



2016 Annual Report

October 1, 2015 - September 30, 2016



Protect • Sustain • Educate

We are the Alabama Forestry Commission



The Honorable Robert Bentley
Governor, State of Alabama
600 Dexter Avenue
Montgomery, Alabama 36130

Dear Governor Bentley:

On behalf of the seven commissioners and 234 employees of the Alabama Forestry Commission (AFC), I'm pleased to submit the agency's 47th Annual Report to you and the citizens of the state for Fiscal Year 2015-2016. As a stand-alone agency under the control of the Governor, we are the voice for both private forestland owners as well as other forest interests across Alabama.

While the annual contribution of \$21.4 billion to Alabama's economy in forest products is driven by more than 440,000 forestland owners in the state, educating and advising these landowners in the sustainable management of their forestland is a major component of the AFC's mission. As noted in this report, the state's timberland currently covers over 23 million acres, making Alabama the third most forested state in the contiguous 48, behind only Oregon and Georgia, with the second-most acres of privately-held forest land in the U.S. According to surveys completed by Forestry Commission personnel, the state's forests actually produce 51 percent more timber than is being harvested.

As the second largest sector of Alabama's economy, our forests provide much needed employment and income for the state's landowners and citizens. In 2016 the AFC successfully recruited an international company to operate one of the agency's seedling nurseries that has remained idle for a number of years. This operation will create much needed jobs in addition to a supply of tree seedlings for area landowners to reforest harvested acres.

Also of note in June of 2016, the agency hosted the annual meeting of the Southern Group of State Foresters in Mobile, welcoming state foresters and their staffs from across the South. Last hosted by Alabama in 2002, this event rotates among all 13 states in the group. Alabama's vast natural resources were highlighted, with those in attendance giving excellent reviews. Although this project required planning and facilitating by 32 AFC personnel, it was funded completely by private donations.

As the state agency charged with the protection of Alabama's forests, the Alabama Forestry Commission provides many necessary services that are not available from any other entity. In the past year, dedicated AFC employees continued to deliver a wide array of programs that focus on protecting and sustaining our state's forest resources, while also educating the general public about the many benefits our forests provide. However, budget reductions have significantly affected the delivery of these services, with many areas of the state being understaffed. In fact, Alabama currently has the fewest number of wildland firefighters per square mile than any other Southern state. Each two-person wildfire crew is now charged with protecting 501 square miles of the state's timberland. This critically low level of personnel not only places our firefighters at greater risk, but also the lives and property of the people of Alabama.

Today more than ever, the Alabama Forestry Commission operates as an extremely cost-efficient state agency, exacting the most productivity possible from every dollar we receive. I am proud to work with the men and women of this agency as we rise to this challenge, and humbly submit this report for your review.

Sincerely,



Interim State Forester



Robert Bentley
Governor of Alabama



Alabama Forestry Commission

Jerry Dwyer, Chairman
Jane T. Russell, Vice Chairman
Katrenia Kier
Stephen W. May III
Salem Saloom
Tommy Thompson
Robert Turner

Interim State Forester

Gary Cole

Assistant State Forester

Dan Jackson

Administrative Division Director

Arthur Hitt

Forest Management Division Director

Walter Cartwright

Forest Protection Division Director

John Goff

Regional Foresters

North.....	Terry Ezzell
Northeast.....	Jason Dockery
Northwest.....	Hank McKinley
East Central.....	Bruce Springer
Southeast.....	Michael Older
Southwest.....	Benji Elmore

The Alabama Forestry Commission is a state agency governed by a seven-member Board of Commissioners. Each commissioner, appointed by the Governor of Alabama, serves a five-year term.

Our Mission:

We will serve Alabama by protecting and sustaining our forest resources using professionally applied stewardship principals and education. We will ensure that Alabama's forests contribute to abundant timber and wildlife, clean air and water, and a healthy economy.

Forest Protection



Through the Forest Protection Division, the Alabama Forestry Commission (AFC) oversees statewide fire suppression and mitigation, emergency disaster assistance, wildland urban interface and fire prevention, central dispatch, communications for both AFC and rural community fire protection, as well as forest health.

FIRE SUPPRESSION

AFC wildland firefighters responded and suppressed 1,739 wildfires, burning 22,252 acres in Alabama. Average fire size was 13 acres. Wildfires destroyed or damaged 33 homes, while 1,265 were saved. Additional fire statistics include 3,404 structures (other than homes) and 107 vehicles either destroyed or damaged, while 616 structures and 1,321 vehicles were saved. Also, 895 haybales were saved through the AFC's efforts while 1,724 haybales were destroyed or damaged.

HAZARD MITIGATION

The Commission continued to assist landowners in protecting their lands from wildfires by completing approximately 27,492 acres of prescribed burning across the state in 2016. Total prescribed burning (including AFC, private landowners, and contractors) involved 13,355 burns on 1,033,013 acres. This is a direct result of the agency's effort to offer more training and certification to landowners who have an interest in conducting prescribed burns personally and safely.

The AFC presented a series of Certified Prescribed Burn Manager (CPBM) training courses, certifying 90 new burners and recertifying 78.

