



Protect



Sustain



Educate



2014 Alabama Forestry Commission

annual report

The Honorable Robert Bentley
Governor, State of Alabama
600 Dexter Avenue
Montgomery, Alabama 36130

Dear Governor Bentley:

On behalf of the commissioners and associates of the Alabama Forestry Commission, I am proud to submit this 45th Annual Report for State Fiscal Year 2013-2014 to you and the citizens of Alabama. Since becoming a stand-alone agency under the control of the Governor in 1969, the Alabama Forestry Commission (AFC) has taken great pride in being the state agency voice for private forestland owners and forest interests across the state.

According to a 2010 economic study, forest products contribute \$11.3 billion annually to Alabama's economy. Statistics from the Forest Inventory Analysis (FIA), completed by the Alabama Forestry Commission, show that some type of timber harvest activity occurred on over 869,000 acres of Alabama's 22.8 million acres of timberland annually from 2001-2013. Yet with this amount of economic activity, the 2013 FIA report shows we are growing 42 percent more timber than is being harvested for this same time period.

This year, as in all others, associates from the Alabama Forestry Commission have played an active role in ensuring the forest resources continue to grow, not only for economic value but also for all the other benefits Alabamians receive from the forests such as wildlife, clean water, clean air, and the aesthetic beauty of our state. In addition to providing the only inventory update of Alabama's forest annually, our associates protect the forest from the threat of wildfire. With the smallest number of forest firefighters per acre in the South, we count on our partnership with the 992 volunteer fire departments (VFDs) across the state to help accomplish this task. Many of our programs such as Federal Excess Property and VFD radio communication outlined in this report help keep that partnership strong. AFC associates also help protect Alabama's forests from the ever increasing threat from non-native insects and disease. A report on the health of the forest is also included.

Over the past 12 months, our associates have continued to help sustain the state's forest resources by advising landowners and communities in the management of their forests for multiple resource benefits. In Fiscal Year 2014, over 4,000 Alabama forest landowners and 140 communities received assistance and written forest management recommendations from the Alabama Forestry Commission. Our associates also write management plans to qualify forest landowners for several federal cost-share programs enabling them to carry out stewardship practices on their land.

Education of Alabamians is another important facet of the Alabama Forestry Commission. Whether talking to homeowners about protecting their property from wildfire, providing loggers with the best management practices to ensure water quality, presenting a wildfire prevention program for school children, or conducting a workshop on forest management for landowners, AFC associates deliver. Many of these educational achievements are reported here.

Unlike many agencies that have specialists who carry out certain programs to the public, each Alabama Forestry Commission associate delivers this wide array of programs within their local area. I am proud to work with each of them, and am pleased to deliver to you their achievements for the past year.

Sincerely,



Greg Pate
State Forester



Robert Bentley
Governor of Alabama



Alabama Forestry Commission

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Regional Foresters

North.....Terry Ezzell
Northeast.....Jason Dockery
Northwest.....Hank McKinley
East Central.....Bruce Springer
Southeast.....Michael Older
Southwest.....Benji Elmore

The Alabama Forestry Commission is a state agency governed by a seven-member Board of Commissioners. Each commissioner, appointed by the Governor of Alabama, serves a five-year term.

Our Mission:

We will serve Alabama by protecting and sustaining our forest resources using professionally applied stewardship principals and education. We will ensure that Alabama's forests contribute to abundant timber and wildlife, clean air and water, and a healthy economy.

FOREST PROTECTION DIVISION



FIRE SUPPRESSION

Alabama Forestry Commission (AFC) men and women provide the public, especially forest landowners, excellent wildfire protection 24 hours a day, seven days a week. These firefighters face difficult environmental factors in the course of responding to, suppressing, and returning from wildfires. In all types of terrain, day or night, in adverse weather conditions, facing unknown hazards, AFC firefighters protect the forest from wildfires and other natural hazards.

During Fiscal Year 2014, average and frequent rainfall across the state helped keep fire occurrences below average. A total of 1,485 wildfires were reported and suppressed, burning 26,619 acres. Average fire size was 18 acres. While wildfires destroyed or damaged 112 structures, firefighters saved 2,627 homes. Additional fire statistics include 418 structures (other than homes) and 37 vehicles either destroyed or damaged, while 936 structures and 470 vehicles were saved. Other property often affected by wildfires is haybales. Although 1,470 haybales were destroyed or damaged, 734 were saved through AFC efforts.

HAZARD MITIGATION

Completing approximately 51,187 acres of prescribed burns across the state, the Alabama Forestry Commission continued to assist landowners in protecting their lands from wildfires. Total prescribed burning (including AFC, private landowners, and contractors) involved 13,970 burns on 974,499 acres, which is above average for Alabama. The numbers continue to be high as a direct result of the Commission's ongoing efforts to offer more training to landowners who have an interest in conducting prescribed burns safely, and the increase in individuals who have become certified prescribed burn managers.

Again this year, the AFC presented a series of Certified Prescribed Burn Manager (CPBM) training courses. In addition to training 124 new burners,

the agency also provided recertification continuing education courses for 148 existing CPBMs with an emphasis on Prescribed Burn Planning and Fuel Management. An increase in prescribed burning across the state is anticipated as a result of past educational efforts, and the Commission is prepared to offer more CPBM courses as needed to accommodate the demand.

COMMUNITY PROTECTION GRANT

For the first time in 2014, the AFC applied for and received funding for the Community Protection Grant, designed to assist with fire lane construction and prescribed burning for landowners who own property within 10 miles of a National Forest. This offers landowners all across the state the opportunity to receive funding since there are four National Forests located in Alabama, including Bankhead, Conecuh, Tuskegee, and Talladega (which is composed of three ranger districts: Talladega, Shoal Creek, and Oakmulgee). There were 32 landowners who submitted applications and received approval for funding in FY 2014. Half of these prescribed burns were completed in 2014, with the remaining 16 to be completed in the upcoming burn season.

