

Tree Country

January/February 2020

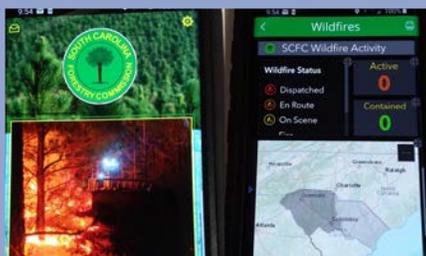


the employee
newsletter of the
South Carolina
Forestry Commission

from the desk of
STATE FORESTER
Scott Phillips



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Fast and Furious! That's the best way to describe the bustle around the Commission as we race into 2020.

With the new year comes a new legislative session and the seemingly endless rush of activities that surround it. The Commission's budget request is at the top of my priorities this time of year and the agency's major focus this legislative session. We are off to a great start! The governor's executive budget, released in January, prominently featured the Forestry Commission in his talking points and provided full funding for our top priority, \$1 million recurring for firefighting equipment.

His version of the budget also includes an additional \$1 million in one-time funds for firefighting equipment and \$250,000 in one-time funds to purchase two aircraft for fire support. Our message on the importance of safe equipment has really gained traction, and with the support of the General Assembly we will receive the funding to create a long-term fix for this issue this year.

The Governor's budget also fully funded our number two priority, providing \$420,000 for four critical positions we are seeking to fill this year. Partial funding for our third priority is also included, providing three positions and operating funds for information

technology and security. In total the governor's budget included \$3 million of the \$5.3 million we requested this year.

We presented our requests to the House Ways and Means Subcommittee Jan. 28, and they were well received; that said, there is still a lot of work to do before the budget is approved for FY2020-2021. We will continue working with members in the House and Senate to build on the great start provided by the governor's office.

Again this year, vacancies are impacting our programs and our budget. The January vacancy report revealed more than 40 vacancies around the state. All these unfilled positions stretch our staffing as we try to keep up with the demands of our mission while also recruiting and training new employees. The good news is that it continues to stay wet, which has greatly reduced the occurrence of wildfires. Our turnover rates are down compared to previous years, and the vacancies do create surplus one-time funds within our budget that allow us to invest in projects that we would not otherwise be able to afford.

One of these projects that I am extremely proud of is the recent investment in 32 Automated External Defibrillators (AED). The most common causes of death for firefighters, including wildland firefighters, are cardiac events. Last year we conducted first aid training for all agency employees, and the use of AEDs were covered as part of this training. So now that we have the training, making these life-saving devices more readily available in the field is critically important.

In the very near future we will be placing an AED in the truck of every Fire Management Officer to improve our firefighters' chance of survival should a cardiac event occur while on the fireline. We will also be placing AEDs in our larger offices to ensure these devices are on hand when needed. This is a very positive move for the safety of our employees, and I really appreciate Safety & Training Coordinator Leslie Woodham and Protection Chief Darryl Jones leading the charge on this!

Like last year we are also using these surplus funds for facility improvement projects to make our workplace safer and nicer for our employees and the public. Projects are underway all across the state. From paving projects at the Piedmont Forestry Center and office renovations in Bonneau to security fencing in Kingtree, a lot of work is being done.

Here in Columbia our staff is busy boxing up their offices in preparation for new carpet to be installed in the building. You will also notice when you visit the headquarters that the Virginia pines that once graced the hill by the parking lot have been removed. This makes way for new landscaping at the main entrance to our office, making it more attractive while also including elements that will provide educational opportunities for visitors and habitat for wildlife. These are just a few of the



State Forester Scott Phillips and DNR Take One Make One Program Coordinator Mark Ferrell (far right) received recognition for their coordination in winning the QDMA State Event of the Year for 2018. QDMA Regional Director Rick Counts (second from left) presented the award with QDMA Hunt Coordinator Wes Chappell. (For more on the hunt, see page 15)

items on the long list of projects David Owen is working on around the state. If you see David, Lenora Stukes or Victoria O'Cain thank them for their work to make these projects happen.