WILDLAND URBAN INTERFACE

The Alabama Forestry Commission promotes wildfire prevention through its Wildland/Urban Interface (WUI) program. AFC associates work with individual homeowners, communities, cities, and local fire departments in developing and initiating mitigation practices that help protect homes, businesses, and other structures from damage or destruction from wildfire.

Some of the activities completed during the 2016 fiscal year include:

- AFC personnel completed 49 wildfire risk assessments for homeowners. These assessments assist individual homeowners in implementing practices around their property to decrease the chance of their home being damaged or destroyed in the event of a wildfire.
- Prepared 23 Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs) for communities, fire jurisdictions, and cities. AFC associates worked closely with community leaders, fire services, and local governments in preparing comprehensive mitigation plans in the event of a wildfire emergency.
- The North Smithfield Manor/Green Leaf Heights community in Jefferson County was certified as a Firewise Community/USA in 2016.
- Maintained and re-certified three long-standing Firewise Communities: Adger in Jefferson County, Alapine in Cherokee County, and Vansant Mobile Home Park #2 in Cullman County.

Forest Protection

VOLUNTEER FIRE ASSISTANCE

The AFC continues to be committed to providing all possible assistance to volunteer fire departments (VFDs) to better provide fire protection for citizens throughout the state. A strong partnership between VFDs and AFC personnel is key to our fire suppression efforts. This assistance includes pursuing funding opportunities available to VFDs, as well as providing training and equipment to these departments.



The 13-member Rural Community Fire Protection (RCFP) Steering Committee met four times during Fiscal Year 2016. The steering committee is comprised of ten volunteer firefighters appointed by the State Forester from ten districts across the state, one member of the Alabama Association of Volunteer Fire Departments (AAVFD), one member of the Alabama Firefighters Association, and one member of the Alabama Association of Fire Chiefs. The purpose of this committee is to make recommendations to the State Forester regarding how to improve the rural community fire program and solve immediate problems including parts exchange, training, and financial assistance through federal grants.

Again this year, the Commission assisted the state's volunteer fire departments by continuing several beneficial programs:

- Administered \$1,042,810 in grant money, appropriated by the Alabama Legislature. The checks were issued in June 2016 to 991 qualifying volunteer fire departments, in the amount of \$1,052.28 per department.
- Worked jointly with the RCFP Steering Committee to administer \$120,000 in U.S. Forest Service grant monies to VFDs across Alabama that will fund purchases of wildland personal protective equipment (PPE) and other wildland firefighting equipment.

- Provided and maintained county-wide communication systems for volunteer fire departments in 37 of Alabama's 67 counties.
- Maintained a list of volunteer fire department members who are eligible for 'Firefighter' license plates for their personal vehicles, and made this list available to all vehicle-licensing agencies throughout Alabama as mandated by state law.

At the local level, AFC personnel continue to be closely associated with and supportive of VFDs throughout Alabama. Some examples of these relationships include Commission associates being active members of volunteer fire departments, as well as serving as officers in both VFDs and local or statewide volunteer fire associations. Agency employees also serve as a point of contact for sharing information between the Commission and local volunteer fire service, as well as being actively involved in joint efforts with volunteer fire departments to conduct wildfire prevention and suppression programs.

COMPACT FIRE DUTIES

As part of the agency's training program, a total of 17 AFC personnel were sent to assist on several federal fires and in-state responses taking 3,163 man-hours to complete.

During times of high fire danger the Alabama Forestry Commission filled several requests for overhead wildfire roles in the states of California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Wyoming. These efforts provided support to ensure the protection of life and property as well as assistance to those exhausted local fire fighters, while providing a training opportunity for AFC personnel to gain experience.

In other support roles, the AFC fulfilled several requests from local Alabama Emergency Management Agency (AEMA) offices to assist with commodity reassignments, along with storm clean-up and recovery. In addition to responding to these requests, the agency will continue to train and stand ready to assist the AEMA with the planning process and execution of ensuring the welfare and safety of the citizens of Alabama following a disaster.

FEPP (FEDERAL EXCESS PERSONAL PROPERTY)

The AFC obtains fire suppression equipment from various military bases through the Federal Excess Personal Property Program (FEPP) from the U.S. Department of Defense. During the year AFC personnel acquired property totaling \$8,962,158, then transferred this equipment to volunteer fire departments and Forestry Commission offices. This included 20 transports/tankers, 34 brush trucks, and eight other vehicles, such as vans and pumper engines. In addition to these vehicles, 110 other pieces of

Forest Protection

equipment were screened and issued to various AFC counties and VFDs.

As federal property ages and becomes unusable, the Commission receives, advertises, and processes the sale of this equipment through Government Services Administration (GSA) auctions. During 2016, the Commission disposed of and sold 59 vehicles.

EQUIPMENT



Representatives from CET Pumps and Bay Fire trained AFC personnel on Type 6 pump units that were installed on F350 trucks.

The agency purchased two lowboy trailers to replace older equipment not suited to transport the agency's Type 2 dozers.

The AFC completed re-purposing of road tractors acquired through the Department of Defense so these tractors can be used by county personnel to transport dozers.

Older equipment was reallocated to counties where needed. Two new John Deere 650K dozers were purchased and field training was conducted. The

FC-25 tractor/plow inspection form was updated to encompass newer dozers that have been purchased. One F150 pickup was purchased for the Southwest region.