WILDLAND URBAN INTERFACE

Through promotion of Wildland/Urban Interface (WUI) and wildfire prevention, the Alabama Forestry Commission complies with its legislative mandate to educate citizens about the importance of protecting the forest. One AFC associate is dedicated fulltime to coordination of this program, funded in part by a hazard mitigation grant from the U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture. Additionally, WUI specialists are assigned in each of the agency's regions and work units to provide program delivery to our customers in the field.

The goals of the WUI program are the same as the goals of the National Fire Plan:

- Ensure sufficient firefighting resources for the future.
- Reduce hazardous fuels in forests, especially near communities.
- Work with volunteer fire departments and local residents to improve fire protection.
- Encourage post-fire mitigation to restore fire-damaged ecosystems.

In FY 2014, the AFC visited 320 homeowners where a fire risk assessment was completed to help them protect their property from wildfire. Statewide, 48 Community Protection plans were completed, ensuring that these communities are better prepared to deal with

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an approaching wildfire. This included improvements to structures to make them fire resistant, and devising a plan for fire professionals to enter the neighborhood when battling a wildfire.

community fire program and solve immediate problems including parts exchange, training, and financial assistance through federal grants.

Again this year, the Commission assisted the state's VFDs by continuing several beneficial programs:

- Administered \$1,155,468 in grant money, appropriated by the Alabama Legislature. The checks were issued in May 2014 to 992 qualifying VFDs in the amount of \$1,164.79 per department.
- Worked jointly with the RCFP Steering Committee to administer \$81,486 in U.S. Forest Service grant monies to VFDs across Alabama to fund purchases of wildland personal protective equipment (PPE), and other wildland firefighting equipment.
- Provided and maintained county-wide communication systems for VFDs in 38 of Alabama's 67 counties.
- Maintained a list of VFDs members who are eligible for "Firefighter" license plates for their personal vehicles, and made this list available to all vehicle-licensing agencies throughout Alabama as mandated by state law.
- AFC representation attended numerous VFDs meetings and functions across the state to strengthen relationships between agencies and share information.

SOUTHWRAP

The Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment Portal, called "SouthWRAP" for short, is a new website that will help AFC personnel, homeowners, and communities across the state determine wildfire risks, as well as take measures to minimize or mitigate potential wildfire hazards. A collaborative

effort by the Southern Group of State Foresters (SGSF) and the 13 Southern states, SouthWRAP allows users to identify wildfire threats based on landscape characteristics, historical fire occurrence, weather conditions, and terrain. It also routes users to resources that can help them implement wildfire prevention practices. Professional users such as community planners and land developers, wildland fire managers and emergency services organizations, as well as civic leaders and local governments can use SouthWRAP to generate a report packaging all the wildfire risk data for their specific communities. Such a tool can be useful in defining mitigation options, allocating resources, and prioritizing programs that will better protect communities.

VOLUNTEER FIRE ASSISTANCE

The Alabama Forestry Commission continues to be committed to providing all possible assistance to volunteer fire departments (VFDs) to better provide fire protection for citizens throughout the state. A strong partnership between VFDs and AFC personnel is key to our fire suppression efforts. This assistance includes pursuing funding opportunities available to VFDs, as well as providing training and equipment to these departments.

The 13-member Rural Community Fire Protection (RCFP) Steering Committee met four times during Fiscal Year 2014. The steering committee is comprised of ten volunteer firefighters appointed by the State Forester from ten districts across the state, one member of the Alabama Association of Volunteer Fire Departments (AAVFD), one member of the Alabama Firefighters Association, and one member of the Alabama Association of Fire Chiefs. The purpose of this committee is to make recommendations to the State Forester regarding how to improve the rural

During Fiscal Year 2014, Commission personnel provided the following instructional courses:

- 117 volunteer firefighters attended traditional classroom training for S-130 (Basic Wildfire Tactics), S-190 (Fire Behavior), I-100 (Basic Incident Command System), and L-180 (Human Factors on the Fire Line)
- 27 volunteer firefighters attended training for FI-110 (Wildland Fire Observations & Origin Scene Protection for First Responders).
- Additionally, AFC instructors conducted or assisted in providing numerous non-wildland firefighter trainings throughout the state.

FEDERAL EXCESS PERSONAL PROPERTY (FEPP)

The Alabama Forestry Commission obtains property from various military bases through the Federal Excess Personal Property Program (FEPP) from the Department of Defense (DoD)

to use for fire suppression. In 2014, the Commission acquired property totaling \$16,160,519



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that was then transferred to volunteer fire departments and AFC offices. During the year, 110 transports/tankers, grass trucks, and other vehicles, such as vans, were screened and acquired. Of this property, 16 vehicles were transferred to VFDs and 10 were transferred to Commission offices. In addition to these, eight all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) and four utility task vehicles (UTVs) were screened and issued to various counties.

The agency also acquired eight D3 dozers, one John Deere 650 dozer, four D7 dozers, and three mobile command posts. The AFC Central Shop serviced eight parts requests from fire departments to repair their current equipment.

As federal property ages and becomes unusable, the Commission receives, advertises, and processes the sale of this equipment through Government Services Administration (GSA) federal auctions. During the year, the AFC received 47 vehicles to dispose and sold 52 vehicles.

COMPACT FIRE DUTIES

As part of our training program, a total of 23 AFC personnel were sent to assist on several federal fires and in-state emergency responses, taking 4,676 man hours to complete. This effort included sending 18 personnel to serve and assist in various roles while on assignments throughout the Northwest, where the Commission made a major commitment to assist states such as Idaho, Washington, and California. These states have suffered historic drought conditions that have caused catastrophic wildfires. While these assignments to protect life and property are dangerous, they provide excellent experience for our staff.

