

# Alabama Forestry Commission

Strategic Plan



**2011 - 2013**

# **Alabama Forestry Commission's Mission Statement**

Established as a state agency in 1924, the mission of the Alabama Forestry Commission is three-fold, to:

- Protect the Forests from all harmful agents;
- Serve landowners and help them carry out responsible forest management on their property, using professional technical assistance so as to benefit themselves, their land and society; and
- Educate the General Public about the value of our forests in ensuring both a healthy economy and environment.

## **Alabama Forestry Commission's Core Values**

### **Teamwork**

We share responsibility and ownership of our decisions and actions, and trust one another in making shared decisions as a team through honest and open communications.

### **Excellence**

We will provide the highest standards of quality in everything we do.

### **Integrity**

We insist on an organizational environment consistently based upon the highest ethical standards.

### **Respect**

We will show appreciation and high regard for our associates, partners, and customers. Our core values are the principles or standards upon which we conduct business and the values upon which we base our decisions, the foundation upon which we will interact with one another, and how we will be expected to interact with customers and others.

# Alabama Forestry Commission's Key Strategies

## **I. Invest in our employee's personal and professional growth and development.**

- A. Conduct ongoing positional gap analysis of training needs.
  - 1. Divisions, Regions and Work Units will coordinate training needs with the Training Officer.
  - 2. Ensure all personnel are up-to-date on Tree Farm, Stewardship, and Treasure Forest programs rules and procedures.
  - 3. Train and equip our personnel to take a leadership role in making the public aware of the threat of non-native invasive plants.
- B. Provide up-to-date training opportunities for all employees with an emphasis on the following courses.
  - 1. Basic Firefighter Training for new employees.
  - 2. Basic Firefighting Equipment Operation Training for new employees.
  - 3. Incident Command System (ICS) Training for current employees.
- C. Ensure training meets external requirements to provide maximum effectiveness for employees and other natural resource stakeholders.
  - 1. Divisions will coordinate training opportunities with external partners and communicate to regions and the Training Officer.
  - 2. Divisions will ensure training and certification of training meets any required external requirements.
- D. Develop internal or seek outside resources for training opportunities to enhance our employee's professional presentation skills.
- E. Develop statewide forest management training program.
  - 1. Introduction to Forest Management.
  - 2. Basic to advanced forest management.

## **II. Reduce the Agency Total Incident Rate (TIR) by promoting a Safe Working Environment.**

- A. Apply statewide safety program to assure a safe working environment which allows input from all Commission employees.
- B. State Safety Officer, Divisions, Regions and Work Unit safety groups will operate collaboratively to emphasize safety.
  - 1. Utilize a statewide reporting system to effectively communicate changes, alerts, identify training needs and provide timely accident analysis to minimize future accidents.
  - 2. Revise statewide safety manual as needed.

## **III. Efficiently use manpower, assets, and equipment to maximize agencies effectiveness in providing services which protect and enhance the natural resources of the State.**

- A. Ensure consistency of accomplishment reporting.
- B. Identify opportunities for operational improvement.
- C. Conduct an annual assessment of needs and agency resources as relates to equipment, land and buildings. Develop a replacement and/or retention plan of all assets.
  - 1. Decrease average age of firefighting equipment to minimize downtime and repair costs.
    - i. Establish a realistic replacement schedule.
    - ii. Seek opportunities to secure equipment through grants and/or lease programs.
    - iii. Utilize FEPP to purchase used equipment to upgrade fleet.
  - 2. Utilize the 10-year management plans to maximize forest management and productivity of all state lands.
    - i. Review and revise as necessary.
  - 3. Utilize annual DORM Property Certification to determine feasibility for a) usage of current agency owned structures and b) whether additional capital outlay for upcoming year is needed.

## **IV. Protect Alabama's Natural Resources from Threats**

### **A. Wildfire**

1. Deploy trained personnel to safely and efficiently detect and suppress wildfires.

### **B. Insects and Diseases**

1. Detect, report and assist in the suppression of infestations of harmful insects and diseases.
  - i. Achieve 100% notification of SPB infestations to affected landowners.
  - ii. Provide direct landowner services in suppression efforts.
  - iii. Seek opportunities to off-set suppression costs through grants and/or cost share programs.
2. Develop partners to assist in detection.
3. Map infestations that can be shared with all landowners.
4. Respond to and investigate 100% of BMP complaints.
5. Assist landowners in the suppression of harmful agents.
  - i. Utilize statewide assessment and regular monitoring of invasive species locations.
  - ii. Identify, assess and monitor native forest pests.

### **C. Urban Growth & Development**

1. Continue involvement with the Alabama Association of Regional Councils.
  - i. Maintain region liaisons for their local regional planning council.
2. Continue to facilitate communities' efforts to develop their capacity to manage urban forest.

#### D. Unlawful Forest Activities

1. Focus Commission's law enforcement efforts to reduce overall number of wildfires, timber and equipment theft cases.
  - i. Maintain close working relationships with other law enforcement agencies to improve productivity.
  - ii. Utilize "Blaze" bloodhound to aid in arson cases.
  - iii. Utilize incidental investigations of permitted and non-permitted burns to educate the public about wildfires and proper burning.

### V. Sustain Healthy and Productive Forests

#### A. Provide professional forestry advice to increase forested acres that are sustainably managed on public and private lands.

