

SC FORESTRY  
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# Annual Report

## SC Forestry Commission



Trees.sc.gov

FY 2011-2012



Henry E. Kodama  
State Forester

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## Year of Firsts for Forestry Commission

This is the first Forestry Commission Summary Report prepared to supplement the traditional annual state agency report. The Summary is illustrated and designed to be easy to read and to provide a snapshot of the status of the state's forest resource and the Commission's activities for the past fiscal year.

Recovery from the impacts of the deepest economic downturn since the Great Depression has been the recent focus for the Commission. The recession created challenges that have never been so detrimental to the mission of protecting and developing the forest resources of South Carolina. However, our partners in the Governor's Office and the General Assembly and the conservation and business community came to the Commission's aid with support for and improved funding for the Commission's critical state services.

Another first occurred with the agency rolling out its first enclosed-cab bulldozers for fire suppression (pictured at right). Funding was provided in fiscal 2011 and 2012 to support this initiative. These dozers are a monumental improvement for the safety and well being of wildland firefighters and the public.

The Commission also obtained its first recurring equipment funding source with the passage of the Property and Firefighter Protection Bill (Act 271) by the General Assembly. This action showed that South Carolina recognizes the safety needs of firefighters.



The bill will generate about \$3 million annually for five years for fire-fighting and firefighting equipment.

While forest protection and firefighter safety improvements are in

progress, recovery from recessionary losses to firefighting capacity and additional new enclosed cab dozers are still needed.

So, as work continues on firefighting and safety initiatives, the Commission needs to more actively address resource development to expand the forest industry and add more high quality jobs for SC citizens. South Carolina's forests are at record volumes and ready to do more for the people of the Palmetto State.

## Protecting the Forest Resource

The South Carolina Forestry Commission is responsible for protecting 13.6 million acres of forestland in South Carolina from wildfire, insects, and diseases.

Thankfully, recent fire seasons have been mild since firefighting capacity is down about 40% and much equipment is unreliable. Still, **2,192 wildfires burned 16,690 acres** of forestland and grassland during the fiscal year. **21 homes were destroyed and 9 damaged**, while 40 other buildings were destroyed and 24 damaged. But, this level of activity and damage is far below **peak years when fire numbers topped 10,000**.

On the positive side, the Commission **saved 486 homes** and an additional 72 structures that were directly threatened by wildfires.

To reduce response times to wildfires and be better able to monitor and deploy personnel, firefighter dispatch was upgraded to a computer aided system that has allowed dispatch times to be cut almost in half since 2005 to just over 3 minutes. On-site response time has been slightly increasing due to reduced numbers of firefighters that have to travel longer distances to reach fire locations and increased traffic loads.





Above, a photo from the Blue Ridge Escarpment in Greenville Co. South Carolina has 13.1 million acres of forestland— 68% of the state’s total land area.

“The state’s forests are in great shape and are enjoying robust growth.

Uneven age class distribution due to past economic forces, 1989’s Hurricane Hugo, and past government incentive programs present us with a momentous challenge (opportunity) to grow more wood — and — grow more jobs.

Global demand for South Carolina wood (across the range of age classes) is predicted to explode right along with the world’s population and its consumption of wood products per person.”

— State Forester Henry E. Kodama

# Growing Trees, Growing Industry

Forestry’s 20/15 Initiative picked up momentum during FY 2012 after the Commission acquired funding from a USDA Forest Service Grant.

While interest in forestry-related economic development was strong throughout the year, announced capital investments and jobs created were at a four-year low due to the prolonged economic downturn’s impact on the housing market.

A total of 27 forestry-related investment projects were active during fiscal year 2012. Sixteen of the 27 projects were biomass energy projects, either involving the production and export of wood pellets or the domestic production of steam or electricity from biomass. 59% of the active projects were dependent

on export markets reinforcing the importance of our ports.

Future growth of the industry looks bright with home construction rebounding and global wood demand rising rapidly and expected to exceed supply in the near future. The state needs to actively promote more active forest management, more tree planting, new markets, and additional wood product manufacturing to compete with other states and countries and seize the advantages offered by improving demand.

