



# State and Private Forestry Fact Sheet

## Georgia 2018



### Investment in State's Cooperative Programs

Program	FY 2017 Final
Community Forestry and Open Space	\$0
Cooperative Lands - Forest Health Management	\$638,310
Forest Legacy	\$5,021,746
Forest Stewardship	\$386,215
Landscape Scale Restoration	\$388,406
State Fire Assistance	\$1,413,101
Urban and Community Forestry	\$704,064
Volunteer Fire Assistance	\$304,112
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$8,855,954</b>

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

### Program Goals

- 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.
- 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 through the use of partnerships in program delivery, increase forestland value and sustainability, and do so in a voluntary and non-regulatory manner.

### Key Issues

- The GFC is taking an active leadership role in southeast U.S. water resource issues including working closely with the Middle Chattahoochee Forests & Water Supply Forum Planning Team to make the connection between water resources, such as drinking water and healthy working forests. GFC's Forestry Water Quality team has been involved in working with its Continuing Logger Education partners and has created an online capability for Best Management Practices (BMP) education.
- 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 FY17, there were 128 homes lost or heavily damaged by wildfire in Georgia with another 4,805 saved by direct suppression actions by the GFC.
- The reduction in the domestic use of wood products highlights the need for new markets for forest products from private lands. Wood volume in standing pine saw timber has increased by 94 million green tons (29%) since 2002, which indicates the need for lumber and other market development. Ecosystem service values continue to evolve through voluntary markets and the increasing interest in green business.
- With the continuing change in demographics in the Southeast, the GFC recognizes the need for increased efforts in outreach to forest landowners and the general public. Efforts continue to increase use of social media, magazine articles and partnerships with local TV stations. Important subjects include Water Quality and Working Forests, Forest Health Issues, Urban Forestry and reforestation needs.

## Forest Facts and Accomplishments

<b>Selected Facts</b>	<b>Value</b>	<b>FY 2017 Accomplishments</b>	<b>Value</b>
Population	9,687,653	Landowners Receiving Educational or Technical Assistance	66,084
Acres of Forest Land	24,634,886	Acres Covered by New or Revised Forest Stewardship Plans	56,878
Acres of Nonindustrial Private Forest Land	18,172,000	Acres in Important Forest Resource Areas Covered by New or Revised Stewardship Plans	29,935
Number of NIPF Landowners	524,000	Volunteer Fire Departments Assisted	50
Acres of Federal Land Under State Fire Protection	1,400,000	State Fire Communities Assisted	285
Acres of Private Land Under State Fire Protection	27,300,000	Coop Forest Health Acres Protected	9,200
Number of Rural Fire Departments	934	Forest Legacy Project Acquisitions	19,559
Cities and Towns	533	Communities Provided Urban Forestry Program Assistance	271
Forest Based Employment	144,537	Population Living in Communities Provided Urban Forestry Program Assistance	7,262,647
Economic Impact of Forestry (by rank)	1	Urban Forestry Volunteer Assistance	75,779
State Forestry Budget (All Sources)	55,108,072		

## Program Highlights

### **Cooperative Fire Protection**

There were 6,129 wildfires that burned over 71,084 acres of private forestland during FY17. State Fire Assistance provided for the safety of Georgia's citizens by assuring they were protected from the threat of wildfires. GFC enforcement personnel investigated 83 wildfires resulting in 13 criminal charges. The GFC serviced 4,455 requests and installed 25,543 miles of pre-suppression firebreaks during the year. There were 1,114,753 acres that received prescribed burning during the year, with the GFC providing assistance on 90,128 acres. The GFC conducted five (5) Prescribed Fire Manager Certification training sessions. We have initiated plans in 143 counties and have completed 141 CWPPs to date. There are 91 Firewise Community USA national recognitions for GA in FY17. 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 FY17 the GFC acquired over 250 individual pieces of equipment to support both GFC, local counties, and fire and emergency service agencies with a combined asset value of \$11 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 coordination by the GFC's Type II Incident Management Team (IMT) and our expanded dispatch section, the GFC was able to provide National Wildland fire response by filling 227 individual personnel resource orders on 20 wildfire incidents.