CENTRAL DISPATCH CENTER

The Central Dispatch Center is essential to the agency's ability to receive wildfire information from 911 centers, sheriffs' offices, and the general public, then relay it to AFC firefighters so that they are dispatched in a timely manner. In FY 2016, the Center dispatched agency firefighters to 1,739 wildfires throughout the state.

For safety purposes, Central Dispatch implemented a new Computer Aided Dispatch System (CAD) that replaces handwritten logs and map boards. All information is entered into a database allowing dispatchers to track personnel and equipment in real time.

The AFC dispatch center issued 13,356 burn permits in FY 2016. Through an agreement with the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, AFC dispatchers also received a total of 57 calls regarding scheduling of hunting reservations for disabled persons at Macon State Forest.

COMMUNICATION

The Commission operates and maintains two complete radio systems and over 200 tower sites across the state. AFC personnel utilize the statewide VHF system for routine communications, fire prevention, and suppression operations, while a UHF radio system provides communication for volunteer fire departments in 37 counties throughout the state. The AFC provides and maintains these repeaters 24 hours a day, seven days a week, at no cost to the volunteer fire departments. Four technicians service and maintain the two radio system infrastructures, including over 1,000 AFC radios and almost 500 RCFP (VFD) radios.

During the year, the Communication Section completed outfitting of 46 trucks, five transports, and two dozers with VHF and UHF mobile radio, installing LED emergency lighting on front and rear of trucks. The AFC technicians outfitted 22 Type 6 engines with 200-gallon pumper units. They also outfitted a tower trailer with a local repeater and distributed radios to instructors for communication during chainsaw training in Chambers County.

Other activities included AFC technicians assisting the AEMA with 'Operation Rising Angel' in Cullman County, setting up a radio system that multiple law enforcement agencies used for traffic control and security detail. The AFC participated with AEMA during the summer hurricane exercise and reverse contraflow exercise held in Mobile County. They also diagnosed and repaired a microwave wireless link in Tuscaloosa County that is vital for Central Dispatch to communicate with the northwest region of the state.

GIS (GEOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION SYSTEMS)

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) at the Forestry Commission is testing Esri's ArcGIS platform with emphasis on ArcGIS Online to possibly implement the technology statewide. The AFC has several configurable and web AppBuilder mapping applications in place, such as wildfire dispatch and southern pine beetle maps. In addition, pilots are collecting forest health geospatial data using disconnected editing technology from Esri.

AFC's future focus is aimed at making mapping applications more available to our foresters, rangers, and management staff, allowing for easier access of maps that are centrally integrated and available across various computing devices and platforms. The AFC also hopes to integrate other mapping services that will enable seamless mapping of wildfire incidents within the state and provide national visibility.

The AFC continues to explore, study, and implement the newest technology in the area of GIS to ensure forest resources in Alabama are not just sustained, but are made more abundant for the future.

Forest Protection

FOREST HEALTH

As part of the Alabama Forestry Commission's vision to ensure healthy, diverse forests for future generations, there may be more of a challenge now than ever before with rising concerns about both exotic and native pests. Conducting surveys to detect and monitor the location of these encroaching species is important for early management response.

While native insects and diseases are wreaking havoc on pine stands, the extended drought of summer and fall is causing all vegetation types to experience detrimental health issues and complications. Many tree species were affected, but red oaks were the worst. Especially in the northern half of the state, early browning and defoliation of red oak leaves were noticeable by late summer. The leaves on some of these oaks may have been infected with bacterial leaf scorch. Drought-stressed trees are more vulnerable to forest pests.

Native Forest Pests

The agency conducted detection flights for southern pine beetle (SPB) (*Dendroctonus frontalis*) from May through September 2016 for all 67 counties in the state. As the spring SPB pheromone survey had predicted, there was an overall increase in infestations of this native bark beetle across Alabama with numbers quite high in certain areas. From the combined SPB aerial surveys, the total number of spots detected was 691 infesting 36,346 trees. Talladega National Forest, Oakmulgee District, conducted its own aerial detection surveys where results indicated a significant number of infestations.

There was also an increase in reported cases of pitch canker (*Fusarium circinatum*) this year, a native fungal disease causing extreme damage to longleaf pines of various ages in several Alabama counties.

Non-Native Forest Pests

Laurel wilt disease continues to spread in western Alabama. Deploying one trap per county during the summer of 2016, the AFC surveyed eight counties for redbay ambrosia beetle (*Xyleborus glabratus*). This insect that vectors the deadly fungus (*Raffaelea lauricola*) into host trees of the laurel family (redbay, swampbay, sassafras, etc.) has increased its range into Baldwin, Wilcox, and Dallas counties.

For the first time, the federally-listed emerald ash borer (*Agrilus planipennis*) that kills native ash trees was confirmed in the state this year. The USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) deployed over 400 traps in Alabama in spring, with four insects collected and positively identified in Calhoun County.

Another non-native pest reported but not officially confirmed in Lauderdale County is the oak leaf gall mite (*Pyemotes herfsi*). This small insect has been confirmed in Tennessee where it caused aesthetic damage on infested oak leaves. Its bite to humans can cause a red, itchy and sometimes painful rash.

With assistance of the University of Tennessee and the Tennessee Valley Authority, the AFC conducted a survey for 'thousand cankers disease' in the North Region this past summer. Of the 12 traps deployed (one per county), no walnut twig beetles (*Pityophthorus juglandis*) were caught.

