

Release

from the South Carolina Forestry Commission



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Hurricane Matthew caused over \$200M in timber damage statewide

COLUMBIA—The South Carolina Forestry Commission estimates Hurricane Matthew-related damage to the state’s timber resources at \$205 million.

The agency began assessing storm damage on a widespread scale Monday, Oct. 10, sending Forest Inventory & Analysis (FIA) personnel and other foresters on a systematic survey of coastal plain counties to ground-truth aerial observations made previously by Commission pilots and other forest health professionals.

The storm primarily affected forested areas in the eastern half of South Carolina, and overall, timber damage/loss was widely scattered. Where damage did occur, however, it was significant, consisting of trees that were blown-down, uprooted, leaning more than 30 degrees or broken. Most significant impacts were in the edges of stands, along ditches and waterways, and in recently thinned stands.

While some areas of the state experienced flooding, especially in the Pee Dee region, the Forestry Commission expects very minimal seedling mortality in these areas. Lessons learned from October 2015’s historic flooding and past events indicate that there will not be a need for large-scale replanting.

“On a statewide basis, a \$205 million timber damage estimate represents less than one percent of the state’s total timber value, and the economic impact from the storm will only be a small percentage of forestry’s \$18.6 billion annual contribution to the state’s economy,” said State Forester Gene Kodama. “However, for those individuals and mills who were impacted, the damage is very real; therefore, our focus right now is providing technical expertise to individual landowners and helping them access any federal financial assistance that will be available.

“Fortunately, our forests and the industry they support are amazingly resilient and will bounce back from Matthew’s impact.”

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The South Carolina Forestry Commission was among the many state agencies that provided Hurricane Matthew response by sending trained emergency professionals to the hardest-hit areas of the state. In addition to providing incident management teams that assisted counties with emergency operations, law enforcement officers assisted with the state’s coordinated evacuation, chainsaw crews cleared debris, and other employees staffed multiple emergency operations centers around the clock.



This windblown pine stand in Lee County bore the brunt of Hurricane Matthew’s winds. Recently thinned tracts like this one were most susceptible to the storm’s high winds.