Frequent rainfall and a below-average wildfire season here at home provided additional opportunities for AFC personnel to train and be better prepared to respond

to incidents. In our support roles, we fulfilled several requests from local Alabama Emergency Management Agency (AEMA) offices to assist with train derailments, missing person searches, and storm cleanup and recovery. In addition to responding to these requests, the Alabama Forestry Commission will continue to train personnel, standing ready to respond and assist the AEMA with the planning process and execution of commodity delivery in the event of a catastrophic event.

CENTRAL DISPATCH CENTER

The Central Dispatch Center is essential to the agency's ability to receive information pertaining to wildfires from 911 centers, sheriffs' offices, and the general public. This information is relayed to the proper AFC firefighters as they are dispatched to wildfires in a timely manner. In FY 2014, there were 5,917 calls associated with wildfires dispatched to AFC firefighters. Another responsibility of the dispatch center is recording the movements of all on-duty personnel, utilizing dispatch logs and map boards to determine the safe return of all firefighters at the end of each work day.

The dispatch center issued 14,063 burn permits for fuel reduction, hardwood control, land clearing, agricultural, wildlife enhancement, and miscellaneous burns in FY 2014. There were an additional 1,783 calls inquiring about the burn permit process and requirements, as well as general forestry information.

Through an agreement with the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, the AFC dispatch center scheduled hunting reservations for disabled persons at Macon State Forest and Little River State Forest. A total of 193 calls were received in reference to this duty.

COMMUNICATIONS

The Alabama Forestry Commission operates and maintains two complete radio systems and over 200 tower sites across the state. AFC personnel utilize the statewide VHF system for routine communications, fire prevention, and suppression operations, while a UHF radio system provides communication for the volunteer fire departments in 38 counties. The AFC provides and maintains these repeaters 24 hours a day, seven days a week, at no cost to the VFDs.

Three AFC communication technicians service and maintain the UHF and VHF radio systems infrastructure. Located in Decatur, Brewton, and the Montgomery Dispatch Center, each technician is responsible for maintaining a geographic area within the state. These technicians combined service over 1,000 AFC radios and almost 500 RCFP (VFD) radios.



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The Communications Section is exploring the potential use of a digital radio system for both UHF and VHF, and how it could benefit the agency in the future. Additional sites have been added to a few RCFP counties due to weaker audio levels that were a result of frequency narrow banding. Bibb, Etowah, Washington, Crenshaw, Marengo, Perry, and Calhoun are some of the counties that benefited from these additional repeater sites. Updating of all counties with significant coverage gaps is still in process.

The AFC holds a position on the Alabama First Responders Wireless Commission (AFRWC). Created by Gov. Robert Bentley, this group is responsible for strategic planning of a statewide interoperable system to be used by first responders and support personnel in Public Safety, Public Health, and Public Works.

AFC LAW ENFORCEMENT

The Alabama Forestry Commission's investigative unit had both a busy and productive year in FY 2014. Unfortunately, 2014 was also the final year that the agency would field its own investigators. Effective January 1, 2015, pursuant to Alabama Act 2013-67, all seven of the AFC's forest investigators – as well as its two arson bloodhounds – became part of the newly created Alabama Law Enforcement Agency (ALEA). With this tremendous change, much of 2014 was devoted to preparing for the ALEA merger.

As Alabama's law enforcement legacy agencies planned to merge, FY 2014 offered many training opportunities. AFC forest investigators participated in an ALEA orientation course, ALERRT active-shooter training, and state Bureau of Investigation cross-training. At the latter of these, an AFC forest investigator provided arson investigation training to non-AFC law enforcement officers, resulting in more state personnel receiving this essential training.

In preparation of 2015, AFC forest investigators worked hand-in-hand with other state law enforcement agencies in other ways including participation in ALEA personnel, policy, and training committees. AFC forest investigators also conducted operations with other state law enforcement agencies. In particular, they worked with officers from the Alabama Alcoholic Beverage Control Board and the Alabama Department of Homeland Security. One AFC forest investigator even became a certified member of the state's newly-formed Tactical Dive Team.

Much progress was made in equipping AFC forest investigators for their work. Because they typically work alone, and often in remote, forested areas, AFC forest investigators must stake their lives on the equipment they bring to the field. Knowing this, the AFC made it a priority

in FY 2014 to equip its forest investigators with new ballistic vests, Glock 23 pistols, Garmin GPS units, and PlotWatcher surveillance cameras. Significantly, all this equipment was funded through private grants or trade-ins of surplus equipment, resulting in very little added cost to the state. Additionally, through the cooperation and generosity of the Alabama Alcoholic Beverage Control Board, AFC forest investigators were also equipped with and trained to use Smith & Wesson AR-15 rifles.

Even with anticipation of the coming change, AFC forest investigators remained devoted to their normal day-to-day law enforcement responsibilities throughout FY 2014. All across the state, they investigated cases of timber theft, logging equipment theft, and arson. The AFC's original bloodhound, Blaze, continued to assist with arson investigations. Meanwhile, the agency's newest bloodhound, Ember, became fully trained.

The AFC's law enforcement efforts resulted in numerous arrests, indictments, and convictions. This included the apprehension of wildland arsonists, halting a logging equipment theft ring in Fayette County, and the capture of a group of diesel fuel thieves in Butler County. In Marion and Winston counties, AFC forest investigators provided the critical link to breaking a multi-state theft ring that involved logging equipment, vehicles, ATVs, and trailers. A broader, multi-agency investigation revealed that this same group was involved in the production and sale of methamphetamine, cocaine, and marijuana. Finally, another investigation uncovered widespread timber theft in central Alabama, resulting in 17 felony theft indictments.

FOREST HEALTH

The Forest Health section affirmatively adheres to the agency's vision of ensuring healthy, productive forests for everyone in Alabama to enjoy. Forest surveying and management activities were conducted throughout the year to detect, monitor, and ultimately reduce the impact of these harmful agents.