The last major activity that I want to highlight is the revision of our agency's Strategic Plan and Forest Action Plan. With the recent change in leadership, both on the Commission and State Forester, and the need to perform the 10-year revision of our Forest Action Plan, this is a great time to revise these documents in a way that truly integrates our Strategic Plan and Forest Action Plan to create proactive documents that drive us toward our vision.

We officially kicked off this project in early December and there has been A LOT of work done on this project to date. The Commissioners and our senior management met in early December for a two-day meeting to gather their input and direction on the Strategic Plan revision at a high level. In January we followed up with a meeting to collect the same from a larger representative group of employees.

While I would like to have personal interactions with all our employees during this process it was not feasible,

given the timeline and the budget. Instead, a group of 50 employees representing a broad cross-section of our agency met and had the opportunity to dig into the planning process and provide lots of input from the perspective of our employees. And boy did we get input! Nearly 60 pages of comments were generated from these meetings, and all of that information was used to create the current draft that we recently released, as part of a survey, for broader review by all of our employees.

Right now the survey is open to capture the perspectives from all of our employees on the current draft of the plan and to gain insights on how we can better use this plan to fulfill our mission. I hope you will take time to complete the survey and share your thoughts about the future direction of the South Carolina Forestry Commission. You can fill out the survey online at:

<http://scfc.input.sgizmo.com/s3/>

The online survey will be available until 6 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 12.

Scott



On the Cover

The cover photo features broomstraw underneath pines.

JUST FOR FUN...



See if you can find the hidden dozer located somewhere in this issue of Tree Country. (It will be smaller than the one to the left and NO, it isn't the one in the header of the Safety Message.)



BUDGET AFFAIRS

FY2020-21 budget request: \$5,310,000

1 **FIREFIGHTING EQUIPMENT**
\$1 million recurring funds / \$1 million non-recurring funds



2 **STAFFING REALIGNMENT**
\$420,000 recurring funds



3 **I.T. CAPACITY**
\$550,000 recurring funds



4 **FIRE/MANAGEMENT CAPACITY**
\$1,990,000 recurring funds



5 **COMMUNICATIONS CAPACITY**
\$100,000 recurring funds



6 **AIRCRAFT FOR FIRE SUPPORT**
\$250,000 capital funds





How to Properly Ride and Operate an ATV

Riding an ATV correctly allows the operator to operate and control the machine more easily, and react more quickly to changes in terrain and environment.

- Proper riding posture includes:
 - Head and eyes up, looking forward
 - Shoulders relaxed, with elbows bent slightly
 - Hands on the handlebars
 - Knees in toward the gas tank
 - Feet on the footrests, toes pointing straight ahead
 - Back should be straight but not tense
- To turn an ATV, keep most of your body weight on the outside foot peg and lean your upper body into the turn. Never lower your foot to the ground for stability – could cause ejection if foot is caught by tire.
- When climbing hills, shift your body weight forward to keep the front wheel(s) on the ground.
- If stopped while going uphill, do not apply the rear brake only. Apply equal pressure to both front and rear brakes, but never only to the rear brake. Get off the machine and turn it around to proceed down the hill.
- When going downhill, keep the engine running and in low gear, apply both front and rear brakes with even pressure and avoid sharp turns. Slide body forward on seat towards gas tank, keeping body weight back by leaning backwards. This will help keep weight on back wheels and lessen potential to flip ATV over forward. Avoid “side hill” situations. When they are unavoidable, lean into the hill.
- When carrying a load up hill, if possible, place load on the front of the ATV to help keep the front end of the ATV from flipping over. If going downhill, place load on back of ATV to help keep the ATV from flipping over forward. If loads cannot be adjusted, (drip torch mounted on back), try to equalize the load on front and back if possible.
- Only operate an ATV under the conditions for which you have been trained, qualified for, and are experienced in riding.
- As a last resort to avoid an impending collision, roll off the vehicle and kick yourself free of it.



