



2013 - 2016 Strategic Plan

(Updated: March 5, 2013)



Alabama Forestry Commission's Mission Statement

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

1. Protect the forests from all harmful agents;
2. 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
3. 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 to ensure 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. Conduct tailgate safety briefings, monthly safety meetings, and attend periodic safety training offered by external sources.
 - 2. Utilize a statewide reporting system to effectively communicate changes, alerts, identify training needs and provide timely accident analysis to minimize future accidents.
 - 3. Conduct safety reviews quarterly as identified in the AFC Safety Manual.
 - 4. Revise statewide safety manual as needed.

II. Invest in our employee's personal and professional growth and development by providing training opportunities in identified areas.

- A. Basic firefighter training for new employees serving as firefighters.
- B. Basic firefighting equipment operation training for new employees serving as firefighters.
- C. Advanced Incident Command System (ICS) and National Incident Management Systems (NIMS) Training for employees serving on Type III and II Teams (including trainees).
- D. Advanced forest management training opportunities on topics such as forest health, improved forest management strategies for the small forest landowner, BMPs for water quality, invasive species control, threatened and endangered species, Stewardship & Tree Farm rules and procedures, and federal cost-share programs.
- E. Ensure agency foresters maintain professionalism by renewing their Alabama Board of Registered Foresters license by completing required continuing education credits.
- F. Implement the ranger career path training curriculum.
- G. Ensure supervisors complete State Personnel supervisor training.
- H. Complete and maintain succession planning strategies that identify training needs for employees who have either identified desire for advancement and/or serve as backup to another employee's position.
- I. 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 IQS.

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. Annually set goals and objectives for each division, region, work unit, 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 as relates 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 FEPP 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 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. Also, identify property that should be considered for disposal.

IV. PROTECT Alabama's Natural Resources from Threats

A. Wildfire

- 1. Deploy trained personnel to safely and efficiently detect and suppress wildfires.
- 2. Promote prescribed burning to reduce fuel loads.
- 3. Promote installation of firebreaks to slow wildfires and provide better access during suppression efforts.
- 4. Work with homeowners and communities in the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) to reduce the potential risks of damaging wildfires.

B. Insects and Diseases

- 1. Monitor, detect, report and assist in the suppression of infestations of harmful insects and diseases.
- 2. Monitor and map beetle outbreaks, notify landowners of beetle infestations, and assist landowners with control efforts. This includes seeking and providing opportunities to offset suppression costs through grants and/or cost-share programs.

C. Invasive Species

- 1. Utilize statewide assessment and regular monitoring of invasive species locations.
- 2. Alert landowners of invasive species outbreaks and work with them to control.
- 3. Continue efforts to control invasive species by applying for additional funding opportunities and providing technical assistance and cost-share funding to forest landowners.

D. Water Quality

- 1. Monitor issues relating to water quality in forested watersheds.
- 2. Maintain an up-to-date Best Management Practices for Forestry Guide and inform the public, loggers, and forest landowners of the proper methods to manage forestland while protecting water quality.

3. Conduct random monitoring of harvesting operations to determine trends in the proper use of forestry BMPs practices to protect water quality.
4. Under a memorandum of agreement with ADEM, serve as first-line response to citizen's forestry BMP complaints, investigate all complaints, and attempt resolution in a timely manner.
5. Strengthen partnerships with ADEM and clean water associations to maintain an open and working relationship in implementing watershed plans.

E. Urban Growth & Development

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

F. Unlawful Forest Activities

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

G. Natural Disaster Response

1. Respond after natural disasters with the appropriate resources to assist with relief, recovery and rehabilitation efforts in the affected area.
2. Coordinate efforts with forest industry and with 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 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** pests 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% 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 whom have never received assistance).
 5. Cost-share financial assistance

VI. EDUCATE the public and landowners about the values of natural resources, proper forest management, and its protection.

- A. Continue to present traditional educational programs and produce publications about fire prevention, sustainable forest management, and forest health.
- B. Work with other groups in order to expand outreach efforts to gain access to forest landowners not previously serviced, and the general public whom are unfamiliar with services the Commission provides.
- C. Continue improving and expanding the Commission's web page to provide timely and useable information. Ensure links to other groups and agencies are beneficial to landowners.
- D. Continue to promote the existing forest industry by bringing together vendors, timber buyers, and landowners, helping forest landowners keep their forests productive to ensure a steady supply of timber products and other benefits derived from well-managed forests.
- E. Identify value added opportunities for landowners and 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.