During the year, the Commission joined with the Department of Agriculture to jointly fund a new position within the Department of Commerce to focus on expanding the forestry and farming industry.

The state has the most

wood volume and highest growth rates ever recorded and is well positioned to expand its impact and job numbers.



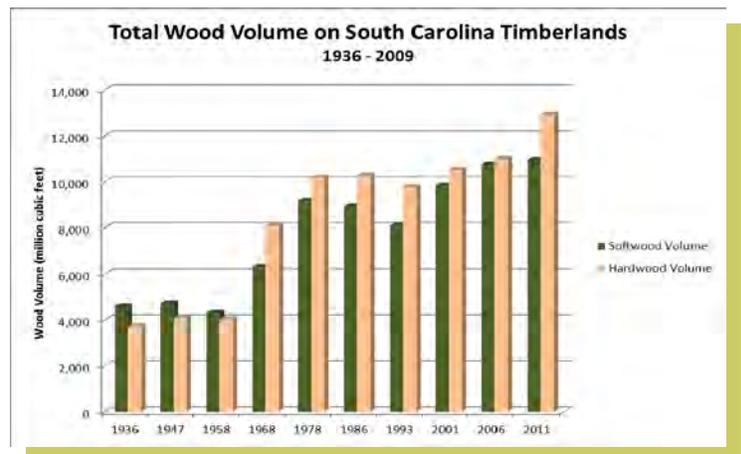
## How Much Wood?

We have more standing timber than we did 100 years ago. SC forests contain 23.3 billion cubic feet of wood. Current annual growth is the highest ever recorded.

The state’s forests, both hardwood and softwood are growing significantly more wood than is being harvested.

Net annual softwood growth is double pre-Hurricane Hugo growth rates.

The latest data indicates an **annual growth rate of 866 million cubic feet**, the highest ever recorded.



# Best Management Practices in SC Continue to Set Industry Example for Water Quality Protection

SCFC's Environmental Management Section is responsible for the development and implementation of South Carolina Forestry Commission programs that are related to the environmental protection of forest and associated natural resources.

Protection of water quality, endangered species, and unique ecosystems are of utmost importance in addition to site productivity,

for loggers, landowners, contractors, and forest resource professionals. Courtesy BMP exams are available to landowners, foresters, and timber buyers.

The BMP Forester makes site-specific BMP recommendations to follow while conducting forestry activities.



**Active forest management:**

The use of planning, thinning, prescribed burning of underbrush, and replanting to intentionally influence the health and character of a forest.



**BMP Monitoring**

Compliance with Best Management Practices (BMPs) related to timber harvesting was 93%.

BMP training and education are essential to the success of the Forestry Commission's non-regulatory BMP program.

During this fiscal year, **1,868 contact hours of training were held across the state**



During the 2011-2012 fiscal year, SCFC's BMP Foresters provided assistance on 412 sites and completed 212 courtesy exams.

# Improved Firefighter Response Times

As of FY2012, the average time from receiving a wildfire call to dispatching firefighters has been cut almost **in half**.

In 2005, the agency went "live" with a new computer aided dispatch and records management system.

The Forestry Commission operates three dispatch centers which take about 50,000 calls a year for burn notifications and wildfires.

**SUMMARY AND COMPARISON OF SCFC DISPATCH TIMES FOR FISCAL YEAR 2004 through 2012**

\*New software implemented in FY 2006

TIMES	Fiscal Year Average Dispatching Times (Minutes)									
	2004	2005	2006*	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	
Dispatching	5.10	6.33	4.18	3.56	3.53	3.22	3.13	3.39	3.28	

# Managing SC's Forest Resource

**Thirteen million** acres of commercial forestland exist in South Carolina. Eighty-eight percent is privately owned by about 350,000 landowners. Forest industry now owns 2%. Public agencies own 12%. Of particular importance, is the fact that **private land produces 92% of the wood consumed by forest industry** and is therefore critical to industry job growth and retention.

The Commission's Forest Management Section assists the public and other state agencies with their forestry needs and has a program to assist local governments, educational institutions, and non-profits with trees and urban green space. The Management Section also manages about 95,000 acres in five SCFC-owned state forests.

