



## 2025 Legislative Position Statements

(Approved by the ExComm 1/30/25 FINAL)

### **ISSUE – Sales Tax Exemption**

The 2022 legislature expanded sales tax exemptions on farm trailers used in the production and transport of forestry and agricultural crops. However, only trailers owned by a farmer as defined in Florida law qualify for the exemption. This excludes a significant segment of trailers used by loggers and other forestry service providers.

#### ***Florida Forestry Association Position:***

*The Association supports legislation to expand the state sales tax exemption on trailers to include those used in logging and other forest service industries.*

### **ISSUE – State Hurricane Assistance**

With the critical leadership of Commissioner Simpson, in the wake of Hurricane Idalia the Florida legislature created two novel programs to provide immediate relief to timber and agriculture producers impacted by the storm. The Agricultural Disaster Loan program enabled producers to access up to \$500,000 interest-free capital to clean up, repair and rebuild. These loans had a 10-year term, but payment wasn't due until year three on the loan term. In addition, and specific to forestry, the legislature authorized a timber grant program within FDACS. The timber program provided dollars for cleanup and replanting timber impacted by storms.

#### ***Florida Forestry Association Position:***

*The Association supports Commissioner Simpson's proposal to make the Timber Disaster Assistance Program a permanent standing program within the Department. In addition, the Association supports updates to the program which give flexibility to the Department for cleanup and replanting of full timber stands as well as the flexibility to assist landowners with cleanup of partially damaged marketable timber stands.*

### **ISSUE – Farm TEAM Card**

A priority of Commissioner Wilton Simpson, the 2023 Legislature created the Florida Farm Tax Exempt Agricultural Materials (TEAM) card. Similar to the Georgia GATE card, the Florida card was created to allow farmers to present a card to receive sales tax exemptions for which they were entitled as opposed to filling out affidavits at every retail purchase point. The card was created to streamline the purchase process and provide a more efficient process for the farmer.

#### ***Florida Forestry Association Position:***

*The Association supports the creation of a card similar in concept to the TEAM card, which would be available to those specific companies who directly work in the agriculture or forestry industries and by the nature of use are entitled to certain tax exemptions.*

### **ISSUE – Mass Timber**

Mass timber is a relatively new product to the market and has demonstrated its comparability to other materials related to wind, fires, load, and cost. The 2021 International Building Code recognized mass timber as an appropriate material to be used in new construction projects. However, the Florida Building Commission has not yet included mass timber in its updates to the state building code.

#### ***Florida Forestry Association Position:***

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

### **ISSUE – Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS)**

PFAS are a complex family of chemicals which are critical in many of the products we use to power our lives. Not surprisingly, PFAS are not all created equal; each chemical 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 being used in many common fire suppression foams. Both the federal Environmental Protection Agency and the state Department of Environmental Protection have contemplated new regulations

and water quality standards which would include criteria for PFAS. Given their unique nature, there is still much debate on the impacts of PFAS.

***Florida Forestry Association Position:***

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

**ISSUE – Trucking Weights**

The Association has been and continues to be a vocal supporter of a permanent increase in truck weights on federal highways. In 2010, the state legislature approved an increase in truck weights up to 88,000 pounds on non-interstate highways. The limit on federal interstate highways is currently 80,000 pounds.

***Florida Forestry Association Position:***

*The Association supports federal legislation to permanently increase truck weights for transporters of forestry and ag products on federal interstate highways.*

**ISSUE- Tort Reform**

Frivolous lawsuits and abuse of the court system directly impact the cost of doing business in Florida, create higher insurance premiums, slow job growth and creation, and remove any predictability from a system where profit margins are increasingly smaller. We appreciate the work Florida's legislature has completed over the years to minimize frivolous lawsuits and protect all business including Florida's wood and wood products industry. We recognize there is still work needed within the broader world of tort reform.