SUDDEN OAK DEATH

The spring survey for sudden oak death was conducted in March and April 2014. The results indicated that two of the five nursery sites that had previously tested positive for the pathogen, *Phytophthora ramorum*, tested positive again this year. Unfortunately, there was one new nursery site that also tested positive.

SOUTHERN PINE BEETLE

Pheromone traps were placed in four selected counties and at four national forests in the state to predict the population levels of southern pine beetle (*Dendroctonus*



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frontalis). These traps were deployed in March when the dogwoods began to bloom and remained on site for four consecutive weeks. The overall results from the 24 traps predicted that Alabama would once again experience a low population of southern pine beetle (SPB).

Detection flights for southern pine beetle were conducted statewide in June/July and August/September. More beetle infestations were detected than the previous year, justifying the continuation of flights well into October. The total number of SPB spots detected from June to October was 168, infesting 18,785 pines.

LOBLOLLY PINE SAWFLY

For the second consecutive year, the Alabama Forestry Commission received a formal report about the loblolly pine sawfly (*Neodiprion taedae linearis*) damaging trees in northwest Alabama. For some pine stands in the area, this was the third consecutive year. Infestations from this defoliating pest were reported in Colbert, Marion, Franklin, Lamar and Fayette counties, totaling 7,897 acres.



EMERALD ASH BORER AND THOUSAND CANKERS DISEASE

The AFC notified the Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries (AGI) that there was a potential threat of infected ash and black walnut wood being transported into Alabama. However, traps deployed by AGI in selected areas in the northeastern section of the state produced no emerald ash borers (*Agrilus planipennis*) or walnut twig beetles (*Pityophthorus juglandis*) that cause “thousand cankers” disease.

LAUREL WILT DISEASE

After wilting sassafras trees were noticed in Sumter and Hale counties, stem samples were collected. Laboratory results confirmed that laurel wilt disease, the interaction between the redbay ambrosia beetle (*Xyleborus glabratus*) and a fungus (*Raffaelea lauricola*), has now spread to these two additional counties in the state.

FIREWOOD REDESIGN GRANT

The Alabama Forestry Commission has continued educating citizens across the state with the “Don’t Move Firewood” campaign. Brochures and pamphlets explaining

the connection between the movement of firewood and the introduction of non-native pests were distributed at several different events.

COGONGRASS REDESIGN GRANT

Several county agencies participating in a cost-share program have worked to identify and spray along rights-of-way for infestations of cogongrass (*Imperata cylindrical*). To date, over \$47,000 has been paid to these participating county road departments for work completed under the program. Several AFC county offices purchased spraying equipment this year that totaled close to \$30,000 to be used for treating cogongrass infestations on state property managed by the agency. AFC personnel also completed other accomplishments such as detecting cogongrass spots, presenting cogongrass information, and writing cogongrass management recommendations.

KUDZU REDESIGN GRANT

In addition to cogongrass, the Alabama Forestry Commission has initiated spraying and additional control treatments for other invasive plants on agency-managed state lands. Several AFC county offices purchased spraying equipment that totaled approximately \$20,000 for controlling kudzu (*Pueraria Montana*). Employees at the Chilton County office started spraying about 40 acres with Milestone at Thorsby Seed Orchard, where approximately 60 acres of kudzu exists.

Also of interest are the control treatments implemented for kudzu at Red Mountain Park in Birmingham, a sub-recipient of the Kudzu Redesign Grant. A 5.5-acre tract of land at the park was first plowed in the fall of 2013 to cut and expose kudzu roots. A glyphosate herbicide was immediately sprayed to control the uprooted kudzu and Chinese privet. To restore the site with native vegetation, rye grass and tree seedlings were planted in this treated area by February 2014. A company called “Goat Busters” delivered 50 Kiko goats (along with two Great Pyrenees dogs) in August 2014 to control kudzu and other invasive plants in a 3.25-acre area near a sensitive, historical site. During their seven days at the park, the goats consumed over two acres of vegetation.

STORM DAMAGE

On April 28, 2014, storms moved across northern and central Alabama, with 23 tornados damaging property and downing trees. Limestone, Franklin, and Marion counties were chosen for aerial assessment due to the amount of destroyed forestland. A total of 77 acres were destroyed by the storms.

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STEWARDSHIP

Alabama's Forest Stewardship program provides technical assistance to private forest owners to encourage and enable active long-term forest management. A primary focus of the program is the development of comprehensive, multiple-resource management plans that provide landowners with the information they need to manage their forests for a variety of products and services.

AFC staff members work with private landowners to educate them on multi-resource forest management. Using a stand management recommendation (SMR), we provide the landowners with a written proposal to address a specific situation. Next, the landowner is encouraged to address the management of the entire property through a Stewardship forest management plan. Once the management plan is in place, current accomplishments are acknowledged by awarding of Stewardship certification. Partnering very closely with the American Tree Farm System, the AFC presents the merits of Tree Farm and third-party certification once a landowner becomes a Forest Steward.

As a private landowner grows in the knowledge of multiple-use forest management, a threshold is reached where the landowner becomes eligible for Alabama's flagship program, TREASURE Forest. TREASURE is an acronym for Timber, Recreation, Environment, and Aesthetics, for a Sustained Usable REsource. When a private landowner is awarded TREASURE Forest status, they have demonstrated sound multiple resource management to wisely meet their own objectives while at the same time protecting and enhancing the forest resources of Alabama.

Stewardship / Forest Management Accomplishments FY14		
Program	Landowners Assisted	Impact
Stewardship Management Plans	361	47,017 acres
New Certifications	271	71,479 acres
Stand Management Recommendations	3,193	176,893 acres
Prescribed Burning	431	25,859 acres
Firebreak Plowing	490	775 miles
Forestry Consultant Referrals	423	N/A

LANDOWNER ASSISTANCE/ COST-SHARE PROGRAMS

Writing forest management plans is one of the many services that the Alabama Forestry Commission offers landowners to assist them in meeting their objectives for their property. To further help landowners achieve their goals, financial assistance is also available to qualified

landowners through forestry cost-share programs. AFC foresters and technicians are available to meet with landowners and provide technical assistance through on-the-ground assessments. Written management plans give directions for installing cost-share practices and cover a variety of topics including timber and wildlife habitat management, invasive species control, maintaining Alabama's Best Management Practices for Forestry, as well as enhancing threatened and endangered species and their ecosystems.