Other Forest Damage

Although there was no significant forest damage from seasonal storms this year, three informal tornado reports were completed. On December 24, 2015, the unusually warm climate prompted several tornadoes in the state, with one destroying 400 acres of forestland in Lauderdale County. On February 2, 2016, tornadoes destroyed 150 acres of forestland in Pickens and Lamar counties. Another tornado traversed across Conecuh County on February 15, but no measurable timber damage was recorded.

Ongoing Projects

Utilization of the 'Don't Move Firewood' campaign will assist the AFC's efforts to slow the spread of invasive organisms. The agency renewed its contract with the University of Alabama, Crimson Tide Sports Marketing, LLC, with the message presented during the "Hey Coach" and "Nick Saban Show" throughout regular football season. The message was also promoted in the 2015-16 *Hunting and Fishing Digest*, a publication of the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, with 400,000 copies printed annually.



Other forest health activities such as financial and technical assistance programs are designed to encourage landowners to take a proactive approach in properly managing their lands to reduce the risk of forest pests. This year, 29 landowners encompassing 1,109.80 acres were approved for the 2015-2016 southern pine beetle prevention cost-share program to implement management practices including pre-commercial thinning and longleaf pine planting.

Forest Management



As technology improves, the importance of Alabama's natural resources becomes more evident. We must continue to help protect and manage these natural resources and educate the stakeholders that own, use, and work in the Alabama forests that provide many of these natural resources.

The Forest Management Division assists timberland owners with several programs to help manage sustainable forests on their properties. Program managers within the division administer many different programs, including

- Forest Management Plans
- Stewardship Certifications
- TREASURE Forest Certifications
- Tree Farm Certifications
- Stand Management Recommendations
- Best Management Practices for Forestry (BMPs)
- Forest Inventory Analysis (FIA)
- Hardwood Management
- Technical Assistance for Federal Cost-Share Programs
- Urban & Community Forestry
- State Lands Management
- Legacy Lands Acquisition
- Auxiliary State Forest Management

This year, a Threatened and Endangered Species Specialist was added to monitor federal actions proposed for 'at risk' species. With more and more species of plants, animals and aquatic species proposed for listing, the agency chose to take a proactive approach and inform our staff and landowners about protecting critical habitat for those species in hopes they may be precluded from listing by the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

BMP PROGRAM

Alabama's rivers and streams are among the most biologically diverse waterways in the world. To put it in perspective: there are more species of fish in the Cahaba River alone than in the entire State of California. Better technology has improved river and stream channel delineation, increasing the number of miles that we protect from 77,242 to 132,419 miles – almost doubling what was previously thought to exist. With 23.1 million acres of commercial forestland – primarily under private ownership and a vibrant forest products industry, the AFC utilizes Alabama's Best Management Practices (BMPs) for Forestry as a framework of sound stewardship practices that, when consistently applied, will contribute positively to maintaining a high degree of water quality flowing from the forest.

Program components and accomplishments include the following:

Complaint Resolution: The AFC investigated 46 water quality complaints initiated from silvicultural activities. Of these, 27 were actually deemed as valid complaints needing remediation. Four of the 27 were land-use conversion and were transferred to other agencies. The remaining 23 were strictly silviculture in nature and the educational remediation process was applied. If this process is not successful, the sites are turned over to the Alabama Department of Environmental Management, the regulatory agency for water quality in Alabama. The AFC also worked with the State Implementation Committee of the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (a third-party certification program) to mitigate two inconsistent practices cases.

Education: This year the AFC conducted 29 training sessions on proper BMP implementation, wetland issues

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and threatened and endangered species mitigation. A total of 1,574 attendees included forest landowners, AFC staff, loggers, foresters, and the general public. The AFC also held four bottomland hardwood classes that were attended by 346 forest landowners.

Prevention: To ensure AFC staff implement BMPs in all performed duties, 66 internal BMP audits were completed on work performed by agency associates for private forest landowners. The AFC also inspected 26 additional sites by request.

Implementation: The AFC has conducted multiple recurring detailed site surveys on closed-out logging jobs to determine the extent of forestry BMP implementation and to assess each BMP's functionality. A total of 253 randomly-selected sites were inspected across the state resulting in the following BMP implementation rates for 2016:

Harvesting BMPs when needed	97.7%
Site Preparation BMPs when needed	97.1%
Forest Road BMPs when needed	95.5%
Stream Crossing BMPs when needed	97.1%
Streamside Management Zones when needed	96.9%
Firelane Stabilization when needed	95.7%
Forest Chemical Application when needed	95.2%
Overall BMP Implementation on the entire tract	98.2%

Implementation surveys were completed in 2009, 2010, 2013, and 2016. The results can be viewed at www.forestry.alabama.gov/bmpmon.aspx. In the years between implementation surveys, inspections are made on active logging sites for prevention and education – usually 250 inspections per year based on the previous year's timber volume removal.

FOREST INVENTORY ANALYSIS

Ongoing for more than 70 years in Alabama, Forest Inventory & Analysis (FIA) is a continuous or perpetual nationwide timber and forest resource inventory. FIA data is the primary source of forest resource information and it plays a vital role in economic development. Some of the more significant data that comes from FIA are the status and trends relating to forest area, forest volume, and tree growth versus harvest removals.

