



State and Private Forestry Fact Sheet

Georgia 2022



Investment in State's Cooperative Programs

Program	FY 2021 Final
Community Forestry and Open Space	\$0
Cooperative Lands - Forest Health Management	\$616,456
Forest Legacy	\$7,110,000
Forest Stewardship	\$339,560
Landscape Scale Restoration	\$396,000
State Fire Assistance	\$1,469,118
Urban and Community Forestry	\$1,057,218
Volunteer Fire Assistance	\$362,215
Total	\$11,350,567

NOTE: This funding is for all entities within the state, not just the State Forester's office.

The cooperative programs are administered and implemented through a partnership among the Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC), the USDA Forest Service, and many other private and government entities. These programs promote the health and productivity of forestlands and rural economies. Emphasis focuses on forest sustainability and the production of commodity and amenity values such as wildlife, water quality, and environmental services.

Program Goals

- The overarching goal is to maintain and improve the health of urban and rural forests and related economies as well as to protect the forests and citizens of the state. These programs maximize cost effectiveness using partnerships in program delivery, increase forestland value and sustainability, and do so in a voluntary and non-regulatory manner.

Key Issues

- One of the main issues during FY 21 revolved around our continued response to the Covid-19 outbreak. The focus was on the safety of our citizens and employees, while continuing to provide services and meet program goals. Through these efforts we returned and reached pre-pandemic goals and objectives in most program areas. Each department within the agency crafted a plan to continue to function, while minimizing risks. For example, the forest management department staff is teleworking exclusively
- According to the Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment, Georgia has 11,768 communities at risk of wildland fire of which 5,066, or 43%, are rated at high or very high risk from wildfires. Twenty-five percent of Georgia's landscape, or 9 million acres, is categorized as Wildland Urban Interface (WUI). In FY21, there were 41 homes lost or heavily damaged by wildfire in Georgia with another 1,859 saved by direct suppression actions by the GFC.
- The GFC is continuing to take an active leadership role in southeast U.S. water resource issues including working closely with multiple partners such as the US Endowment for Forests and Communities, the Southeastern Partnership for Forests and Water, the Longleaf Alliance (LLA), the Savannah River Clean Water Fund (SRCWF), the University of GA (UGA), and many others to make the connection between water resources, such as drinking water, and healthy working forests.
- Each year, Georgia's timberlands grow 46% more wood than is utilized. Over supply of stumpage, particularly pine saw timber, highlights the need for new markets for forest products from private lands. Momentum and support are gaining to compensate private forest landowners for carbon and ecosystem services. Reforestation is an important initiative moving forward as FIA data showed general tree planting declines during the last decade
- With the continuing change in demographics in the southeast, GFC recognizes the need for

increased outreach efforts targeting forest landowners and more general audiences. Efforts continue to increase use of social media and traditional media to distribute messages for water quality and working forests, forest health issues, urban forestry and reforestation needs.

Forest Facts and Accomplishments

Selected Facts	Value	FY 2021 Accomplishments	Value
Population	9,687,653	Landowners Receiving Educational or Technical Assistance	28,724
Acres of Forest Land	24,464,219	Acres Covered by New or Revised Forest Stewardship Plans	145,035
Acres of Nonindustrial Private Forest Land	18,172,000	Acres in Important Forest Resource Areas Covered by New or Revised Stewardship Plans	34,777
Number of NIPF Landowners	524,000	Volunteer Fire Departments Assisted	25
Acres of Federal Land Under State Fire Protection	0	State Fire Communities Assisted	242
Acres of Private Land Under State Fire Protection	22,622,063	Coop Forest Health Acres Protected	10,873
Number of Rural Fire Departments	470	Forest Legacy Project Acquisitions	20,192
Cities and Towns	533	Communities Provided Urban Forestry Program Assistance	246
Forest Based Employment	54,185	Population Living in Communities Provided Urban Forestry Program Assistance	6,597,358
Economic Impact of Forestry (by rank)	1	Urban Forestry Volunteer Assistance	43,193
State Forestry Budget (All Sources)	61,776,175		