1. Utilize the 2010 Statewide Assessment which has established a baseline of forest resources to focus Commission efforts. This baseline allows us to monitor our progress in meeting what partner groups and the Commission have determined as priority issues throughout the State.
2. Increase landowner participation in programs that recognize managed forest properties.
  - i. Stewardship Management Plans
  - ii. Stand Management Recommendations
  - iii. Landowner certification programs
  - iv. Outreach and Underserved
  - v. Cost share
3. Provide technical assistance and stand management recommendations that help landowners qualify for cost share assistance.
4. Provide landowners with technical and financial assistance related to federal and state cost share programs.
  - i. Help local and federal entities provide cost share assistance.
5. Identify and assist underserved landowners.

- i. Identify and work with partners to leverage success of meeting limited resource and minority landowner needs.
- B. Collaborate with other partnerships to implement Statewide Assessment.
  1. The Forestry Commission will participate in a Statewide Assessment Taskforce to select strategies that address threats to natural resources.
  2. Strengthen partnerships with ADEM and Clean Water Associations to maintain an open and working relationship in implementing watershed plans.
- C. Respond to disasters with the appropriate resources to assist with relief, recovery and rehabilitation efforts in the affected area.
  1. Pre-identify and train strike teams/task forces and incident command teams for immediate response to disasters.
    - i. Capitalize on non-emergency ICS training opportunities.
  2. Increased interagency involvement with all-hazard disaster planning and preparedness.
  3. Seek opportunities to secure training for AFC personnel and VFDs through grants.

## **VI. Educate the Public and Landowners about the values of natural resources, proper forest management, and its protection.**

- A. Provide educational programs and publications about fire prevention and environmental stewardship.
  1. Develop a WUI educational campaign.
    - i. Work with partners in their educational efforts with Firewise Prevention and Green Infrastructure Planning Programs.
    - ii. Continue identifying and developing working relationships and other opportunities with community and city planners to promote Green Infrastructure.
  2. Train and equip the public to combat the dangers and threats of non-native invasive plants.

- B. Work with all landowner groups, organizations and educational institutions in their natural resource educational efforts.
  - 1. Work with groups and agencies to reach a more diverse audience.
    - i. Work with other resource groups and agencies to assist landowners interested in certification and conservation easements.
  - 2. Work with groups, agencies and universities to develop demonstration areas highlighting value added opportunities.
  - 3. Continue providing support to the Underserved Outreach Council.
- C. Continue improving the Forestry Commission's web page to provide timely and useable information.
  - 1. Ensure links to other groups and agencies are beneficial to landowners.
  - 2. Create and implement a Feedback survey.
- D. Utilize statewide database of landowners and Statewide Assessment and Resource Strategies document to refine and improve service provided to landowners.
  - 1. Improve identifying landowner needs and geographic areas to better focus our landowner assistance efforts.
- E. Identify value added opportunities for landowners and economic development for Alabama.
  - 1. Develop closer working relationships with agencies, universities, and groups to identify and develop emerging markets to provide small landowners with value added opportunities and highlight emerging markets.
    - i. Carbon sequestration
    - ii. Woody biomass fuels
    - iii. Ecosystem Services
    - iv. Green Infrastructure
- F. Prepare and disseminate public awareness material.
  - 1. Kickoff AFC promotional Campaign to include budget presentations.

**VII. Develop an ongoing statewide landowner survey to determine landowner needs and their perception of services provided.**

1. Develop a simple questionnaire consisting of seven (7) to ten (10) questions requesting input from landowners on services provided.
2. Conduct follow-up survey with landowners who request assistance and services through the web.
3. Develop a culture of trust and open communication between AFC employees regarding feedback for services we provide to the public.

## Critical Issues

Listed below are nine threats identified during the statewide assessment which the Forestry Commission may or may not be able to respond to appropriately due to the lack of adequate funding, staffing, training and equipment. These four critical issues stretch across each of the nine threats creating their own unique circumstances in dealing with the threats. Another critical issue is unfunded mandates both at the federal and state level. Unfunded mandates require shifting of limited or non-existent resources in order to comply with the mandate. These critical issues which crossover amongst the different threats make the Forestry Commission's job of overcoming these threats without proper resources extremely difficult.

## Nine Threats

- **Urban growth and development** will continue to have an impact on the distribution, composition, and function of the state's forest resources.
- Forests weakened by **fragmentation** become more susceptible to damage from insects and diseases, and come under stress, often degenerating into a condition of chronic ill health.
- **Invasions of non-native plants and animals** into forests continue to spread and include new species, increasingly eroding forest productivity, hindering forest use and management activities, and degrading diversity and wildlife habitat.
- A **weakening forest-based economy** poses a financial incentive risk for landowners who manage their forests for traditional wood products.
- **Insects and disease** pests can have a significant impact on forest health and productivity through the effects of excessive defoliation, decay, species alteration, or outright mortality.
- A total of 29,593,963 acres—91.7% of Alabama's total surface area—are subject to **wildfire**.
- When **catastrophic storm events** occur, there is often extensive damage and loss to our state's forest resource.
- The effect of **air pollution** on Alabama's forests may become more pronounced as urbanization and population density increase.
- Potential impacts of **climate change** to Alabama's forests include changes in yield of forest products, increased insect outbreaks, and increased encroachment and spread of invasive species.