

Release

from the South Carolina Forestry Commission



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday, June 30, 2017

CONTACT:

Doug Wood, Director of Communications
(803) 968-1576 CELL | (803) 896-8820 OFFICE
DWood@scfc.gov

Gene Kodama departing SC Forestry Commission at year's end

State Forester to serve through national search for and transition with next agency head

COLUMBIA—South Carolina State Forester Gene Kodama announced yesterday that he will be “departing” the Forestry Commission in January 2018. He is only the 10th State Forester since the agency’s inception in 1927, serving the third-longest tenure of his predecessors.

“I am not using the word ‘retire’ because I plan to continue to work, but in a different setting that could be in either the public or private sector,” Kodama said in a statement. “This has been an extremely difficult decision to make because my almost 10 years of working with the Commission and all its partners in the forest products industry, the General Assembly and the natural resources community has been a fantastic, rewarding experience.”

He said he wanted to work through this year to realize several key milestones. Upon his departure, Gene will have worked for exactly 40 years as a professional forester, served 10 years as Forestry Commission director, saw through the completion of the 20/15 SC Forestry Project, which culminated in the achievement of forestry’s economic impact reaching \$21 billion, and presided over the agency’s year-long 90th anniversary celebration. He will perhaps be best remembered for championing the funding fight for enclosed-cab bulldozers, which now make up about half of the Commission’s fleet, for the safety of agency firefighters.

Kodama is a native of Moncks Corner and earned a bachelor’s and master’s degree from Clemson University in 1975 and 1977, respectively. He worked for Westvaco Corporation and Mead-Westvaco Corporation after their merger in a variety of leadership roles for 29 years. He has chaired the South Carolina Forestry Association, a Forest Resources Association Division, and the USDA’s Forestry Research Advisory Council as well as served in numerous other industry and association leadership roles.

He and his wife own and manage Walnut Bluff Tree Farm in Berkeley County, which is certified by the American Tree Farm System. He won the Society of American Foresters’ Gifford Pinchot Medal in 2015, one of the most esteemed forestry awards in the nation for “exemplary actions that further the field of forestry by making an indelible mark on the profession and being a person of action.”

Gene lives near Summerville with his wife Karen of 41 years; they have two adult sons.



SC State Forester Henry “Gene” Kodama

###