Program Highlights

Cooperative Fire Protection

There were 2,444 wildfires that burned over 12,495 acres of private forestland during FY21. State Fire Assistance provided for the safety of Georgia's citizens by assuring they were protected from the threat of wildfires. Through the implementation of internal COVID-19 protocols the Forest Protection Department was successful in returning to pre-pandemic mitigation, preparedness, and response plans. Wildland fire suppression, leadership, and prescribed fire training was delivered using both virtual and small group strategies which increased the level of training opportunities from the previous year. GFC enforcement personnel investigated 60 wildfires resulting in 3 criminal charges. The GFC serviced 4,150 requests and installed 24,126 miles of pre-suppression firebreaks during the year. There were 1,3023,025 total acres that received prescribed burning during the year, with the GFC providing direct assistance on 152,101 acres. The GFC conducted four (4) Prescribed Fire Manager Certification training sessions with 107 participants in attendance. We have initiated Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP) in 143 counties and have completed 141 CWPPs to date. There are 114 Firewise, USA national recognitions for GA in FY21. The Federal Excess Personal Property Program assists Georgia in acquiring and placing fire equipment in rural communities throughout the state. Through the Federal DOD Firefighter Program, in FY21 the GFC acquired 56 individual pieces of equipment to support both GFC, local counties, and fire and emergency service agencies with a combined asset value of over \$1.9 million. In addition, the GFC administers Volunteer Fire Assistance Program funds to support the fire prevention and protection efforts of rural community fire departments. Through national and regional coordination, the GFC was able to provide National Wildland fire response by filling 102 individual personnel resource orders on 9 out of state wildfire incidents.

Economic Action

Georgia's forest industry contributed \$39.1 billion in revenue output and 140,081 jobs with compensation of \$8.6 billion. Maintaining the forest industry's status as one of the top economic drivers in the state is critical, particularly for rural communities. Georgia's forest industry would not exist without the state's highly productive and sustainable forests. The state's forests have excess utilization capacity for existing industry expansion or for new forest industries. New markets and demand for this large excess wood supply will help forest owners keep their forests as forests and not converting them to non-forest uses. GFC forest utilization and marketing provides forest resource analyses for existing industries seeking to

expand operations, new industrial prospects, forest owners, business consultants, and state and local economic developers. U&M staff provided assistance to sixteen projects.

Establishing New Forest Products and Values Highlight

GFC champions market growth of all forest industry sectors through existing and new product research, development and technology transfer that may lead to new income streams for forest owners including sequestered carbon and other ecosystem service valuations, forest planning and financial analyses. U&M staff provided 8 forest planning and financial analyses assists using Simulator for Managed Stands (SiMS) growth and yield modeling to educate forest owners on improving economic outcomes from various forest management scenarios. Staff provided 41 technical advice/reports on carbon sequestration, carbon markets, Georgia's Carbon Sequestration Registry and other ecosystem services that may lead to new values realized from forests. Staff attended scores of virtual technical conferences on timber supply forecasting, mass timber, forest industry logistics, and financial analyses and delivered this information through outreach/education efforts to customers, company prospects, and the general public via various media. Staff collaborated with several NGO's, state, regional and national organizations to advance the development of a new forest product in Georgia, cross-laminated timber (CLT). Staff maintains, monitors and collects growth data on (2) eight-year-old, biomass reforestation demonstration plots, located on the Bartram and Dixon state forests, which may result in new forest biomass silvicultural prescriptions and potentially new income streams from forest biomass. Staff continued research on four, multi-year and multi-state projects including construction sector wood usage, forestry sector economic impact modeling, urban forest wood utilization and projections on timber harvest and wood supplies.

Forest Health Protection

In 2021, GFC foresters incorporated insect, disease or invasive species advice in 269 management cases involving 15,160 acres. Each Stewardship and Tree Farm plan written in GA incorporates advice to landowners concerning forest health issues. Statewide, forest health personnel provided training to 1,169 GA citizens during 17 training sessions. Annually, prediction traps are set statewide to provide early detection of destructive forest insects and provide information to produce an active response to the threat. Diligent efforts are made to detect the following destructive forest insects in GA: southern pine beetle, ips engraver beetle, emerald ash borer, Asian gypsy moth, redbay ambrosia beetle, walnut twig borer, Asian longhorned beetle and any new first introduction pest that is found in the United States. In 2021, 8 southern pine beetle infestations were detected with a total loss of 58 acres of mature pine timber. Aerial forest health surveys returned to pre-Covid pandemic levels, with 5,509 miles flown and visual observations on 5,642,819 acres. Annual early detection/rapid response surveys were also conducted to identify non-native forest pests entering the US through international commerce. One European gypsy moth was caught in 2021 at the campground on Jekyll Island. The Invasive Plant Control Program continued, assisting landowners with control of targeted invasive plant species. In 2021, 16 contracts were completed on 459 acres. One hundred and thirty-seven new cogongrass infestation sites were reported and treated by the GFC during 2021. Seventy-two Georgia counties now have identified cogongrass infestations involving 1,602 sites on 415 acres. Only 210 infestations remain active in GA and all active spots have been treated with herbicides at least once.