Funding for federal cost-share programs comes primarily through the US Farm Bill. The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) oversee distribution of these funds for a variety of agricultural programs including forestry. The AFC is responsible for writing plans outlining the practice requirements for all of the cost-shared forestry practices.

The following table lists the forestry cost-share programs available for FY 2014, and the corresponding plans and acres produced by AFC forestry technicians for Alabama timberland owners enrolled in these programs.

FARM SERVICE AGENCY (FSA) PROGRAMS

- Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) – AFC county offices wrote 262 plans totaling 8,967 acres during fiscal year 2014 for general and continuous CRP practices.
- Emergency Forestry Restoration Program (EFRP) – Designed to provide funding for restoration of farmland and timberland damaged by natural disasters, FSA county offices can request EFRP funding when damage occurs to rural property. In FY2014, AFC reported writing 11 plans for 693 acres in four Alabama counties including Calhoun, Cherokee, Marshall, and Sumter.

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE (NRCS) PROGRAMS

- Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) – 154 management plans for 10,079 acres
- Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) – 11 management plans for 567 acres. The WHIP program is to be deactivated after 2014.
- Conservation Activity Plans (CAP) – AFC Technical Service Provider (TSP) foresters wrote eight CAP or 106 Forest Management Plans for 233 acres in FY2014.

STATE OF ALABAMA FUNDED PROGRAMS

- Alabama Agricultural & Conservation Development Commission Program (AACDCP) – Administered by the Alabama Soil and Water

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Conservation Committee (ASWCC) and managed by the Alabama Soil and Water Conservation Districts (ASWCD) located in counties throughout the state, this state-funded program received no new funding for 2013 or 2014. However, the ASWCD pooled their unspent funds and redistributed these funds to the counties. AFC foresters and technicians wrote 76 AACDCP plans totaling 3,029 acres in FY2014.

BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Based on 2013 Forest Inventory Analysis (FIA) data, a total of 869,394 acres of forestland in Alabama underwent some type of timber harvesting activity annually for the years 2001 through 2013. As this figure does not include *all* the acres on which some other type of silvicultural practice occurred each year, it would be fair to say that

each year for the past 12 years, there was close to one million acres of forestland per year in Alabama that incurred some type of silvicultural practice. Alabama's Best Management Practices (BMPs) for Forestry help producers perform such silvicultural practices while protecting both the waters of the state and the waters of the United States.

The Alabama Forestry Commission implements many initiatives that ensure forest landowners have the freedom to exercise their private property rights while protecting water

quality. The following BMP initiatives were addressed and implemented by the AFC in fiscal year 2013-2014:

BMP EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

A total of 27 individual programs were presented to over 1,047 participants including landowners, loggers, foresters, university students, elected officials, and AFC staff.

THIRD-PARTY CERTIFICATION PROGRAMS

There were 16 requests for information from program participants that were fulfilled.

BMP ON-THE-GROUND INSPECTIONS FOR EDUCATION AND PREVENTION

- Statewide, 258 active logging site inspections were completed.
- The AFC was invited to look at another 24 sites.

- Other random inspections included eight sites.
- A total of 290 on-the-ground inspections were conducted.

AFC INTERNAL AUDITS ON AFC WORK COMPLETED

Made 73 on-the-ground inspections.

SILVICULTURAL COMPLAINT RESOLUTION

Through our written memoranda of agreements with the Alabama Department of Environmental Management and the US Army Corps of Engineers, the AFC investigated 51 complaints that were allegedly caused by silvicultural activities. All 51 complaints were resolved or deemed a non-valid water quality complaint for this fiscal year. There were 23 valid complaints, and 27 invalid complaints. One tract received two complaints.

MARKETING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Alabama Forestry Commission contributes to forest products marketing and economic development in a number of ways. Through the AFC's involvement with the Forest Inventory & Analysis (FIA) program, vital statistical data pertaining to Alabama's forest resource is obtained. Land consultants and forest industry representatives utilize FIA data to make important decisions regarding where to locate new wood products mills and make expansions to existing mills. Quite often they request and are provided this data by AFC personnel.

Along with the US Forest Service (USFS), the AFC canvassed all primary wood-products industries during the spring and summer months to determine industrial uses of roundwood, and annual amounts of timber product drain. With the exception of pulp mills (surveyed by the USFS), all primary wood-processing mills were visited by AFC personnel to collect information regarding each mill's operation. The USFS will compile data from all mill survey forms and produce a publication which will document timber product output (TPO) and residue use for Alabama mills. This report will also compare TPO from 2013 with 2011. Mill-specific information is not published. This publication should be available in late 2015.

The AFC produced its annual "Forest Resource Report" in June. This report contains economic status indicators of the forest industry and forest resources for Alabama for the previous year. The "Forest Resource Report 2013" is available on the AFC website.

Finally, the AFC is a member of the Southern Group of State Foresters' Services, Utilization, and Marketing (SUM) Committee. The goal of the SUM Committee is to coordinate actions to market forest resources, forest products, and other forest values of the South.



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FOREST INVENTORY ANALYSIS

FIA is a continuous, nationwide timber and forest resource inventory that has been ongoing for more than 70 years in Alabama. FIA data is the primary source of forest resource information and it plays a vital role in economic development. Some of the more significant information obtained from FIA include the status and trends relating to forest area, forest volume, and tree growth versus removals.