This information is obtained by AFC two-man field crews that collect a variety of forest resource data from a set of field sample locations (FIA plots) distributed across the landscape at approximately 3x3-mile spacing. When fully staffed, Alabama has six field crews that sample 15 percent of the total number of FIA plots annually. The field data collected is transferred by the FIA crew leader to US

Forest Service personnel for analysis, and subsequently compiled into statistical reports. The 2016 FIA Inventory will not be complete until after the end of the fiscal year. A total of 761 plots were inventoried in FY16, exceeding the desired goal by 22 plots (3.0 percent).

- 2015 FIA data indicates there are 23.1 million acres of forest land in Alabama, accounting for 69 percent of the state's total area. This amount of area remains virtually unchanged since 2000. Individual or family-owned forests account for 13.6 million acres, or 58.9 percent of the state's timberland. Over 1.1 billion cubic feet of wood is being grown on these family-owned forests each year.
- 2015 FIA data shows that Alabama is growing timber faster than it is being harvested. The ratio of annual loblolly/shortleaf pine sawtimber growth-to-loss through removals and mortality combined is +1.47. For cypress, the ratio is +1.61. Sweetgum +1.50, and for all oak species combined the ratio is +1.25.
- According to 2015 FIA data, the 'loblolly pine' forest type is by far the predominant single forest type in Alabama, occupying approximately 36.7 percent of total timberland area.* The 'mixed upland hardwood' forest type ranks a distant second, accounting for approximately 10.7 percent of timberland acreage.
- 2015 FIA data estimates that 215,600 acres of Alabama forests are annually undergoing artificial regeneration, while another 208,600 acres per year are being regenerated naturally.

*According to the most recent national data, loblolly pine occurs in 20 states. Alabama has more loblolly pine volume than any other state; 4.7 percent more than Georgia and 5.0 percent more than Mississippi, the next closest states in terms of loblolly pine volume.

LANDOWNER ASSISTANCE/COST-SHARE PROGRAMS

Helping forest landowners achieve the management goals for their property is one of the primary objectives of the Alabama Forestry Commission. One of the services provided by the agency is the implementation of financial assistance programs, available to qualified landowners through state and federal cost-share programs.

Funding for federal cost-share programs comes primarily from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Bill. The USDA Farm Services Agency and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service oversee the distribution of these funds for several agricultural programs including forestry. AFC foresters and technicians work with landowners to provide technical assistance through on-the-

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ground assessments, and agency personnel produce written stand management plans that outline forestry practice requirements covered through the cost-share programs.

To ensure a broad section of landowners can utilize these programs, a variety of forestry practices are provided that help landowners achieve goals pertaining to wildlife habitat improvement, timber production, control of invasive or noxious species, implementation of Alabama's Best Management Practices for Forestry, and habitat protection and restoration for threatened and endangered species.

Following is a list of the forestry financial assistance programs that were available in Fiscal Year 2016, with the corresponding plans and acres produced by AFC foresters and technicians for Alabama timberland owners enrolled in them.

Farm Service Agency (FSA) Programs

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

- AFC foresters and technicians prepared 288 stand management recommendations/plans totaling 8,814 acres during FY16 for general and continuous CRP practices.

- AFC county personnel performed 500 CRP compliance checks on a total of 16,000 acres during FY16.

Emergency Forest Restoration Program (EFRP)

- Designed to provide funding for restoration of farmland and timberland damaged by natural disasters, FSA county offices can request EFRP funding when damage occurs on rural property. In FY16, AFC reported writing two plans (one each in Etowah and Lee counties) for a total of 77 acres.

Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Programs

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

- AFC personnel wrote 244 stand management recommendations/plans for 17,613 acres in FY16.
- AFC personnel performed 39 compliance/practice checks on a total of 2,163 acres during FY16.

Conservation Activity Plans (CAP)

- AFC Technical Service Provider (TSP) foresters prepared 10 CAP forest management plans for 1230 acres during FY16.

State of Alabama Funded Programs

Alabama Agricultural & Conservation Development Commission Program (AACDCP)

- This state funded program, administered by the Alabama Soil and Water Conservation Committee (ASWCC) and managed by the Alabama Soil and Water Conservation Districts (ASWCD) located in counties throughout the state, received no new funding in FY16.
- AFC personnel wrote one stand management plan for 70 acres during FY16.
- AFC personnel completed 15 compliance/practice checks for a total of 439 acres during FY16.

STEWARDSHIP

To enhance the non-industrial private landowner's knowledge and understanding of multiple-use forest management, the Commission utilizes the National Stewardship Program, sponsored by the US Forest Service, the 'American Tree Farm System' sponsored by the American Forest Foundation, and Alabama's flagship program, 'TREASURE Forest,' sponsored by the Alabama Natural Resources

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Council. TREASURE is an acronym for Timber, Recreation, Environment, and Aesthetics for a Sustained Useable REsource. Landowners achieve TREASURE Forest status when they demonstrate sound multiple resource management to meet their own objectives, while at the same time protecting and enhancing the forest resources of Alabama.