### **Economic Action**

The mission of GFC's Marketing & Utilization department is to add value to Georgia's largest industry – the forest products industry. Total economic activity supported by the forestry industry in Georgia was nearly \$35.2 billion in 2016. These activities supported the employment of 144,537 people whose compensation was \$8.5 billion. The department takes an active leadership role in the development and growth of Georgia's biomass energy sector, resulting in a huge success story for the state. Georgia's wood pellet industry portfolio has grown from 0 to 10 wood pellet mills from 2007 to 2017. Georgia's three biomass electricity plants provide a total of 114 MW of clean, renewable energy to Georgia citizens. The biomass energy sector provides over \$80 million in wages and salaries to nearly 916 workers. Furthermore, the use of previously under-utilized forest biomass creates additional values for forest owners and encourages the continued maintenance and retention of forests. In addition, several other companies have announced intentions to build wood pellet and biomass electricity plants in Georgia.

The department continues to assist prospective companies with locating sites and analyzing forest resources in a cooperative manner with local and state economic development agencies. Staff provided assistance to 46 potential projects, of which, 21 projects were bioenergy-related, and 25 projects were

traditional industry-related.

### **Establishing New Forest Products and Values**

GFC works to establish new forest products and values that will encourage forest owners to keep their lands in forests. The Commission develops and maintains the Georgia Carbon Sequestration Registry – this tool is available to assist Georgia forest owners in quantifying the carbon that is sequestered in their growing trees and forests. Staff provided technical advice to 3 landowners. The Registry may also play a part in the development of the state's carbon reduction plan under the proposed U.S. Clean Power Plan. Staff members also cooperate with regional partners in developing standardized ecosystem services evaluation tools which may lead to new values realized from forests.

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. For these reasons, the Marketing and Utilization department is working to strengthen and expand markets for Georgia forest products.

### **Forest Diseases**

Four major diseases are monitored and managed across Georgia: Heterobasidion root disease (formerly annosus root disease), thousand cankers disease, sudden oak death, and laurel wilt disease.

Heterobasidion root disease began in 2005 with mortality in recently thinned pine plantations (slash and loblolly). Over the past decade, most commercial treatment options have been withdrawn, leaving Cellu-Treat® for control of this root disease. In October 2016, labeling of Phlebiopsis gigantean was accomplished to provide an additional tool for control of Heterobasidion root disease.

Annual surveys are conducted to detect thousand cankers disease, and sudden oak death.

Laurel wilt disease is confirmed in 57 counties in Georgia, infesting approximately 9 million acres. Dougherty, Glascock, Grady, Treutlen, and Mitchell counties were confirmed positive in 2017.

### **Forest Health Protection**

The Forest Health staff provide advice to landowners and forestry professionals across Georgia.

In 2017, Georgia Forestry Commission foresters incorporated insect, disease, or invasive species advice in 732 management cases involving 30,052 acres, and 173 Stewardship and Tree Farm cases with a total impact on 50,921 acres. Statewide, forest health personnel provided training to 3,491 Georgia citizens during 66 training sessions with foresters, resource managers, loggers, nurserymen, regulatory agencies, and landowners across Georgia.

### **Forest Insects**

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. Both native and nonnative insects cause damage in Georgia, and diligent efforts are made to detect the following destructive forest insects in Georgia: southern pine beetle, Ips engraver beetle, emerald ash borer, Asian gypsy moth, redbay ambrosia beetle, walnut twig borer, Tremex and Sirex wood borers, and any new first introduction pest that is found in the United States. In 2017, the GFC Forest Health staff expanded the regional quarantine of Emerald Ash Borer to encompass the entire state of Georgia.

Southern pine beetle has the potential to cause more forest destruction in the southeastern states than all other forest pests combined. In 2017, 237 infestations were detected with a total loss of 325 acres of mature pine timber.

2017 proved to be a year none of us can remember having such extremes. In October and November 2017, Ips engraver beetles infestations were detected in heavily drought stressed trees. An estimated 5,000 infestations (.25 acre or less) were noted and attributed to severe drought, and infestations have been identified as large as 60 acres. Two hundred seventy eight (278) Ips engraver beetle infestations were identified across central Georgia with spots ranging from five to 60 acres. It is estimated that more than 6,500 acres of timber were lost to this unprecedented Ips engraver beetle outbreak.

Annual early detection/rapid response surveys are conducted to identify nonnative forest pests entering the United States through international commerce. Asian gypsy moth was identified in a trap directly outside the Port of Savannah in 2015, and annual warehouse surveys establish Early Detection Rapid Response traps and Cooperative Agriculture Pest Survey traps around warehouse sites identified as high priority sites due to cargo being received on wood packing material.