This information is obtained by AFC two-man field crews that collect a variety of forest resource data from a set of field sample locations (FIA plots) distributed across the landscape at approximately a 3x3 mile spacing. When fully staffed, Alabama has five field crews sample 15 percent of the total number of FIA plots annually. The field data collected is transferred by the FIA crew leader to USFS personnel for analysis, and subsequently compiled into statistical reports. The 2014 FIA Inventory is expected to be completed sometime in October.



- 2013 FIA data indicates there are approximately 22.8 million acres of timberland in Alabama, accounting for 68 percent of the state's total area. This amount of area remains virtually unchanged since 2000. Individual or family-owned forests account for 13.7 million acres, or 60.0 percent of the state's timberland.
- 2013 FIA data shows that Alabama is growing timber faster than it is being harvested. The average annual rate of growth-to-removals for all species is 1.42:1 for the period 2001 to 2013. For softwoods, the growth-to-removal ratio is 1.35:1, and for hardwoods the ratio is 1.67:1.
- According to 2013 FIA data, the "loblolly pine/shortleaf pine" forest type group is the predominant forest type group in Alabama, occupying approximately 37.9 percent of the total timberland area. The "oak/hickory" forest type group ranks second, accounting for approximately 31.1 percent of timberland acreage.

STATE LANDS MANAGEMENT AND ASSISTANCE

With the recent management agreement in FY2014 between the Alabama Forestry Commission and the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources State Parks Division, the AFC is now responsible for assisting in managing an additional 24,774 acres of state parks. This makes a total of approximately 52,138 acres of forestland in Alabama that is being managed by the Commission. More than 16,000 acres are under the agency's direct control; these include 12 state forests, as well as numerous old fire tower sites. The Commission has entered into cooperative agreements with three other agencies to manage their forestlands: 19 state fishing lakes (4,786 acres) and seven state parks (24,774 acres, as mentioned above) for the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources; seven tracts (5,060 acres) for the Department of Mental Health; and approximately 2,000 acres at the old Fort McClellan post for the McClellan Development Authority. All of these lands are managed under TREASURE Forest guidelines for multiple use and sustainability.

During FY2014, Commission personnel were involved in a variety of management activities on these lands, including preparation of timber sales and oversight of harvesting activities; prescribed burning for wildlife habitat

2014 REVENUES FROM STATE LANDS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Timber Sales	Sale Value	Revenue AFC
Alabama Forestry Commission	\$976,817	\$976,817
Department of Conservation	\$126,559	\$12,656
Department of Mental Health		
Alberta Tract 14-11 (<i>Rejected by Dept of MH</i>)		
McClellan Development Authority	\$133,932	\$13,393
Total	\$1,237,308	\$1,002,866
Prescribed Burning	Acres	Revenue
Department of Mental Health	673	\$17,162
Department of Conservation	435	\$8,936
Total	1,108	\$26,098
Management Fees	Acres	Revenue
Department of Conservation - Fisheries	4,786	\$4,786
Department of Conservation - State Parks	710	\$710
Department of Mental Health	5,060	\$5,060
McClellan Development Authority	1,330	\$1,330
Total	11,886	\$11,886
Grand Total		\$1,040,850

FOREST MANAGEMENT DIVISION

improvement, aesthetics, and wildfire hazard reduction; site preparation and tree planting; forest health monitoring; and road, bridge, and building maintenance. In addition, hunting, fishing, hiking, biking, camping, horseback riding, and other recreational opportunities are available on certain state forests. Revenues from timber sales on these lands are shown in the accompanying table. The Commission proceeded with numerous sales in FY2014 as the timber market continued to show strength.

URBAN FORESTRY

The goals of the Alabama Forestry Commission's Urban and Community Forestry (U&CF) program are to promote and assist cities, towns, and communities in professionally managing their valuable urban forests. Thanks to our many tree planting partners, the yearly estimates show over 13,400 volunteer hours focused on urban forestry. More than 140 communities in Alabama were contacted by U&CF personnel for technical assistance and to promote Tree City USA certification/recertification. Arbor Day celebrations were held in all 67 counties in Alabama. AFC employees made more than 500 contacts including 356 technical assists with homeowners during the 2014 fiscal year. Other accomplishments in the urban forest for the year are listed below.

- Arbor Day Foundation recognitions are supported by this program. Certification occurs in December after the submission deadline for this annual report. The numbers for the year ending 2013 were 80 fully-approved Tree City USAs in the state, up nine from the previous year. We are on track to surpass this number in 2014, and there are five communities receiving growth awards. We also have seven Tree Campus USA participating institutions, and one Tree Line USA agency, the Alabama Power Company.
- The annual AFC tree give-aways were held in February around Arbor Week with over 75,000 seedlings of 19 different species distributed to Alabama residents.
- U&CF grant sub-recipients completed projects in 2014 from the 2012 fiscal year proposals. Sub-recipients included Your Town Alabama, Trenholm State Community College (40+ trees planted in 2014), Wallace State Community College (provided seedlings for give-aways), and the City of Prattville. There were no pass-through funds for 2013, but proposal requests for the \$20,000 approved in 2014 have begun for distribution in 2015.
- U&CF personnel participated in numerous training sessions and events in 2014, including a series of US Forest Service classes on grant management;

revitalization projects such as "50 Years Forward: the 50th Anniversary of the Birmingham Civil Rights Movement," and a talk to the Alabama Association of Conservation Districts mid-year meeting. Other activities included the MLK Day restorations, Alabama Power Foundation's "Good Roots" grant program, and tree board meetings. Display booths were manned at the Buckmasters Expo and Tuskegee University's 45th anniversary of their forestry program. Training was also attended at the Green Infrastructure Seminar in South Carolina, and the Urban Forest Strike Team Training and Mock Disaster in Savannah, Georgia.

- The Alabama Tree Recovery Campaign concluded, following this third and last year of the cooperative tree plantings with our partner, the Arbor Day Foundation. This project resulted in over 85,000 new trees in the ground for Alabama communities to replace those lost in the April 2011 tornados.



GEOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION SERVICES

Administered by the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA), a National Agriculture Imagery Program (NAIP) capturing the state's forests during full foliage has been made available to Alabama Forestry Commission personnel. AFC county offices use this 'leaf-on' aerial imagery as a base layer for forestry mapping and to digitize forest management plans annually. The NAIP imagery is also used at the state office for various mapping purposes and has played a vital role in the AFC's GIS analysis.

In FY 2013-14, the AFC used the Stewardship Accomplishment Data Loader (SADL), an application programming interface within the Stewardship Mapping and Reporting Tool (SMART), to generate annual accomplishment reporting to the US Forest Service.

The AFC continues to use GIS technology to ensure sustainable forestry management and environmental integrity in the state.

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

OUTREACH

Fiscal year 2014 was a year of continuity for the Alabama Forestry Commission's Outreach Program. With assistance from our six regional outreach coordinators, the program sailed smoothly through continued initiatives. With new leadership, a renewed effort has been applied toward increasing our visibility within the state, both in and out of the classroom. These regional coordinators hosted numerous school programs that reached over 1,000 children in grades K–8. Other collaborations and outreach efforts offered the same message to adult audiences throughout the state, enhancing fire prevention knowledge to all in attendance.

Additionally, 24 high school students from around the state enjoyed a jam-packed week as they were exposed to natural resource fields at the Alabama Forestry Camp this past June. For the 20th year, the camp was held at the Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund's Rural Training and Research Center located at Epes in Sumter County, Alabama. The five-day event was conducted by the Federation of Southern Cooperatives, comprised of personnel from the AFC, Alabama A&M University, and Tuskegee University who collectively directed each day's varied activities.

Despite funding shortfalls, organizers of the Alabama Forestry Camp enlisted the Alabama A&M University FireDawgs to assist with instruction and hands-on guidance to the campers. This also gave the high school students a chance to speak with someone close to their age. Graduates made many friends and enjoyed an enhanced awareness of forestry and natural resources as they returned home. This year's camp was a success because of various sponsors such as the National Park Service, the City of Tuscaloosa, and the Alabama Marine Police.

BUTLER COUNTY NATURAL RESOURCES YOUTH CAMP

In its 19th year, the Butler County Forestry Planning Committee's Natural Resources Youth Camp has provided Butler County youth the opportunity to become more aware of the value of forest resources to Alabama's environment and economy, and the relationship these resources have to their everyday life. An outdoor classroom was the setting for 30 energetic and inquisitive sixth-grade students who were chosen by their school principals and science teachers

to attend this three day/two night camp. This camp offered them the opportunity to learn about forestry, wildlife, ecology, tree identification, fire protection, forest products, soil and water conservation, and the people who manage these vast Alabama resources.

Instructors from the Alabama Forestry Commission, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Butler County Soil & Water Conservation District, Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Farm Service Agency, Alabama Forestry Association, Alabama Ornithological Society, and others conducted "hands-on" classes

concerning forestry-related subjects which included native plants, wildlife management and identification, non-game birds, as well as several Project Learning Tree activities. In addition, an on-site visit from Callaway Gardens provided an up-close visit with some local birds of prey. A highlight of the camp, students were given the opportunity to spend time exploring Mussel Creek, looking for inhabitants and often being surprised by what they



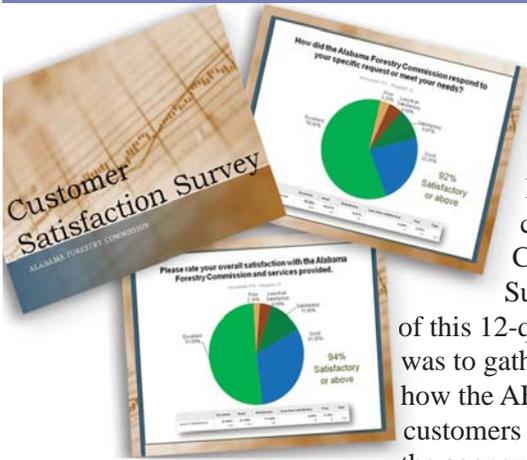
found. The final day provided a chance for the campers to display their marksmanship in different shooting sports events such as shotguns, rifles, black powder, and archery.

Since the beginning of this unique camping experience, the opportunity has been provided at no cost to campers or their families. Funding for this project comes from tremendous support from the forest community, private individuals, and civic clubs. Additional funding is provided through grants from the "Alabama Forests Forever" education grant, the Alabama Power Foundation, and Rayonier Foundation.

MEDIA/PUBLICATIONS

In 2014, the AFC Media/Publications Team continued with the ongoing public awareness campaign to favorably market the agency, not only to the state's forest landowners but also the general public. Communication and positive media coverage was achieved statewide through the usual avenues of producing and distributing news releases and media advisories, as well as through social media networks including Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube.

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH



To better serve the landowners and citizens of our state, the Alabama Forestry Commission conducted a brief Customer Satisfaction Survey. The objective of this 12-question online survey was to gather input regarding how the AFC has served customers in the past, and how the agency can better focus our attention and services in the future. The findings revealed a 92 percent satisfactory or above rating on the question “How did the Alabama Forestry Commission respond to your specific request or meet your needs?” and 94 percent satisfactory or above regarding “Please rate your overall satisfaction with the Alabama Forestry Commission and services provided.” The complete results of the survey can be viewed on the agency website under the “About Us” tab on the home page.