Stewardship/Forest Management Accomplishments FY16		
Program	Landowners Assisted	Impact
Stewardship Management Plans	221	28,072 acres
New Certifications	181	43,247 acres
Stand Management Plans	2,845	150,582 acres
Prescribed Burning	543	31,495 acres
Firebreak Plowing	495	835 miles
Forestry Consultant Referrals	241	N/A

STATE LANDS MANAGEMENT AND ASSISTANCE

In addition to managing timber sales for other agencies, in FY 2016, AFC's State Lands section assisted the Southeast Region by cruising one of two Geneva State Forest shelterwood cut timber sales. These two sales generated over \$271,000 for the agency. Total income from timber product sales on AFC-owned lands was \$403,737. Total income from commissions generated by handling timber sales for other agencies was \$52,384. Of this amount, handling three timber sales for the McClellan Development Authority on the old Fort McClellan post generated \$43,071. Total revenues from timber sales and other services on these lands are shown in the attached table.

Approximately 47,600 acres of forest land in Alabama are managed by the Alabama Forestry Commission. More than 16,000 acres are under the agency's direct control; these include 12 state forests, as well as numerous old fire tower sites. These sites are managed by the local AFC field offices with some assistance from our State Lands section.

The Commission has entered into cooperative agreements with three other agencies to manage their forestlands: seven state parks (24,774 acres) for the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, seven tracts (4,867 acres) for the Department of Mental Health, and approximately 2,000 acres at the old Fort McClellan post for the McClellan Development Authority. All of these lands are managed by the AFC State Lands section under TREASURE Forest guidelines for multiple uses and sustainability.

During FY2016, Commission personnel were involved in a variety of management activities on these lands: preparation of timber sales and oversight of harvesting activities; prescribed burning for wildlife habitat improvement, aesthetics, and wildfire hazard reduction; site preparation and tree planting; forest health monitoring; and road, bridge, and building maintenance. In addition, hunting, fishing, hiking, biking, camping, horse-riding and other recreational opportunities are available on certain state forests.

FY16 AFC Revenues from State Lands Management Program		
Timber Sales	Sale Value	Revenue
Alabama Forestry Commission	\$ 403,737	\$ 403,737
Department of Conservation	\$ 71,560	\$ 7,156
Department of Mental Health	\$ 31,571	\$ 3,157
McClellan Development Authority	\$ 420,714	\$ 42,071
Total		\$ 456,121
Prescribed burning	Acres	Revenue
Department of Conservation	59	\$ 1,795
Department of Mental Health	488	\$ 12,940
Total	547	\$ 14,735
Management Fees	Acres	Revenue
Department of Conservation	59	\$ 1,000
Department of Mental Health	4,867	\$ 4,867
Total	4,926	\$ 5,867
Grand Total		\$476,723

THREATENED & ENDANGERED SPECIES

The Alabama Forestry Commission created a part-time position to monitor the federal register and address the impacts of increased numbers of species being protected

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under the Endangered Species Act in recent years. A retired certified wildlife biologist was hired to fill this newly created position in April 2016. The following is a short synopsis of activities for April-September, 2016:

- Met with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service personnel in Daphne to discuss: 1) recent petitions to list additional species for protection under the Endangered Species Act, 2) the schedule of planned activities regarding proposed rulings and findings for the foreseeable future, and 3) the need for increased communication with Alabama's landowners to provide for an informed, knowledgeable, cooperative citizenry.
- Reviewed and revised management information sheets on agency website for use by agency employees and citizens.
- Created and updated an excel spreadsheet listing each threatened and endangered species in Alabama by county.
- Participated in two workshops ('Chat and Chew Sessions') in Dekalb and Etowah counties to provide endangered species and wildlife management information to participants.
- Participated in two field tours with other wildlife professionals in Cleburne, Madison, and Lawrence counties to gather information on ecological and life history requirements of northern long-eared bats, Indiana bats, and green salamanders.
- Represented the Alabama Forestry Commission at the gopher tortoise candidate conservation agreement conference in Cocoa Beach, Florida.
- Met with Geneva State Forest personnel on two occasions to discuss gopher tortoise management needs and determine if suitable ephemeral ponds exist on agency property that meet the habitat requirements for gopher frogs.
- Gave a presentation regarding the Endangered Species Act to the Forest Management Division Directors at the Southern Group of State Foresters annual conference in Mobile.

URBAN FORESTRY

The AFC Urban and Community Forestry (U&CF) Program promotes, protects and enhances the urban forests in the state of Alabama, primarily focusing on trees where people live, work and play. The program is funded by a \$200,000 base grant from the USDA Forest Service, which is matched by in-kind services from the AFC.

One of the highlights for the year was the successful signing of an agreement to place the Alabama Urban and Community Forestry Advisory Committee as a standing committee within the Alabama Urban Forestry Association. This agreement has already proved to be effective in bringing the two groups closer together and magnifying their impact within the state.

A major impact of the AFC's urban forestry program is recruitment for the Arbor Day Foundation recognition programs: Tree City USA, Tree Campus USA, and Tree Line USA. Requirements for recognition vary between programs, but all include a responsible party, documented tree ordinance or plan, budgets for tree care, and holding a celebration for Arbor Day. Alabama's Tree City USA applicants held steady at 82 cities, the Tree Campus USA numbers hit a new high of 13 individual campuses, and the Alabama Power Company continued to be the sole Tree Line USA member. The 2016 fiscal year also saw the adoption of a '40 for 40' goal of adding 40 new Tree City USA successful applicants by the end of 2019 to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Tree City USA program.