***Florida Forestry Association Position:***

*The Association supports any efforts by the legislature to further discourage or eliminate frivolous lawsuits. Whether they are broadly focused or narrowly tailored to a specific area, each improvement can lead to reduced business costs and a stable business environment.*

**ISSUE – Immigration Reform**

Over the past several years, there have been multiple state legislative proposals requiring employers to use the federal E-Verify system to verify the legal status of their workers.

***Florida Forestry Association Position:***

*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.*

**ISSUE - Tangible Personal Property Taxes**

Under Florida law, businesses are required to pay taxes on all tangible personal property. The taxes are collected by local governments and are a vital part of local government revenues. Florida's constitution provides a nominal amount of relief through an exemption to a small portion of the tax, but agricultural and forest products businesses pay a significant bill statewide.

***Florida Forestry Association Position:***

*The Association supports legislation to increase the current exemption or to eliminate tangible personal property taxes on forest and wood products companies.*

**ISSUE - Labor Contracting**

The United States Department of Labor is currently working on new regulations which have the potential to fundamentally change how independent contractors are classified by employers. Most notably, the proposed rules would require a contractor to calculate the hours worked for each individual client; in the event one client receives the predominant daily/ weekly work hours, the contractor would be considered a direct employee of that client.

***Florida Forestry Association Position:***

*The Association opposes any proposed rules that would fundamentally change the contractor/client relationship. We believe all businesses should be able to contract out specific duties as best suits their business model, regardless of the hours involved.*

### **ISSUE - Critical Wetlands**

During the 2023 Florida legislative session, the legislature passed updates to Florida water law. These updates enabled water management districts to develop a database of wetlands and other hydrologic features for the purposes of conservation and to meet existing requirements under Florida's minimum flows and levels (MFLs) laws. While the intent is laudable, in practice some water management districts have set up systems where landowners who have critical wetland features are automatically included in the database and must take action to "opt out."

#### ***Florida Forestry Association Position:***

*The Association supports legislation or rules that allow impacted landowners to "opt into" inclusion in the database, rather than requiring them to "opt out."*

### **ISSUE - Air Quality Regulation/EPA's PM 2.5 Rule updates**

Florida remains the national model for the success of prescribed burning as an effective land management and wildfire mitigation tool. Although Florida's program receives much national recognition, there are groups who aggressively push to eliminate fire as a management tool. EPA's moves to lower the PM 2.5 standards have the potential to severely impact prescribed burning in Florida and throughout the nation. The PM 2.5 rules set standards and ranges of particulate matter in the air for the purposes of determining air quality and public safety. Currently, EPA's PM 2.5 rules use a benchmark of 12, which Florida's excellent air quality rarely exceeds. While not finalized, EPA has suggested moving the PM 2.5 index to a 9 or 10, which gives minimal variance from baseline natural air measures absent of human activity. Moving the index this far will undoubtedly limit the number of actual burn days in a given calendar year. In some locations throughout the U.S., it could eliminate prescribed fire completely, which in turn increases the threat of wildfire and its severe impact on our nation's air quality.

#### ***Florida Forestry Association Position:***

*The Association strongly opposes rules which unrealistically limit land managers' ability to utilize prescribed fire as a cost-effective and efficient management tool. As Florida's population continues to expand and people move into forest-rich areas, it would be foolish and dangerous to eliminate our most effective wildfire prevention tool.*

### **ISSUE – Priority Budget Issues:**

#### **Florida Forest Service –**

Rural & Family Lands Program	\$200 M
Wildfire Equipment Replacement	\$13.2 M
FL's Future Forest Reforestation Program	\$4 M
Facility Maintenance	\$4.1 M
Land Management	\$32 M

#### **UF/IFAS –**

Workload	\$6.4 M
4H Camp Cherry Lake Facility	\$5.6 M
Center for Artificial Intelligence in Ag	\$4.5 M

#### **Department of Environmental Protection –**

Springs Protection Funding	\$50 M
Florida Forever Funding	\$100 M