthworks, LLC

Sprengel, James

Tison Timber

Williams, Robert

2025 MEMBERSHIP CONTEST

Prize: \$250 Visa Gift card compliments of

Every \$1 in dues generated = 1 point
Example: Friend of Forestry member @ \$70 = 70 points

The recruiter with the most points (250 minimum) on 12.31.25 wins!

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

ANNUAL MEETING INFORMATION



2025 ANNUAL MEETING AUGUST 26-28 SANDESTIN GOLF & BEACH RESORT MIRAMAR BEACH, FL

Forestry professionals and enthusiasts should not miss the Florida Forestry Association's 2025 Annual Meeting & Trade Show! Attendees will have the opportunity to attend informative sessions and workshops, as well as to interact with other forestry professionals from around the state.

The event will be held August 26-28 at the beautiful Sandestin Golf and Beach Resort in Miramar Beach, FL. This location is a longtime favorite of Association members for many reasons: good scenery, good friends, and good times can always be found there!

The meeting provides a platform for members of the state's forestry community to exchange ideas, share experiences, and build relationships. Attendees will have the chance to meet with industry leaders, government officials, and representatives from various organizations.

It is also a chance to have some fun. The event features various social activities, including a golf tournament, a women's brunch, and live and silent auctions that get bigger and better each year.

If you're interested in sponsoring, exhibiting, or donating an item for the auctions, please contact our Director of Membership, Whitney Hough, at 850.222.5646 or Whitney@FLForestry.org.

REGISTRATION

Early Bird Registration (on or before July 28)

Full Registration \$450 • Full Spouse \$250
1-Day \$225 • 1-Day Spouse \$100

Regular Registration (on or after July 29)

Full Registration \$500 • Full Spouse \$300
1-Day \$275 • 1-Day Spouse \$150

If you prefer to pay by check, download a printable registration form at bit.ly/PRINTFORM2025



bit.ly/AMRegistration2025



HOTEL INFORMATION

Sandestin Golf & Beach Resort
9300 Emerald Coast Pkwy W
Miramar Beach, FL 32550



bit.ly/FFARESERVATIONS2025

Special Annual Meeting Rate:
\$180 (+ taxes and fees)
Must be booked before July 31.



TIMBER TOPPERS GOLF CLASSIC

Hit the links on Wednesday, August 27, for an invaluable networking experience with other forestry professionals and friends!

Golf is open to all Association members and their guests. Meeting registration is not required to play in the tournament, but golfers must register for the tournament in advance to ensure a spot. Golfers may sign up individually or secure a team of four using the registration form.

Tournament registration is \$125 per person or \$500 per team.



AUCTIONS

We need your support to make this year's live and silent auctions the biggest and best we've ever had.

You can be a part of this effort by 1) donating items and 2) bidding on items. We always have phenomenal donations, so we encourage everyone to bid high and bid often on them!

Suggested Items:

Sports Items and Autographed Memorabilia
Trips and Vacation Home Rentals • Golf Equipment and Outings
Hunting and Fishing Equipment and Experiences
Gift Certificates (Retail and Restaurants)
Knives and Guns • Art • Hand-Crafted Wood Items • Jewelry
Tickets to Entertainment or Sporting Events

All donors are welcome to bring business cards, brochures, etc. to put on the table with the auction item. If you have questions, please feel free to contact Whitney@FLForestry.org or 850.222.5646.



WOMEN OF FORESTRY NETWORKING BRUNCH

Wednesday, August 27, at 9:30 AM CDT

Ladies, please join us as we celebrate the incredible women working in forestry and the amazing spouses of those in the field. We're taking it to the next level with fantastic conversation, lasting connections, and delicious mimosas. **The brunch is free, but you must register to attend.**

FIREARM RAFFLE

\$20 donation per ticket or donate \$100 and receive 6 tickets.

Winner will pick one of the following:

- The Kimber Independence, a limited-edition 1911 in .45 ACP
- Browning BAR Mark III in .270 Win
- Beretta A300 Ultimate 12ga with Holosun 507 or
- Winchester Bandit Safe

Drawing to be held August 28 during the Annual Meeting Trade Show Social. You do not have to be present to win.

For tickets or more information, please contact Whitney Hough at 850.222.5646 or Whitney@FLForestry.org.

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

Tuesday, August 26, 2025

10:00 AM - 6:00 PM Registration Desk Open
1:00 PM - 6:00 PM Trade Show Set-Up & Silent Auction Open
1:00 PM - 3:00 PM Forestry Council Meeting
3:00 PM - 5:00 PM Prescribed Burn Working Group
5:30 PM - 7:00 PM Registrant Reception/Exhibitor Meet & Greet

Wednesday, August 27, 2025

6:30 AM - 6:00 PM Registration Desk Open
6:30 AM - 8:00 AM Early Bird Coffee
6:30 AM - 10:00 AM Trade Show Set-Up
6:45 AM - 7:45 AM Tee-Time Coffee & Golf Registration
8:00 AM - 1:00 PM Timber Toppers Golf Tournament Shotgun Start
9:30 AM - 11:00 AM Women of Forestry Networking Brunch:
Ginger Feagle and Allison Nash
10:00 AM - 7:00 PM Trade Show & Silent Auction Open
11:00 AM - 12:00 PM Breakout Session:
Sustainable Aviation Fuel - Gary Peter
12:00 PM - 2:00 PM Lunch on your own
2:00 PM - 4:10 PM General Session:
Help is Here! - Laura DiBella
Forestry Economic Impact Study - Christa Court
European Union Deforestation Regulation - Mark Pitts
4:15 PM - 5:15 PM Board Meeting
5:30 PM - 7:00 PM Welcome Reception/Exhibitor Meet & Greet

Thursday, August 28, 2025

6:45 AM - 12:00 PM Registration Desk Open
6:45 AM - 8:00 AM Early Bird Coffee
8:00 AM - 10:00 AM Awards Breakfast
10:00 AM - 4:00 PM Trade Show & Silent Auction Open
10:00 AM - 11:20 AM General Session:
Alternative Revenue Sources Lightning Round Carbon - Richard Hall
Conservation Easements & Gopher Tortoise Recipient Sites - Jay Vogel
Wetland Mitigation & Water-Related Revenue - Jack Vogel
Pine Straw - Judd Lisenby
11:30 AM - 1:00 PM Breakout Session:
NRCS Funding Programs, Juan Hernandez & Staff
12:00 PM - 1:30 PM Lunch on your own
12:00 PM - 1:15 PM *Master Logger Lunch: *Lt. Bill Henderson*
1:30 PM - 2:30 PM General Session:
Forest Markets - Amanda Lang
2:45 PM - 3:45 PM Trade Show Social & Silent Auction Final Bidding
5:00 PM - 6:00 PM Dinner Reception
6:00 PM - 7:30 PM Closing Dinner & Live Auction

*THE MASTER LOGGER LUNCH IS OPEN TO EVERYONE. HOWEVER, ONLY MASTER LOGGERS REGISTERED FOR THE FULL MEETING MAY ATTEND AT NO CHARGE. OTHERS WISHING TO ATTEND MUST PURCHASE A TICKET BY AUGUST 14, 2025.

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AVAILABLE EDUCATIONAL CREDITS

Master Logger Continuing Logger Education (CLE) credits: 6 hours

Society of American Foresters Continuing Forestry Education (CFE) credits:

Category 1 – 6.5 hours
Category 2 – 1 hour



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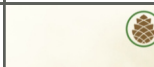


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