As in past years, grants played a major role in the program's activities. During the year, four sub-grant recipients were selected to participate in 'pass-through' grants totaling \$20,000:

- Following an Auburn University Horticulture Department plan designed to add canopy cover downtown and within the recreation park, the City of Blountsville was awarded a sub-grant to plant trees.
- A sub-grant was awarded to CAWACO RC&D (CAhaba, WArrior and COosa rivers Resource, Conservation & Development Council) to work with the Nature Conservancy and other partners, forming a forestry planning group and making an urban forestry plan for a portion of Birmingham.
- The third award went to the Alabama Cooperative Extension System for a workshop to educate tree board members in new and existing technology in urban forestry.
- The fourth and final award aimed to build public awareness of the value of trees and increase membership in Montgomery Trees advocacy board.

All awards should be finished before year-end. Alabama was also fortunate to receive \$85,700 as part of a Landscape Scale Restoration Grant. A city will be selected to benefit from contract work to measure and direct canopy cover to mitigate storm water flow.

Education & Outreach



OUTREACH

With assistance from six regional outreach coordinators, the Alabama Forestry Commission's Outreach Program continued to reach underserved landowners and stakeholders. While maintaining visibility across the state both in and out of the classroom, numerous school programs reached over 4,000 children grades K–8. Other collaborations offered the same fire prevention and safety message to adult audiences throughout the state.

Another successful partnership between the Alabama Forestry Commission, the U.S. Forest Service, and Alabama A&M University is the student wildland firefighting hand crew known as the 'FireDawgs.' These students continue to assist the agency in emergency response efforts while also serving as wildfire prevention ambassadors.



YOUTH CAMP

For the 21st consecutive year, the Butler County Forestry Planning Committee's Natural Resources Youth Camp provided Butler County youth the opportunity to become more aware of the value of forest resources to Alabama's environment and economy, and the relationship that these resources have to their everyday life. An outdoor classroom was the setting for 28 energetic and inquisitive sixth-grade students chosen by their school principals and science teachers to attend this three day/two night camp. The camp offered them the opportunity to learn about forestry, wildlife, ecology, tree identification, fire protection, forest products, soil and water conservation, and the people who manage these vast Alabama resources.

Instructors from the Alabama Forestry Commission, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Butler County Soil & Water Conservation District, Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, USDA Farm Service Agency, Alabama Ornithological Society, Larson & McGowin, and others conducted 'hands-on' classes for forestry-related subjects including native plants, wildlife management and identification, non-game birds as well as several Project Learning Tree activities.

Additionally, an on-site visit from Winged Ambassadors provided an up-close visit with some local birds of prey. An opportunity to spend time in one of Alabama's many creeks is an annual highlight of the camp. Campers explored Mussel Creek looking for inhabitants and were often surprised by what they found. The final day provided a chance for the

Education & Outreach

campers to display their marksmanship in different shooting sports events such as shotguns, rifles, black powder, and archery.

From the beginning, this unique camping experience has been provided at no cost to the campers or their families. Funding for the project comes from tremendous support from the forest community, private individuals, and civic clubs. Additional funding was provided through a grant from the Forests Forever Education Grant.

MEDIA/PUBLICATIONS

In March of 2016, the Alabama Forestry Commission's first unmanned aircraft system (UAS) – often referred to as a 'drone' – received a Certificate of Authorization (COA) from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). The AFC was not only the first state agency in Alabama to achieve this status, but also the first forestry agency in the South as well. This COA documents the team's permission to legally operate the drone in the national airspace. Additionally, two AFC employees were certified as UAS pilots under the FAA's Part 107, licensing them to fly in a professional capacity for the agency.



Throughout the year, the drone's abilities were tested in a variety of ways. From the air, the UAS has the capability of giving firefighting crews a bird's-eye view during wildfires and prescribed burning by monitoring hotspots and checking fire breaks. It has also been used to provide high resolution aerial imagery and mapping for landowners and Forest Health teams inspecting insects and disease outbreaks. The drone crew has also assisted the AFC Communication section with initial tower inspections. These aerial reviews allow technicians to do an assessment from the ground, saving time and money. At a time when the Commission's budget continues to be reduced, the UAS offers a cost-efficient tool to help the agency meet its mandate to Protect, Sustain, and Educate.

Again in 2016, the AFC Media/Publications Team continued with the ongoing public awareness campaign to fa-

vorably market the agency to the state's forest landowners and the general public. In addition to attaining positive media coverage through the traditional avenues of statewide distribution of news releases and media advisories, more and more communication is realized with a wider audience through our social media networks such as Facebook (with over 6,700 followers), Twitter, and YouTube.

The AFC website (www.forestry.alabama.gov) also continues to be a major source of educational information for landowners and citizens across the state. During Fiscal Year 2016, the website had over 894,000 page views.

