

## VARN TAPPED AS ASSOCIATION EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT



In May, Association President Avery C. Roberts announced that the Executive Committee had selected Brittany Varn to serve as the Association's executive vice president.

"Brittany has been filling the role on an interim basis since August 2025," said Roberts. "She has demonstrated tremendous leadership in the midst of substantial transitions for both the Association and the forest industry as a whole. Combine that with her innovative thinking and tireless dedication, and it's clear that the Association is in capable hands with her at the helm."

Jim Karels will stay on as Executive Director through October 1. At that point, Brittany will officially drop the interim title and take on the role in full.

## FLORIDA FORESTRY ASSOCIATION ENDORSES SIMPSON FOR REELECTION AS AGRICULTURE COMMISSIONER



A coalition of leaders from the Florida Forestry Association has endorsed Florida Agriculture Commissioner Wilton Simpson in his bid for reelection, citing his support for the state's forestry industry, wildfire preparedness efforts and rural communities. The endorsement includes current executive committee members, board members and former presidents of the association.

Association President Avery Roberts said Simpson has demonstrated a commitment to Florida's working forests and the industries that depend on them.

"Florida's forestry community needs leaders who value the long-term importance of working forests to our state's economy, environment and rural way of life," Roberts said. "Wilton Simpson has demonstrated that commitment throughout his public service career, and we are proud to support his campaign for the Commissioner of Agriculture."

Forestry leaders pointed to Simpson's support for the Florida Forest Service, including efforts to expand access to technology such as drones and GPS equipment and to improve pay for personnel as part of recruitment and retention initiatives

Immediate Past President Jimmy Bielling said Simpson's approach to wildfire management extends beyond emergency response. "Commissioner Simpson knows that wildfire protection does not begin when smoke is in the

air and it does not end when the flames are out," Bielling said. "His strong support for the Florida Forest Service and leadership in providing needed resources will protect Florida's forests and communities both now and in the years ahead."

The endorsement comes as forestry-related issues continue to intersect with broader policy debates in Florida, including wildfire resilience, land conservation, infrastructure development and natural resource management.

Association President-Elect Wesley Carter said agricultural policy decisions often have impacts beyond the farming industry.

"Commissioner Simpson recognizes that agricultural policy affects far more than agriculture alone," Carter said. "The decisions made in Tallahassee influence investment, jobs, land management, and the future of communities across Florida."

Florida's forestry sector supports more than 100,000 jobs and contributes \$28.8 billion annually to the state's economy.

Association Executive Director Jim Karels said the endorsement reflects confidence in Simpson's leadership and engagement with forestry stakeholders.

"Forestry is a long-term commitment that requires practical leadership and a clear awareness of the challenges facing landowners and producers," Karels said. "Wilton Simpson has earned the trust of many in our industry because he listens, stays engaged, and works toward real solutions."



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

## JOIN THE ASSOCIATION TEAM!



### DIRECTOR OF FORESTRY & REGULATORY AFFAIRS

Requires a Bachelor of Science degree in forestry or related field and a minimum of 5 years of full-time forestry-related experience.

Find more information under the job listings on our website, [FLForestry.org](http://FLForestry.org).



## STUDY REVEALS FORESTRY'S ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTIONS TO FLORIDA

Results of a study by the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) in partnership with the Florida Forest Service (FFS) show that Florida's forest industry supported more than 103,000 jobs and generated nearly \$29 billion in total economic output in 2023, reinforcing the industry's vital role in the state's economy and rural communities.

"Florida's forest industry is a major economic driver for our state," said Commissioner Wilton Simpson. "It supports jobs, strengthens rural communities, and provides sustainable products we all rely on. These findings show why it's so important that we continue to support and invest in Florida forestry."

Florida is home to approximately 16.76 million acres of forest land — nearly half of the state's land area — which supports the manufacture of a wide range of products,

continued on next page>

including lumber, paper, packaging, and renewable biomass energy. Forestry remains especially important in North Florida, where many communities rely on the industry for jobs and economic stability.

“Florida’s forestry community works every day to keep our forests productive and sustainable,” said Jim Karels, Executive Director of the Florida Forestry Association. “This report shows the real impact that work has on jobs, communities, and our state’s economy.”

“The Florida Forest Service works closely with landowners and industry partners to ensure our forests remain healthy, productive, and resilient,” said Rick Dolan, Director of the Florida Forest Service. “These findings reflect the strength of that partnership and the important role active forest management plays in supporting both our economy and natural resources.”

In addition to supporting jobs and economic activity across the state, Florida’s forest industry contributes to international trade, with more than \$1.79 billion in forest products exported globally in 2023.

“This study looks at the full scale and scope of economic activity related to the forest industry, including its support of economic activity in non-forest-related sectors,” said Christa Court, Director of the UF/IFAS Economic Impact Analysis Program. “It gives a clearer picture of how the forest industry is related to the broader state economy, and which counties are more reliant on this industry in terms of their local economies.”

Beyond the economic value of the forest industry, Florida’s forests provide important environmental benefits, including wildlife habitat, water quality protection, and outdoor recreation opportunities that support local economies and enhance the quality of life for Floridians.

The full report, *Economic Contributions of the Florida Forest Industry in 2023*, provides updated insights into the industry’s performance since 2016 and highlights the continued importance of forestry to Florida’s economy and natural resources. The report, along with an interactive map of forestry contributions by county, can be found at [go.ufl.edu/florida-forest-products](http://go.ufl.edu/florida-forest-products).

Many thanks to our friends at FFS and the UF/IFAS Economic Impact Analysis Program for their work on this study and for allowing us to be part of the process!