Edisto Unit Forester Pete Stuckey patrols the line around a prescribed fire at Niederhof Forestry Center.

Provided by IMT Safety Officers Kip Terry and Michael Weeks



This safety message comes from the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) Risk Management Committee's Six Minutes for Safety Program. <https://www.nwcg.gov/committee/6mfs>



Human Resources

Employee News

New Employees

Please welcome three new employees who started with the agency in January.

Johnny Wilkins is the new Forestry Technician I for the Dillon/Florence Sector. Johnny lives in Dillon and attended Dillon High School. He started Jan. 2 and has experience as a heavy duty diesel mechanic and welder.



Johnny Wilkins

Kyle Goeke Dee is the new Pee Dee FIA Forester. He started Jan. 2. Kyle lives in Florence and attended N.C. State University. He has experience as a wildland firefighter with the Alaska Fire Service and was a forestry technician for the U.S. Forest Service.



Kyle Goeke Dee



Drew Pressley

Drew Pressley started Jan. 17, he is the new Coastal FIA Forester. Drew will be working out of the Walterboro office. He lives in Hampton and attended Clemson University. He previously worked with State Parks and LEO with SC DHEC.

Farewells

Pee Dee Dispatcher **Brittany Hickson** resigned Dec. 29.

Clarendon/Sumter Sector Forestry Warden **Jay Johnson** resigned Jan. 1.

Human Resources

- Lynn Rivers

Ulmer Graduates from Criminal Justice Academy

Bamberg/Colleton Sector Fire Management Officer Scott Ulmer graduated from the Criminal Justice Academy law enforcement training Jan. 24. Scott was sworn in with the Forestry Commission Jan. 28. Congratulations, Scott!



Bamberg/Colleton Sector FMO Scott Ulmer is sworn in by Law Enforcement Chief Tommy Mills Jan. 28 at the headquarters.



Ulmer stands at attention during the graduation ceremony.

IMPORTANT!!!

Mileage Rate Reduced for Travel After January 1, 2020

The 2019-2020 General Appropriations Act in Proviso 117.20.J provides for mileage reimbursements at the standard business mileage rate established by the Internal Revenue Service. Beginning on January 1, 2020, the Internal Revenue Service rate will be 57.5 cents per mile (IRS Revenue IR 2020-05). **Reimbursement for trips taken on or after January 1, 2020, will be at the rate of 57.5 cents per mile.** The rate was 58 cents for travel taken in 2019.

As a reminder, the same proviso in the General Appropriations Act also directs a reimbursement rate of 4 cents per mile less than the standard business mileage rate when an employee chooses to use his or her personal vehicle when a motor pool vehicle is reasonably available. This rate will change to 53.5 cents per mile for reimbursement for trips taken on or after January 1, 2020.

IMPORTANT!!!

Human Resources

2020 State Holiday Schedule

New Year's Day	Wednesday, January 1
Martin Luther King, Jr. Day	Monday, January 20
George Washington's Birthday/President's Day	Monday, February 17
Confederate Memorial Day	Monday, May 11
National Memorial Day	Monday, May 25
Independence Day	Friday, July 3
Labor Day	Monday, September 7
Veterans Day	Wednesday, November 11
Thanksgiving Day	Thursday, November 26
Day after Thanksgiving Day	Friday, November 27
Christmas Eve	Thursday, December 24
Christmas Day	Friday, December 25
Day after Christmas	Monday, December 28

Human Resources

- Lynn Rivers

DID YOU KNOW?

The leaves and acorns of the oak tree are poisonous to cattle, horses, sheep, and goats in large amounts due to the toxin tannic acid, and cause kidney damage and gastroenteritis.