Forest Inventory & Analysis Highlight

During State FY 2021, Georgia's FIA Foresters met our 5-year cycle goals by collecting data on 1,156 plots. Of these, 80 plots were National Forest Plots (mostly in the mountainous northern region of Georgia) with downed woody debris data collection added. Downed woody debris collection is added to all plots in and surrounding the National Forest to build fuel models and for total carbon counts (which includes dead and down vegetation). Thirty-four of the plots were P2-Plus Plots that have added crown variables to each tree, downed woody debris on each subplot, and vegetative profiles collected on each subplot. A percentage of the completed plots were checked for accuracy and the average accuracy for Georgia's FIA foresters was an excellent 97% for the fiscal year. GFC data collection productivity remained relatively high this year due to receiving full FIA funding from the USFS, which allows us to keep more people to get the work done. Full funding from the USFS is the number one factor in Georgia meeting our productivity goals.

Forest Legacy

Georgia celebrated the closing of two significant acquisitions for FY21. The Ceylon tract, a 12,233-acre maritime forest and Cabin Bluff and adjoining 7,959 acre tract did not submit an application for the FY20 cycle. In addition, Georgia submitted an application for the Suwannee River Headwaters project that will

protect working forests and buffer the headwaters of the Suwannee River near its origin in the Okefenokee Swamp.

Forest Stewardship

To maintain an acceptable level of production, GFC continued the incentive program for plan writers. This program creates a mechanism to produce additional management plans at a reduced cost over conventional contracting. Currently, the cumulative enrollment for active landowners is 2156 plans covering 678,863 acres. In FY21, 254 plans for 73,033 acres were written. New partnerships to reach under-served groups like HEIRS property owners are being developed with groups like the McIntosh Seed, Coastal Regional Commission, and the HEIRS Law Center partnership. This effort delivers focused technical information delivery to landowners challenged with clear title issues. Other underserved landowner outreach programs include UGA's Women's workshops, Law center's HEIRS Workshop, CRC's Undeserved Property Owner Survey, & UGS's Serving Underserved Family Forest Landowners. Other outreach efforts include a Stewardship Series Pod Cast. Through its Certified Steward designation, the FSP continues to recognize landowners who demonstrate commitment to forest stewardship. Fifteen new stewards were nominated in FY21. New partnerships are being developed to broaden outreach by hosting several landowner seminars. These partnerships include SE Georgia Altamaha Partnership, the Feral Swine Initiative, the West Central GA Landowner initiative, and Chattahoochee Fall Partnership. GFC through the Stewardship Program is also supporting the Short Leaf Initiative by provide Cost Share in NW GA counties and by providing additional funding to produce Short Leaf Pine seedlings at the Flint Nursery. In FY21, the Landscape Management Plan was implemented to support Stewardship and Tree Farm. The statewide LMP covers all of Georgia Geographic Regions. Stewardship also developed a virtual training series which covered topics such as Water Quality, Managing Shortleaf Pine, Managing Longleaf Pine, Prescribed Burning, and Pine Bark Beetles.

Landowner Assistance

In FY21, GFC foresters completed a total of 7,700 cases/site visits covering 636,066 acres. Verbal advice was given during most visits and followed up with a written plan to the landowner and other documentation such as maps, pamphlets, directories, etc. Over half of the cases and acres served were associated with the planning and certifying practices for incentive programs, such as EFRP, CRP, SPB, EQIP, IPSC and CSP.

The following is a breakdown of the cases completed.

General Advice: 1599 cases, 168,005 acres
 BMP Assurance Exam: 126 cases
 BMP Firebreak Inspection: 825 cases, 795 miles
 BMP Survey Site Visits: 184 cases
 EFRP: 181 cases, 144,698 acres
 CRP: 1,090 cases, 39,543 acres
 SPB: 388 cases, 35,218 acres
 EQIP: 1,999 cases, 145,883 acres
 IPSC: 49 cases, 2,053 acres
 Tree Farm: 32 cases, 7,486 acres
 CSP: 17 cases, 1,672 acres
 State Lands Cases: 15
 FDMP: 68 cases, 10,294 acres
 FSP completed/renewed: 250 cases, 75,374 acres
 FSP certified: 17 cases, 5,840 acres
 Cogongrass site visits: 757
 Totals: 7,700 cases, 636,066 acres, 795 miles

Landscape Scale Restoration

During FFY21, GFC's Water Quality Program continued to participate as the lead state for a multi-state 2019 LSR Grant which also included TX, SC, and AR. This grant project aimed at working with various partners across the SE United States to help educate people on the important link between healthy well managed forests and healthy water supplies. In GA specifically, education and outreach efforts have been made in three main watersheds that are currently seen as at risk for future forest loss due to increasing population and over-development. Those watersheds include the Upper Oconee River Watershed in NE GA, the Lower Savannah River Watershed in SE GA, and the Middle Chattahoochee River Watershed in

west-central GA. Assuming it gets approved, GA plans to participate in another 2022 LSR Grant project continuing similar work in the southeast with the same multi-state partners, and SC will be the lead state for that 2022 LSR Grant.