## UPCOMING MASTER LOGGER TRAININGS

**CLE Training Workshops**

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**INVESTMENT**

## \$3,500

**OUR AUDIENCE**

The Annual Meeting attracts more than 300 forestry professionals, including:

- Private forest landowners
- Forest products manufacturers
- Forestry consultants
- Natural resource professionals
- Professional foresters
- Industry leaders and decision-makers
- Loggers and contractors

**CONTACT**  
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850-222-5646

**ANNUAL MEETING & TRADE SHOW**  
September 1-3, 2026  
Omni Amelia Island Resort  
Amelia Island, Florida

## ANNUAL MEETING INFORMATION

FLORIDA FORESTRY ASSOCIATION

# Annual Meeting & Trade Show

# 2026

September 1-3  
Omni Amelia Island Resort



## REGISTER NOW FOR THE FLORIDA FORESTRY ASSOCIATION’S 2026 ANNUAL MEETING & TRADE SHOW!

Join forestry professionals and enthusiasts from across the state September 1–3 at the beautiful Omni Amelia Island Beach Resort in Amelia Island, Florida.

Attend informative sessions and workshops. Connect with colleagues, industry leaders, government officials, and partners from across Florida’s forestry community.

There’s plenty of fun on the agenda, too. Enjoy the golf tournament, women’s brunch, and the always-popular live and silent auctions—which get bigger and better every year.

Interested in sponsoring, exhibiting, or donating an auction item? Contact Director of Revenue & Development Whitney Hough at 850.222.5646 or [Whitney@FLForestry.org](mailto:Whitney@FLForestry.org).

### REGISTRATION

**Early Bird Registration (by July 28)**  
Full Registration \$450 • Full Spouse \$250  
1-Day \$225 • 1-Day Spouse \$100

**Regular Registration (after July 28)**  
Full Registration \$500 • Full Spouse \$300  
1-Day \$275 • 1-Day Spouse \$150





## HOTEL INFORMATION

Nestled on 1,350 acres with 3.5 miles of private beach, the luxurious Omni Amelia Island Resort offers stunning Atlantic Ocean views and spacious accommodations in every room. Throughout the resort, guests will discover a charming blend of coastal elegance and natural beauty, with décor inspired by both the sea and the surrounding forests.

**Omni Amelia Island Beach Resort**  
39 Beach Lagoon Road  
Fernandina Beach, Florida

**Special Annual Meeting Rate:**  
\$189 (+ taxes and fees)  
Must be booked before August 3.



Scan to Reserve



## 2026 TIMBER TOPPERS GOLF CLASSIC

**Tee-off: 8 AM ET, Wednesday, September 2**  
Take your best shots at this year's Timber Toppers Golf Classic! Designed by golf legend Pete Dye and renovated in 2025, the Oak Marsh course was selected by *Travel & Leisure Golf* as one of "Florida's 50 Finest Courses."

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.

Tournament registration is \$150 per person or \$600 per team.



## WOMEN OF FORESTRY NETWORKING BRUNCH

**Wednesday, September 2, at 9:30 AM ET**  
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.**



## 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](mailto:Whitney@FLForestry.org) or 850.222.5646.

## FIREARM RAFFLE

Guns donated by Kevin's Sporting Goods



**\$20 donation per ticket or  
\$100 donation = 6 tickets.**

Drawing 9/3/26. You do NOT need to be present to win.

Tickets available on the event registration form. Ticket stub(s) will be included in your registration packet. Winner will pick one of the following:

- Beretta A300 Ultima 12 ga with Holosun 507
- Christensen Evoke Bolt Action Rifle 6.5 Creedmoor
- Smith & Wesson M&P 2.0 Competitor Full Size Series
- Liberty Centurion 24 Safe

## SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

### Tuesday, September 1

- 10:00 AM-6:00 PM Trade Show Set-Up & Silent Auction Open
- 1:00 PM-6:00 PM Registration Desk 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, September 2

- 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
- 10:00 AM-7:00 PM Trade Show & Silent Auction Open
- 9:30 AM-11:00 AM Women of Forestry Networking Brunch  
*Donna Wright, Landowner*
- 11:00 AM-12:00 PM Breakout Session  
*Mark Mauldin: Identifying & Managing Invasive Plants*
- 12:00 PM-2:00 PM Lunch on your own
- 2:00 PM-4:00 PM General Session  
*Rick Dolan and Jim Karels: Wildfires and Impacts to Forestry*  
*Connor Brantley: Trade Policy & Lumber Exports*
- 4:10 PM-5:10 PM Board Meeting
- 5:30 PM-7:00 PM Welcome Reception/Exhibitor Meet & Greet

### Thursday, September 3

- 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  
*Lightning Round – New or Emerging Markets*  
*Dammon Frecker: Engineered Biocarbon*  
*Matias Kirst: Recovery of Rare Earth Elements*  
*Ernie Spiller: Optimizing Timberland Through the Soil Microbiome*  
*Abdurrahman Bejjaj: Sustainable Packaging Solutions*
- 11:30 AM-1:00 PM Breakout Session: NRCS Funding Programs
- 12:00 PM-1:30 PM Lunch on your own
- 12:00 PM-1:15 PM Master Logger Lunch – *Florida Highway Patrol: Regulations*
- 1:30 PM-2:30 PM General Session – *Nick DiLuzio: Forest Markets*
- 2:45 PM-3:45 PM Trade Show Social & Silent Auction Final Bidding
- 5:00 PM-6:00 PM Dinner Reception
- 6:00 PM-7:00 PM President's Dinner
- 7:00 PM-7:30 PM Live Auction

*SAF CFE credits: 6.5 hours (Category 1) • ML credits TBD • \*Schedule subject to change*  
**\*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, 2026.**

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