Employee Service Awards



SERVICE AWARDS FOR JANUARY

Employee's Name	Position	Location	State Service
Tom Patton	Deputy State Forester	Columbia	20 years

SERVICE AWARDS FOR FEBRUARY

Employee's Name	Position	Location	State Service
Ben Knight	Forestry Warden I	Piedmont West Unit	30 years
Ronnie Jones	Forestry Technician I	Edisto Unit	30 years



Forestry Technician Sammy Connelly presented Edgefield/McCormick/Saluda Sector FMO Stephen Patterson his 10 year service award and pin Jan. 29 at the Saluda Sector meeting. Stephen reached 10 years in September.

Know Your Benefits

The start of a new year is the perfect time to refresh your knowledge about your insurance so you can make the most of your benefits in 2020.

MyBenefits

Check your 2020 coverage in MyBenefits. MyBenefits is the fastest, most convenient way for subscribers with insurance coverage through PEBA to manage their benefits. Go to www.mybenefits.sc.gov to get started.

Mobile Apps

Mobile apps make your life easier. Download these apps in your app store for your health, dental, prescription and flexible spending benefits:

- My Health Toolkit® for health and dental benefits;
- Express Scripts for prescription benefits;
- EyeMed Members for vision benefits; and
- ASIFlex Self Service for MoneyPlus benefits.

Benefits/Health

- Allison Doherty

ID Cards

Did you know you can access your ID cards in your mobile apps? If you're missing one of your cards, you can also call the number or visit the website below for a replacement card.

- State Health Plan: (800) 868-2520 or www.StateSC.SouthCarolinaBlues.com.
- Dental Plus: (888) 214-6230 or www.StateSC.SouthCarolinaBlues.com.
- Prescription drug: (855) 612-3128 or www.Express-Scripts.com.
- Vision care: (877) 735-9314 or www.EyeMed.com.

Schedule Appointments Now

Think about scheduling checkups or doctors' visits now. These can include preventive screenings, well visits, dentist appointments and eye exams.

Well visits may be a key part of preventive care. They can reassure you that you are as healthy as you feel, or prompt you to ask questions about your health. Evidence-supported services, based on United States Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) A and B recommendations, are included as part of an adult well visit under the State Health Plan. After talking with your doctor during a visit, the doctor can decide which services you need and build a personal care plan for you. For more information, visit www.peba.sc.gov/wellvisits.html.

Reminder for State ORP Participants

Employees who currently are enrolled in the State Optional Retirement Program (ORP) have received notification from the Human Resources Office about Open Enrollment, Jan. 1 through March 1, 2020 . During the open enrollment period State ORP participants may change vendors or, if eligible, may irrevocably elect to join the South Carolina Retirement System (SCRS). **The effective date for open enrollment changes is April 1, 2020.**

The four State ORP service providers are: MassMutual, MetLife Resources, TIAA, and AIG Retirement Service (formerly VALIC).

For more information, visit the PEBA's State Optional Retirement Program site at <http://www.peba.sc.gov/sorp.html>.

THE Benefits Beat



Reminders About Mid-year Health Savings Account (HSA) Enrollments

Employees making contributions to a health savings account (HSA) can change their contributions anytime during the year. Plus, unlike flexible spending accounts, employees do not have to re-enroll in an HSA to continue contributions in the following plan year. However, if an employee does not change his annual HSA contribution amount for the following plan year, his annual election amount will remain the same.

ASIFlex determines the amount it expects to receive each pay period by dividing the total annual election amount by the number of pay periods. Because of this, if an employee began making contributions to his HSA mid-year and he does not change his annual contribution amount for the following year, his monthly contributions will decrease at the beginning of the next plan year. If the employee wants to contribute the same dollar amount per paycheck, he needs to complete a **Notice of Election** (NOE) form to increase his annual election amount. Employees can change HSA contribution amounts for the following plan year during open enrollment or in December.