For the fifth straight year, the Media Team coordinated the AFC's participation in two of Alabama's largest three-day venues with exhibits at the Annual World Deer Expo in July at the Birmingham-Jefferson Civic Center (BJCC) and the Annual BuckMasters Expo in August at the Montgomery Convention Center/Renaissance Hotel. Agency associates were on hand to talk with attendees, answer questions, provide contact information for local Commission offices, and distribute informative AFC brochures and publications regarding forest management/stewardship, wildfire prevention, and insect protection. An assortment of Smokey Bear and Woodsy Owl merchandise was also provided for event-goers.

Other Media Team projects during the year included:

- Publication of *Alabama's TREASURED Forests*
 - With a circulation of over 13,000, the magazine continued to provide forest landowners with forest stewardship principles and management techniques/advice for the 34th year.
- Production of three video presentations for the Helene Mosley Memorial TREASURE Forest Awards for the 25th consecutive year, unveiled during the annual awards banquet of the Alabama Natural Resources Council.
- Production of *TREETopics*, the AFC employee newsletter, as well as brochures for the annual Butler County Natural Resources Youth Camp.



Administrative

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

The Information Technology (IT) section has developed a fully functional Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD) system that allows dispatchers to track and log the activities of field personnel while they are out controlling wildfires or performing other AFC related tasks. This innovation has strengthened the bond between dispatch and field personnel and adds another level of safety for employees responding to wildfires.

Another recent development has been an Energy Conservation system which allows the agency to track electricity usage throughout all of its buildings across the state in order to reduce energy operating costs.

Also, the IT Section held several Microsoft Office workshops over the past year to help AFC personnel more effectively use MS Word, Excel, Power Point, and One-Note.

PERSONNEL

Fiscal year 2016 saw an overall decrease in AFC personnel with 243 employees at September 30, 2016, down from 252 employees at October 1, 2015. Although recruitment efforts at job fairs and career days generated awareness of the agency as a desirable career choice, hiring did not keep pace with separations causing a downward trend in the number of employees statewide. Ongoing budgetary concerns created the need for more strategic placement of field personnel while continuing strong efforts toward recruitment and retention.

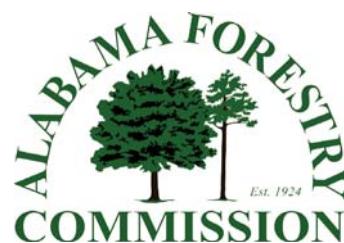
During the fiscal year the random drug testing process was implemented and continues to be refined, while ensuring compliance with DOT testing standards. The final version of pre-employment medical standards was prepared and implemented.

TRAINING

The Commission's readiness and training program is in place to better prepare employees to perform to the level of national wildland fire fighting standards for National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) response, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) response, and forest management standards. This training and preparation provides leadership and assistance to other entities in times of natural disasters, while also assisting the citizens of Alabama.

Training October 2015 to September 2016

Course Description	Hours
BMP	1,799.3
FIA	463.3
Annual Fire Safety Review	1,382.15
Basic Wildland Firefighter	393
Fire Equipment	3,657.15
Incident Command System (ICS)	5,768.3
Westpoint ICS	2,614.15
State Personnel	272
Career Development	1,889
Alabama Forestry Commission	6,042.3
Prescribed Burn Manager	1,363.3
FIF 100	93.15
AEMA Hurricane Exercise	452
Sub-Total	26,189.1
eSTART	3,057.15
Total Training Hours	29,246.25
U&CF Training or Presentation	299.45
U&CF Training Attended	528
LBW Community College Training	22
Basic Wildland Firefighter (VFD)	902.45
Work Capacity Test Readiness	1,376.45



Administrative

REVENUE & OBLIGATIONS SUMMARY

AS OF SEPTEMBER 30, 2016		
Description	Forecasted/ Budgeted	Actual YTD
TOTAL REVENUES:		
Severance Taxes	\$5,458,000	\$5,531,284
Timber and Turpentine	50,000	35,620
Fishing Permits	6,000	3,914
Fire Suppression	2,500	1,511
Oil Royalties	12,500	572
Insurance Recoveries	65,000	8,300
Reimbursements Not Classified	25,000	50,544
Prior Year Refunds	8,000	1,239
Contract Services	1,623,000	966,523
Salvage Equipment	90,000	76,076
Timber Sales	400,000	445,629
Other Sales	0	0
Intragovernmental Receipts	95,000	0
Other Rents	30,000	36,797
General Fund Transfers	7,042,583	7,042,583
Interfund State	318	318
Interfund Federal	0	0
Federal Reimbursements	7,116,005	3,543,189
County Forest Collections/Assessments	3,148,963	1,780,429
TOTAL REVENUES	\$25,172,551	\$19,526,473
TOTAL OBLIGATIONS		
Personnel Costs	\$11,863,194	\$11,356,192
Employee Benefits	5,366,546	4,790,439
Travel, In-State	230,000	149,616
Travel, Out-of-State	60,000	32,654
Repairs & Maintenance	380,000	222,695
Rentals & Leases	90,000	39,125
Utilities & Communication	675,000	598,225
Professional Services	1,000,000	807,042
Supplies, Materials, & Operating Expenses	1,250,000	1,097,908
Transportation Equipment Operations	1,790,000	1,388,158
Grants & Awards	1,517,811	1,495,302
Capital Outlay	50,000	18,537
Transportation Equipment Purchases	410,000	375,336
Other Equipment Purchases	490,000	439,845
Miscellaneous	0	0
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$25,172,551	\$22,811,067



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