### **Forest Inventory and Analysis**

During FY17, Georgia's FIA Foresters collected data on a total of 910 plots. Of these, 46 plots were newly-installed National Forest Plots (in the mountainous region of Georgia) with downed woody debris data collection added. Downed woody debris collection was also added to 21 plots surrounding the National Forests to help increase fire prediction model accuracy. Fifty-eight 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 are checked for accuracy and the average accuracy for Georgia's FIA foresters was 96.3 percent for the fiscal year. GFC data collection, though improved from last year, is still slower than usual meeting plot goals this year due to continued plot work on the Longleaf Ecosystem Project (to make up for lower federal grant allocations) and mandatory fire assignments in fall of 2016 (due to extreme drought and wildfire activity). GFC has increased its number of FIA Foresters by one to 11 due to federal funding improving enough to justify another position. This should help us come close to meeting our 5 year cycle goal.

### **Forest Legacy**

Georgia has leveraged three times the non-federal cost-share funding required by the program. For FY17, Georgia secured \$6M in funding for a forest legacy tract known as the Sansavilla property.

### **Forest Stewardship**

With the completion of the Statewide Assessment and subsequent Strategies, consultant plan contracting has been reduced significantly to respond to a shrinking budget. In order to maintain an acceptable level of production, an incentive program has been developed to create a mechanism to get GFC employees to produce additional management plans at a reduced cost over conventional contracting. Currently, the cumulative enrollment is 2,192 landowners covering 700,704 acres in Georgia. In an effort to streamline the Stewardship Plan development process, the GFC created several written documents called hub articles which provide consistent and detailed information on several forest types. In addition to hub articles, the GFC also created a set of fact sheets to aid plan writers and landowners in managing land and developed a web-based portal for plan writers to store and share common recommendations. The Georgia program has continued to develop partnerships with conservation organizations like the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTFF) and the Quality Deer Management Association (QDMA) to broaden outreach efforts. New partnerships to reach underserved groups like heirs property owners are being developed with groups like the McIntosh Seed partnership. This effort delivers focused technical information delivery to landowners who have been challenged with clear title issues. Another outreach effort called the ALL Lands program seeks to coordinate with landowners around the Oconee NF to address common forest management issues at a landscape level. Through its Certified Steward designation, the FSP continues to recognize landowners who demonstrate commitment to the forest stewardship of their land. New partnerships are being developed in an effort to broaden outreach by hosting several landowner seminars, Owl Organizations seeking to increase outdoor recreation with handicap or underserved landowners, and groups that seek to improve wildlife habitat on private lands.

### **Invasive Plants**

Many invasive plants cause problems in Georgia and our efforts focus on cogongrass and Chinese privet. In 2017, the GFC continued the Invasive Plant Control Cost Share Program assisting landowners with control of targeted invasive species. Landowners were awarded contracts to focus on Chinese privet, Japanese climbing fern, Chinese tallowtree, Chinaberry, and non-native rose on private lands across Georgia. All contracts have been completed and a total of 291 Georgia landowners with 8,534 acres of nonnative invasive were served under this program. This program will hold another signup period in 2018 with an emphasis placed on funding landowners in a seventeen county area organized under the Coastal Invasive Species Management Area (CISMA).

Ninety-two new cogongrass infestation sites were reported and treated during 2017, which is a slight increase in new detections over the past three years. Sixty Georgia counties have now identified cogongrass infestations involving 1157 sites across 296 acres. Screven County was the only new county,

in 2017, where cogongrass was detected. Most infestations in Georgia are approximately a quarter acre in size and all known sites have been treated at least once. Approximately 82% of all known sites are being reported as negative for cogongrass and 723 sites have been declared eradicated.

### **Landowner Assistance**

In FY17, the GFC provided general forest management assistance through 2295 landowner site visits covering 396,449 acres. Verbal advice was given during each visit and all were followed up with a written plan to the landowner and other documentation such as maps, pamphlets, directories, etc. In addition to this work, GFC foresters provided technical assistance with planning and certifying practices within the EFRP, CRP, SPB, EQIP, WHIP, Partners for F&W, IPSC and CSP incentive programs. Within these programs, GFC provided technical assistance in developing 2726 plans covering 122,774 acres. GFC foresters certified the completion of 1,692 cost-share practices/plans covering 64,983 acres.

