



2017 - 2020 Strategic Plan

Updated June 28, 2016



ALABAMA FORESTRY COMMISSION'S MISSION STATEMENT

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

- *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. Understanding that protection of life and property is the core objective of all activities, all Commission employees will promote a Safe Working Environment at all times.**
- A. Apply statewide safety program, which encourages input from all Commission employees to continue to promote a culture of safety. SAFETY FIRST, EVERYTIME!
 - B. State Safety Officer, divisions, regions and work unit safety groups will operate collaboratively to emphasize safety.
 - 1. Conduct tailgate safety briefings, monthly safety meetings, and attend periodic safety training offered by internal or external sources.
 - 2. Utilize a statewide reporting system to effectively communicate changes and alerts, identify training needs, and provide timely accident analysis to minimize future accidents.
 - 3. Conduct quarterly safety reviews of offices and work areas as identified in the AFC Safety Manual. Perform annual regional safety inspections.
 - 4. Conduct monthly equipment inspections in each county and annual equipment inspections in each region.
 - 5. Review and/or update statewide safety manual quarterly.
 - 6. A Statewide Safety Investigation Team will activate immediately upon the occurrence of serious bodily injury to an employee or significant property loss in an incident. This team will conduct an independent review and make recommendations for preventing the reoccurrence of the accident. The State Safety Officer, Protection Division Director and a Regional Safety Officer (not from region where incident is being investigated) shall make up the Statewide Safety Investigation Team.
- II. Invest in our employees' personal and professional growth and development by providing training opportunities in identified areas.**
- A. Provide National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) basic firefighter and National Incident Management Systems (NIMS) training for new employees serving as firefighters.
 - B. Conduct basic firefighting equipment operation training for new employees serving as firefighters.
 - C. Annually update a statewide training calendar. The state training officer will develop this schedule with input from regional training officers, then approval by Leadership Team.
 - D. Provide advanced Incident Command System (ICS) and National Incident Management Systems (NIMS) training for employees serving on Type III and II teams (including trainees).
 - E. Offer advanced forest management training opportunities on topics such as forest health; improved forest management strategies for the small forest landowner; Best Management Practices (BMPs) for water quality; invasive species control; threatened and endangered species; rules/procedures for Stewardship, TREASURE Forest, and Tree Farm programs; and federal cost-share programs.
 - F. Ensure that agency foresters maintain professional status by acquiring and renewing their licenses through the Alabama Board of Registration for Foresters.

- G. Continue Career Development Curriculum training.
- H. Ensure that supervisors complete State Personnel supervisor training.
- I. Complete and maintain succession planning strategies that identify training needs for employees who have either expressed desire for advancement and/or serve as backup to another employee's position.
- J. Regions and divisions will coordinate training strategies with the AFC Training Officer. This includes annually identifying training needs for each employee, and maintaining firefighting training information in the Incident Qualification System (IQS).

III. Efficiently use manpower, assets, and equipment to maximize the agency's effectiveness in providing services which are cost-effective while protecting and enhancing the natural resources of the state.

- A. Annually set goals and objectives for each division, region, work unit, county, and employee, and identify these targets in annual work plans and the agency scorecard. Ensure consistency of accurate and timely accomplishment reporting.
- B. Conduct an annual assessment of needs and agency resources in relation to equipment, land, and buildings. Develop a replacement and/or retention plan of all assets. Seek opportunities to secure equipment through grants and/or lease programs. Utilize Firefighter Property Program (FFP) to acquire used equipment to upgrade fleet.
- C. Utilize the 10-year management plans to maximize forest management and productivity of all state lands.
- D. Utilize annual Department of Risk Management (DORM) property certification to determine feasibility for usage of current agency-owned structures, and whether additional capital outlay for upcoming year is needed. Also, identify property that should be considered for disposal.
- E. Continuously explore avenues to generate revenue utilizing AFC resources and assets.
- F. Expand the amount of fee-based forest management services the AFC provides for other agencies or entities.
- G. Expand the use of the Good Neighbor Policy with the USFS National Forests in Alabama.

IV. PROTECT Alabama's Natural Resources from Threats

- A. Wildfire
 - 1. Appropriately deploy NWCG-trained personnel to safely and efficiently detect and suppress wildfires.
 - 2. Promote prescribed burning to reduce fuel loads and enhance wildlife and fire-dependent

species habitat.

3. Promote installation of permanent firebreaks to impede the spread of wildfires and provide better access during suppression efforts.
4. Work with homeowners, communities, and volunteer fire departments (VFDs) in the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) to reduce the potential risks of damaging wildfires.
5. Work with VFDs to complete Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs) by fire coverage area.
6. Maintain strong partnership with VFDs.
7. Develop methods to better track VFD-suppressed wildfires.
8. Implement and train all employees on the Fire Danger Operating Plan.

B. Insects and Diseases

1. Monitor, detect, report, and map insect and disease outbreaks, notify landowners of infestations, and assist landowners with control efforts. This includes seeking and providing opportunities to offset suppression costs through grants and/or cost-share programs, when available.
2. Coordinate efforts with USFS on regional threats and trends.