For the third straight year, the Media Team coordinated the Alabama Forestry Commission’s participation in two of Alabama’s largest three-day venues with exhibits at the Annual World Deer Expo in July at the Birmingham-Jefferson Civic Center (BJCC) and the Annual BuckMasters Expo in August at the Montgomery Convention Center/Renaissance Hotel. Agency associates were on hand to talk with attendees, answer questions, provide contact information for local Commission offices, and distribute informative AFC brochures and publications regarding forest management/stewardship, wildfire prevention, and insect protection. An assortment of Blaze & Ember, Smokey Bear, and Woodsy Owl merchandise was also provided for event-goers. A particular highlight of both events were the special appearances made by “Blaze” the AFC’s veteran arson dog and the addition of “Ember,” the agency’s

newest arson dog. These two canine ambassadors of the agency proved very successful with the audiences, especially making a big hit with children.

A special Media Team project in mid-July of 2014 involved the coordination of Operation “Planes: Fire & Rescue” for opening weekend of the Disney blockbuster movie. While cinema managers were excited to partner with the agency on this special premiere event, county AFC associates delivered, having a presence at a total of 17 theatres across the state. They responded to the challenge by setting up dozers and transports in theatre parking lots, manning theatre lobbies with AFC displays of wildfire prevention messages, as well as handing out assorted Smokey Bear and Blaze & Ember promotional items to movie-goers. Smokey Bear was on hand at most venues, along with volunteer fire department partners at several sites. This movie event provided a unique opportunity to promote the courageous work performed by AFC wildland firefighters in the service of others, while highlighting the agency’s suppression equipment. It gave Alabama Forestry Commission associates some well-deserved recognition in their local communities and brought the agency a bit of positive exposure at the same time.

Other projects for the year included:

- Publication of *Alabama’s TREASURED Forests* – Entering its 32nd year, the magazine continued to provide forest landowners with stewardship principles and proper forest management techniques/advice.
- Production of the video presentation for the annual Helene Mosley Memorial TREASURE Forest Awards for the 23rd year.
- Assistance with production of the annual Alabama Tree Farmer of the Year video presentation.
- Continued implementation of the “Don’t Move Firewood” campaign, in cooperation with other members of the Southern Group of State Foresters.
- A \$10,000 grant from the Alabama Forests Forever Foundation made possible the purchase of promotional materials featuring arson dogs “Blaze” and “Ember” as well as the AFC’s Arson Hotline.
- Annual production of the brochures for both Alabama Forestry Camp and the Butler County Natural Resources Youth Camp, as well as four issues of *TREETopics*, the AFC employee newsletter.



ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISION

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

The Information Technology (IT) Division has diligently worked towards bringing new technologies to AFC. All Windows XP computers were replaced along with many of the aging printers that were slowing productivity. IT predicts that all Windows Vista computers will be replaced over the next year. Both the public and employee-only websites are currently being remodeled to optimize data entry speed, provide greater error handling, and become aesthetically pleasing while minimizing the time needed to locate desired information.

PERSONNEL

It was an eventful year regarding Alabama Forestry Commission personnel, with a further increase in turnover, coupled with a surge in retirements (16 during the course of the fiscal year). Hiring did not keep pace with separations, causing a downward trend in the number of employees statewide as the fiscal year came to a close. The AFC started the fiscal year October 1, 2013, with 252 employees, and finished September 30, 2014, with 246 employees. This represents a continuum of the AFC budget having been cut

40 percent in the last quadrennial (compared to an overall state government cut of 11 percent), with an associated reduction of 24 percent in personnel, many in the area of frontline fire fighters.

Emphasis has been placed on a more determined approach with regard to recruitment and retention, along with a more strategic process in place for hiring, particularly in the field. The Personnel Office has oversight for ensuring appropriate, efficient, and timely actions with regard to appointments and separations, payroll and benefits, evaluation, safety, readiness and training, and other auxiliary services for over 240 employees statewide.

AFC TRAINING 2013-2014

Consistency is the goal of the Alabama Forestry Commission's readiness and training program. Our training efforts coincide with national training standards in wildland fire fighting, FEMA, and forest management. AFC training programs provide leadership and assistance to both federal and state agencies in times of emergencies that directly impact citizens of Alabama.

This fiscal year, there were over 17,485 hours spent on training individual employees to meet these standards.



ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISION

REVENUE & OBLIGATIONS SUMMARY

AS OF SEPTEMBER 30, 2014

TOTAL REVENUES		
Description	Actual YTD	Forecasted/ Budgeted
Severance Taxes	5,151,478	4,700,000
Timber and Turpentine	36,498	38,000
Fishing Permits	4,577	4,000
Fire Suppression	3,102	1,000
Oil Royalties	6,660	7,000
Insurance Recoveries	30,937	40,000
Reimbursements Not Classified	42,629	8,500
Prior Year Refunds	7,893	2,000
Contract Services	733,408	560,000
Salvage Equipment	21,712	10,000.00
Timber Sales	1,961,122	1,400,000
Other Sales	0	12,000
Intragovernmental Receipts	6,827	20,000
Other Rents	20,856	20,000
General Fund Transfers	9,124,653	9,124,653
Interfund State	800	0
Interfund Federal	0	200,000
Federal Reimbursements	2,518,271	3,000,000
County Forest Collections/Assessments	1,799,809	1,800,000
TOTAL REVENUES	21,471,226	20,947,153
TOTAL OBLIGATIONS:		
Personnel Costs	11,370,260	12,562,481
Employee Benefits	4,571,777	5,089,079
Travel, In-State	151,256	182,600
Travel, Out-of-State	36,802	60,277
Repairs & Maintenance	161,914	283,000
Rentals & Leases	55,384	82,703
Utilities & Communication	617,639	633,956
Professional Services	446,274	500,000
Supplies, Materials, & Operating Expenses	829,167	1,016,000
Transportation Equipment Operations	1,812,321	1,859,000
Grants & Awards	1,334,251	1,565,968
Capital Outlay	37,306	160,000
Transportation Equipment Purchases	83,990	291,135
Other Equipment Purchases	194,293	268,000
Miscellaneous	0	0
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	21,702,628	24,554,199



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If an individual believes they have been discriminated against by the Alabama Forestry Commission, a complaint may be filed by calling toll free (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD) or by writing to:

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