Below is an example:

A new employee enrolls in an HSA with four pay periods remaining in 2019. He contributes \$50 per pay period, which means his total annual election included on the NOE is \$200. If the employee does not change his election for 2020, his annual election amount will remain \$200. Assuming he has 24 pay periods, his expected contributions will decrease to \$8.33 per pay period in 2020. If the employee wishes to continue to contribute \$50 per pay period in 2020, he needs to complete a NOE to change his annual election amount to \$1,200.

Benefits/Health

- Allison Doherty

AttaBoy



In a letter to State Forester Scott Phillips dated Nov. 7, 2019 from Chief Mark A. Keel of the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division in regards to our IMT assisting with the recovery of Nevaeh Adams:

Dear Forester Phillips:

I would like to take this opportunity to extend my sincere appreciation to you and your entire team for the commitment, hard work, and dedication while working to recover five year old Nevaeh Adams.

You and your agency played a vital role in Team South Carolina, which was comprised of over 400 state and local employees, who came together to form one team with one purpose. This daunting task could not have been accomplished without the specialized expertise and personal commitment of every individual involved. Without them, we would not have been fortunate in our efforts of providing some closure for the Adams family and the community of Sumter, South Carolina.

You and your team truly epitomized the meaning of Team South Carolina. Please accept this as my heartfelt appreciation.

Yours very truly,

*Mark A. Keel, Chief
S.C. Law Enforcement Division*



CURRENT JOB OPENINGS

For complete information on SCFC job openings visit <http://www.jobs.sc.gov>, click on the **www.jobs.sc.gov** mouse, search by agency for "Forestry".

Job Title: General Maintenance Technician I Closing Date/Time: 02/17/20 11:59 PM

Agency Hiring Range: Min: \$26,010.00 Max: \$29,912.00

Location: Chesterfield County, South Carolina

Job Title: Forestry Technician I Closing Date/Time: 02/16/20 11:59 PM

Agency Hiring Range: Min: \$23,756.00 Max: \$24,944.00

Location: Clarendon County, South Carolina

Job Title: RE-ADVERTISEMENT - Forester I Closing Date/Time: Continuous

Agency Hiring Range: Min: \$37,740.00 Max: \$42,269.00

Location: Richland County, South Carolina

Job Title: General Maintenance Technician I Closing Date/Time: Continuous

Agency Hiring Range: Min: \$26,010.00 Max: \$29,912.00

Location: Sumter County, South Carolina

Job Title: Forestry Technician II-Timber Closing Date/Time: Continuous

Agency Hiring Range: Min: \$28,903.00 Max: \$33,240.00

Location: Chesterfield County, South Carolina

Forestry Commission Unit Stolen and Recovered

The South Carolina Forestry Commission had a firefighting bulldozer and transport stolen Jan. 17 from an operator's standby location in Kershaw County.

The missing transport was a 2017 Freightliner flatbed truck and the bulldozer a 2017 CAT D-4.