This year, 1,524 management plans were prepared for private landowners with 92% of the landowners responding that they were satisfied with their plans. 100% indicated said they would implement the plans. When landowners' needs are beyond the Commission's capacity, they are referred to private foresters. Eighty-eight landowners were referred this past year.

Cost share programs are administered by the SCFC Management section to provide landowners with incentives to actively management their forest lands. The state's Forest Renewal Program is funded annually with \$200,000 of state funding and \$800,000 of matching industry funding for a \$1 million program to encourage tree planting and active management. Two federal programs administered include the Conservation Re-

serve Program and the Southern Pine Beetle Program. These three programs provided \$1.7 million to almost 1000 landowners or .3% of the total number of private landowners.

Forestry services are provided to private landowners for a fee to assist them with management needs and to generate revenue to offset Commission operating costs. Typical services include firebreak plowing, prescribed burning assistance, timber marking, and equipment rental. Services provided and revenue created have been reduced due reduced staffing in recent years. Revenue generated last year was \$541,000.

The Forest Stewardship Program is a cooperative effort among the USDA Forest Service, SC Forestry Commission, and other partners to encourage sound multiple resource management of non-industrial private forest lands. This program is the Commission's primary mechanism to promote good forest management of private forestlands. However, decreased federal funding for the program has begun to reduce its accomplishments significantly.

This year, 139 Stewardship Plans were written (87 by Commission foresters and 52 by private sector foresters). Of the landowners who returned customer surveys, 100% indicated they were satisfied with their management plans intended to implement them.

The Urban and Community Forestry program is funded by a federal grant and provides technical, financial and educational assistance to municipal and county governments and others for community forest conservation. This year, 167 organizations were assisted and 19 grants awarded. Forty-seven

programs reached 1,588 attendees.

SCFC's five state forests provide forest-based recreation and education and serve as demonstrations of active forest management. They are financially self-sustaining and even provide 25% of their revenue to county school systems. They periodically contribute to general agency funding. Last year, state forests produced \$3,072,999 in gross revenue of which \$804,838 went to the counties of origin for education. This equates to gross return of \$32.00 per acre annually. State Forests also provide forestry and environmental education via special programs such Wood Magic and Teachers Tour for over 1300 participants.

The Forest Management Section provides forest management assistance to all state agencies which own many hundreds of thousands of acres of timberland. Last year, SCFC assisted DNR, PRT, DOC, and DOT on 13 tracts comprising 2,020 acres which produced about \$2.1 million.



Year-round recreation is just one of many of the benefits of well-managed forests

## Snapshot:

### SC Forestland Ownership

- 86% Non-industrial Private
- 8% Federal
- 4% State
- 2% Forest Industry

*As housing recovers nationally, South Carolina's forest resource is well positioned to provide the raw material needed. Increasing demand for wood products worldwide is a good sign for forest landowners and job seekers. Growing and processing more wood is good for the economy and the environment.*

...continued from page one.

Regarding insects and diseases and weather conditions, several years of drought have slowed tree growth and caused some seedling and tree damage, but the biggest historic culprit, the Southern Pine Beetle, has not been active for years. The state is due for an increase in its cyclic activity, and active forest management needs to be continued to minimize its impact.

### SC Forestry Commission Leading South in Timber Crime Law Enforcement

During FY2012, the Forestry Commission employed 35 sworn officers statewide. Three were investigators focusing primarily on complex timber theft, timber fraud, and woods arson cases.

Officers prosecuted 245 fire tickets, 24 litter and environmental cases, 103 violations of state forest regulations, one tire disposal case, 23 game and fish cases, and 35 miscellaneous cases. Total fines collected: \$59,178.75. Fines retained by the county where the offense occurred.

SCFC Law Enforcement Investigators investigated 101 timber theft / fraud cases, which represented a loss of \$632,733.03 to victims. SCFC collected and returned 55% or \$491,568.00 of that money to victimized landowners. During FY2012, 12 arson fires were reported and investigated. SCFC agents arrested two individuals for arson responsible for a total of five fires, including one firefighter arsonist responsible for four of these crimes. Arson is historically hard to prove, and these arrests represent an impressive 46% arrest rate. During the year, SCFC officers investigated 758 fire cases.