C. Invasive Species

1. Utilize statewide assessment and regular monitoring of invasive species and record locations in the statewide database with latitude and longitude.
2. Alert landowners of invasive species outbreaks. Work with them to control by applying for additional funding opportunities as well as providing technical assistance and cost-share funding to forest landowners.
3. Continue efforts to control invasive species by cooperating with other government agencies, non-government organizations (NGOs), and other public and private entities.

D. Water Quality

1. Monitor issues relating to water quality in forested watersheds.
2. Update Best Management Practices (BMPs) for Forestry Guide.
3. Educate and inform the public, loggers, and forest landowners of the proper methods to manage forestland while protecting water quality.
4. Conduct random monitoring of harvesting operations to determine trends in the proper use of forestry BMPs to protect water quality.
5. Under a memorandum of agreement with ADEM, serve as first-line response to citizens' forestry BMP complaints, investigate all complaints, and attempt resolution in a timely manner.
6. Strengthen partnerships with Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM), clean water associations, and other entities to maintain an open, working relationship in implementing watershed plans.
7. Work with Alabama Water Policy Institute and other statewide initiatives to develop a Water Policy for Alabama.
8. Work with the Alabama Drought Assessment and Planning Team (ADAPT) along with the Monitoring and Assessment Group (MAG) to develop plans for drought mitigation.

E. Unlawful Forest Activities

1. Focus Commission's efforts to reduce overall number of wildfires, timber and equipment theft cases by working with the Alabama Fire Marshal's Office (wildfires) and ALEA Rural

- Crimes Unit (timber and equipment thefts).
2. Maintain close working relationships with other law enforcement agencies to improve safety and productivity.
 3. Utilize investigations of permitted and non-permitted burns to educate the public about wildfires and proper burning.

F. Disaster Response

1. Respond to natural and/or manmade disasters with appropriately trained resources, assisting with relief, recovery, and rehabilitation efforts in the affected area.
2. Coordinate efforts with forest industry and with Emergency Management Agency (EMA) and other pre-identified liaisons.
3. Establish and train incident command teams with specific disaster response functions identified.
4. Identify multifunction strike teams for initial response details.
5. Seek opportunities to secure training and continue positive relations with local VFDs.

V. SUSTAIN Healthy and Productive Forests

- A. Utilize the 2010 Statewide Assessment “*Forests at the Crossroads*” which established a baseline of forest resources and nine threats on which to focus Commission forest management 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. The Commission will participate in strategies and programs that will help minimize the impacts and further sustain our forests from these threats to our natural resources.

The nine threats to consider and incorporate in future Commission actions are:

1. *Urban growth and development* will continue to have an impact on the distribution, composition, and function of the state’s forest resources.
2. Forests weakened by *fragmentation* become more susceptible to damage from insects and diseases, and come under stress, often degrading into a condition of chronic ill health.
3. *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.
4. A *weakening forest-based economy* poses a financial incentive risk for landowners who manage their forests for traditional wood products.
5. *Insects and disease* can have a significant impact on forest health and productivity through the effects of excessive defoliation, decay, species alteration, or outright mortality.
6. A total of 29,593,963 acres – 91.7 percent of Alabama’s total surface area – are subject to *wildfire*.
7. When *catastrophic storm events* occur, there is often extensive damage and loss to our state’s forest resource.
8. The effect of *air pollution* on Alabama’s forests may become more pronounced as urbanization and population density increase.
9. 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.

- B. Provide professional forestry advice to forest landowners in order to increase forested acres that

are sustainably managed on public and private lands, as reflected in increased landowner participation in programs that recognize managed forest properties. Assistance is provided through:

1. Stewardship management plans
2. Stand management recommendations
3. Landowner certification programs (recognize all valid third-party certification programs)
4. Identify and assist underserved landowners (Identify and work with partners to leverage success of meeting limited resource and minority landowner needs, and landowners that have never received assistance.)
5. Cost-share financial assistance
6. Interagency services
7. Direct landowner services

C. Urban Forests

1. Continue involvement with the Alabama Association of Regional Councils.
2. Continue to facilitate communities' efforts to develop their capacity to manage their urban forests.

VI. EDUCATE the public and landowners about protecting the values of natural resources and promoting proper forest management.

- A. Continue to present traditional educational programs and produce publications about fire prevention, sustainable forest management, forest health, and threatened and endangered species.
- B. Work with other groups in order to expand outreach efforts to gain access to forest landowners not previously serviced, and those in the general public who are unfamiliar with services the Commission provides.
- C. Continue improving and expanding the Commission's website and social media to provide timely and useable information. Ensure links to other groups and agencies are beneficial to landowners.
- D. Continue to promote new and existing forest industry by bringing together vendors, timber buyers, consultants, and landowners, in order to assist forest landowners in keeping their forests productive as well as ensuring a steady supply of timber products and other values and benefits derived from well-managed forests.
- E. Support an economic development team for Alabama to market existing and new wood products, such as woody biofuels, ecosystems services, carbon sequestration, and wood-plastic composites.
- F. Continue to provide support and leadership to local forestry and natural resources groups.