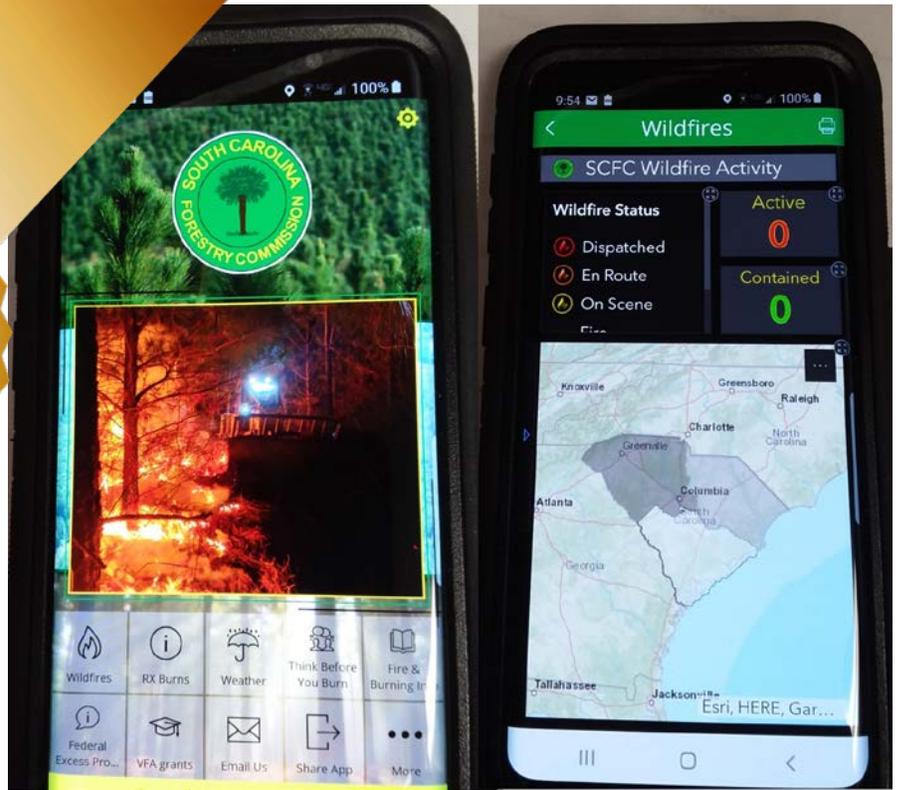
After a two-day search, the vehicles were recovered in Chesterfield County. Both were found in working order; the only damage reported was to the vehicles' decals, which were partially removed. The state and AM/FM radio were removed from the truck, and the state radio and GPS unit were removed from the bulldozer.

No arrests have been made at this time, as the investigation is ongoing.

Many thanks to all the volunteers and members of the public, as well as the Bethune Police Department, the Kershaw, Chesterfield, Lee and Darlington County Sheriffs' Offices, SLED and SC Department of Natural Resources, who all assisted in the search and recovery operation.



SUCCESS STORIES



Agency Launches Wildfire Smartphone App!

The Forestry Commission released a smartphone app in January that allows citizens, media and fire departments to view current wildfires and burn notifications, check the latest fire weather, receive notifications about important news such as burning bans and red flag fire alerts, and much more.

The app was downloaded more than 1,000 times in the first week and was also featured during a segment on WLTX. The easy-to-use interface lets users:

- View all the current wildfires in the state. Pinch-zoom, then click, on any fire or notification to see its location, size and containment status;
- See all the current prescribed burns for forestry, wildlife and agriculture around the state;
- Check the day's fire weather in any region of the state;
- Watch the agency's videos on how to conduct legal debris burns, including making notification

to the Forestry Commission and taking the proper precautions;

- Report a wildfire, arson, litter or other forest law violation.

"If we have an emergency situation with a wildfire or are issuing a burning ban, this app gives us the ability to immediately send out a notification to the public instead of having to rely on a news release and our social media pages to get that information to those who need it," said SCFC Fire Chief Darryl Jones.

To receive notifications – called "push notifications" in the app – users must opt in when first starting the app. Notifications will alert you about current burning bans, Red Flag fire alerts and other wildfire-related warnings. Notifications will never consist of ads or promotional messages.

The app is also a convenient way for fire departments to view information about the Federal Excess Property and Volunteer Fire Assistance (VFA) grant programs, both administered by the agency.

To download the app, search "South Carolina Forestry Commission" on either the Apple or Google Play stores. You may also text "SCFCAPP" to 95577 to have the links to download the app sent directly to your phone.

Learn how to install and use the app by watching this short video on the agency's website: <http://www.state.sc.us/forest/scfcwildfireapp.htm>.



Forestry Commission Participates in SC AgriBiz & Farm Expo

The SC Forestry Commission participated in the SC AgriBiz & Farm Expo held Jan. 15-16 at the Florence Center in the Pee Dee.