Marketing and Technical Assistance

GFC U&M staff markets and promotes the state's forest resources through print and online media and public speaking venues; forest industry surveys and economic impact reports; and by cultivating new customers at domestic and international trade shows. Staff initiated the 2020 Timber Product Output Survey in cooperation with the project lead, USFS SRS, completing (45) surveys of primary wood-using industries. Technical advice and marketing services totaled (1082) including disseminating domestic and international trade leads to potential buyers and exporters, cultivated via memberships with the SFFPA, AHEC and HSEG. Formal presentations were provided to (15) groups. Staff attended/displayed marketing exhibits at (1) domestic trade show, as many were canceled due to Covid.

Urban and Community Forestry

In FY21, Georgia had 145 Tree City USA communities, 21 Tree Campus USA schools and 1 Tree Line USA utility. Funds from the USDA U&CF Assistance program were used to contract with the Georgia Tree Council (GTC) to utilize two circuit-rider arborists to provide additional assistance to communities. Some communities are utilizing virtual platforms, but others are restricted by challenges with technology. Even with these challenges from Covid, approximately 232 educational programs, community events, meetings or trainings were conducted by U&CF staff and circuit rider arborists. Through partnerships with the Georgia Arborist Association (GAA) and GTC, U&CF staff were able to conduct two Certified Arborist review classes using a virtual platform, training 61 individuals to become Certified Arborists. The Statewide Arbor Day was held virtually with the Georgia Tree Council. U&CF funding provided 10,000 seedlings to 40 Keep Georgia Beautiful affiliates for their "Bring One for the Chipper" or Arbor Day events. In addition, U&CF funding was used to support the GTC which conducted three quarterly virtual programs. U&CF funding was also used to support the GAA in leadership transition. One intern from UGA was hired in November to assist with the Tree City USA program and other projects, eventually becoming a full-time GFC U&CF staff. Using supplemental funding from the USFS to assist with Hurricane Michael recovery, GFC partnered with GTC to provide grant funding for tree planting and tree give away projects. Over \$69,000 was provided to 13 communities to plant or distribute over 1700 trees to restore tree canopy. The supplemental funding was also used to contract with a geospatial firm to provide detailed canopy and tree equity data analysis. This info will allow U&CF staff and communities to be more effective with replanting efforts. The U&CF staff has also been assisting the city of Newnan with their efforts to recover from the March 2021 tornado.

Water Quality

The GFC Water Quality program is funded partly through the EPA Section 319 grant. During the FFY2021, the Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC) conducted regular statewide BMP Assurance Monitoring of active or recently active forestry operations. GFC also provided education/advice/training/consultation on forestry BMPs. GFC staff completed a total of 114 site inspections and BMP Assurance Exams. GFC completed 226 BMP Survey Inspections for the 2021 Forestry BMP Survey, additional surveys will be complete through the remainder of calendar year 2021 to complete the overall survey with a full analysis and report expected at the end of calendar year 2021. GFC staff participated in 146 public events for 2738 cumulative attendees including talks/presentations and meetings with various groups, such as federal/state/local government, NGOs, landowners, forest industry, loggers, timber buyers, foresters, contractors, academics, general public, etc. GFC also provided content for online BMP education for continuing logger education which together reached a total of 1013 people completing the courses. GFC staff performed 18 Field Demonstrations of BMPs for 79 participants. GFC staff also conducted 175 primary specific BMP Advice Visits for at least 429 people on a total of about 26470 acres. GFC foresters completed 44 Firebreak BMP Inspections, recorded 63 one-to-one Logger Conferences, and hosted 35 one-to-one and/or group GFC Forester/Ranger Trainings including: Master Timber Harvester Training for all GFC foresters, separate BMP training for each of GFC's 5 management regions, specific training on mechanical site prep in wetlands for foresters, firebreak BMP training sessions for various GFC protection areas, and basic trainings on BMPs for new employees as part of our online GFC Fire Academy. During FFY2021, GFC distributed 251 copies of BMP brochures at 17 BMP events. Finally, GFC maintains a public website with various documents and information related to BMPs.

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