### **Marketing and Technical Assistance**

We cooperate with other state & local agencies in recruiting new forest products and biomass facilities. An important marketing project that has a global reach includes the development of (1) Georgia-based wood-using industry directory with online and hardcopy formats. We also participate in state, regional and national projects to expand Georgia forest products in global markets through domestic and international trade events. Staff attended (1) Forest Products Export Conference, (1) Mass Timber Conference, and (1) International Biomass Conference. Staff exhibited at a booth at the International Wood-Working Fair and Southern Forest Products Expo with nearly 800 marketing materials distributed to customers at these two events. Staff conducted the bi-annual Timber Product Output survey in cooperation with the project lead, U.S. Forest Service Southern Research Station.

Our staff provides technical assistance, such as forest resource analyses, for existing industry expansions or new industrial prospects. We utilize resources from the USDA Forest Service and from internal forest industry surveys to assist with planning the best locations for new forest product and biomass facilities.

Resource reports regarding timber and biomass availability were provided to 12 companies as part of their feasibility analyses. Technical advice and marketing assistance services totaled 652, including certified wood products and exporting, and disseminating domestic and international trade leads to potential buyers and exporters. Formal presentations were provided to 4 groups with a total audience of nearly 100 participants; and in total over 2,000 marketing materials were distributed to customers. The department continued to provide assistance to the Georgia Department of Agriculture's Georgia Grown marketing campaign.

### **Urban and Community Forestry**

In FY17, Georgia had 140 Tree City USA communities, 19 Tree Campus USA schools and 1 Tree Line USA utility. Funds from the Urban and Community Forestry (U&CF) Assistance program were used to contract with the Georgia Urban Forest Council to utilize circuit-rider arborists to make personal visits and assist communities in developing community forestry programs. At least 194 communities were contacted and assisted by the circuit riders in 2017. Services provided included revising tree ordinances (22), working on tree management plans (31), conducting hazardous tree assessments, training municipal tree care workers, and assisting with Tree City USA certifications. At least 34 workshops were conducted by the circuit riders. In addition, circuit riders conducted three Certified Arborist Review classes. These classes were held over 2 days and trained 55 tree care workers and potential arborists in arboriculture and prepared them to take the ISA Certified Arborist Exam.

U&CF funding was also used to assist Trees Atlanta in hosting a Mayor's Symposium to celebrate Arbor Day in addition to holding stakeholder forums to create a long-term vision for the City of Atlanta's tree canopy. Funding was also used to provide 10,000 seedlings to Keep Georgia Beautiful affiliates to distribute at their "Bring One for the Chipper" events. Two Making the Shade grant projects planted 62 large trees around the playground equipment at two elementary schools. In addition, SCFP worked with the Arbor Day Foundation's Energy Saving Trees program to provide over 2,000 seedlings to Georgia Power and Snapping Shoals EMC customers to plant in strategic places around their homes.

The Urban Forest Strike Team (UFST) was also very active during 2016-2017. UFST training was conducted in Rome, GA in September 2016 with 29 people receiving Team Leader or Task Specialist training. In late October 2016, GFC deployed a six member UFST team for three days to assist Tybee

Island after Hurricane Matthew

### **Water Quality**

For Fiscal Year 2017, GFC has completed the items that follow related to water quality. Funded largely through the EPA Section 319 grant program, the GFC Water Quality program is staffed with one state coordinator (staff forester), four Regional Water Quality Specialist Forester positions, and eight District/Area Water Quality Foresters that focus on water quality in a part-time fashion along with regular field forester duties. Regular GFC Field Foresters also contribute to some water quality related work as well. During FY17, GFC Foresters provided 96 BMP talks to 3002 people. In addition, GFC foresters put on 18 BMP field demonstrations with 102 in attendance. GFC foresters investigated 47 complaints requiring 101 site visits to mediate. GFC completed a total of 185 BMP Assurance Exams on harvests and other management activities. Water quality/BMP advice was given during the course of a combination of 517 general advice site visits and management plans for landowners on a total of 108,037 acres. GFC Water Quality Foresters completed 32 state level firebreak BMP inspections on GFC firebreaks, and 243 district level inspections were completed. During FY17, GFC Water Quality Foresters progressed on fieldwork for the 11th Statewide Silvicultural BMP Survey, completing the first 129 site inspections of an expected total of 220+/- randomly selected sites to be completed by mid-November 2017. The expectation is to complete a detailed report on the findings in December of 2017. The GFC continues to be involved in the Governors Comprehensive Water Plan Study Committee. As required by state law, the Regional Councils have continued to meet periodically with GFC Foresters attending as needed. During the period, GFC attended 6 water planning meetings. Additionally, GFC foresters attended and participated in 19 other meetings concerning water quality for various groups such as federal/state/local government, NGOs, landowners, forest industry, loggers, foresters, etc.

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