Pee Dee Regional Forester Mike Ney introduced forestry speakers and acted as moderator for Wednesday's Forestry Track sessions. Rural Forestry Coordinator Chisolm Beckham spoke on the topic of "When is the Next Beetle Outbreak Coming?" and Commissioner Amy McFadden followed Beckham presenting on "Farming and Forestry – It pays to have a plan!"

The Commission had an exhibit staffed with three employees the entire length of the two-day event to assist farmers, landowners and residents with questions about burning, seedlings and cost share. They also pushed the new SCFC app. Ney, Assistant Regional Forester James Brunson and Williamsburg Forestry Technician Clay Rogers were present throughout the event. Dillon/Florence Sector FMO George Martin, and Forestry Technicians Joseph Marlowe and James Bailey also assisted.

The expo celebrates the state's agriculture with more than 100 vendors participating in the trade show and thousands attending.



Commissioner Amy McFadden speaks on the importance of having a good management plan.



Rural Forestry Coordinator Chisolm Beckham gave lots of background information and talked about future SPB outbreaks.



James Brunson, George Martin and Clay Rogers answer questions at the SCFC booth.



The booth was also popular with FFA students asking questions.



Pee Dee Regional Forester Mike Ney introduced forestry speakers and acted as moderator Wednesday morning.



Several current and former SCFC employees attended the event including retired Williamsburg County Ranger Harold Lawrimore and his granddaughters.

Programs

Bennettsville's Bicentennial Live Oak Named 2019 Heritage Tree

Congratulations to Bennettsville, the home of the 2019 Heritage Tree award-winning Bicentennial live oak. The ceremony recognizing the tree was held Dec. 4 at the Visitor's Center in Bennettsville. It was a great day celebrating this magnificent tree and the community that cares for it. The Mayor and city council were present along with Danny Jones of TreesSC, Pee Dee Urban Forester Lois Edwards, and many citizens.

Director of Tourism Elisabeth McNeil nominated the tree since Bennettsville was celebrating their bicentennial all year.

The Bicentennial live oak is situated on the front lawn of the D.D. McColl House and is estimated to be 200 years old. With its position along "the great road leading from Society Hill to Fayetteville, NC" and adjacent to the corner of Cheraw Street and West Main Street (formerly Darlington Street), it would have been witness to numerous historic events including the founding of the City of Bennettsville Dec. 14, 1819; the occupation of the Union Army by General William T. Sherman's troops March 7, 1865; and the laying of the cornerstone for the present Marlboro County Courthouse on March 27, 1884.

In 2004, TreesSC created the Heritage Tree Award Program as a way to recognize and celebrate trees throughout our state that have a historical or cultural significance, as well as those trees that play an important role in our local communities. The tree is elected through a nomination process. Individuals, municipalities, community groups and non-profit organizations can nominate a tree to become a Heritage Tree. All trees must be located on public property that is accessible to the public at no charge within South Carolina. The selection process is based on the following three items: the tree's significance, either historical, cultural or social, to the community; demonstrated community value/appreciation of the tree; and the maintenance of the tree.



Anyone familiar with the Bicentennial live oak can understand why it was selected. Situated on the front lawn of the D.D. McColl House and an estimated 200 years old, the tree has great historical significance to the local community.

Community Forestry

- Lois Edwards



Bartlett Tree Experts is a long-time supporter of Trees SC and the Heritage Tree award. Through their generous contribution, a beautiful plaque is purchased to the annual winner.



Pee Dee Urban Forester Lois Edwards (in white vest) admire the tree's plaque.

Programs

Programs

Charles Towne Landing Celebrates Arbor Day

An Arbor Day celebration was held at Charles Towne Landing State Historic Site on a bright and sunny Saturday in early December.

Two-hundred-fifty containerized longleaf pine seedlings were donated for the event and planted in areas where longleaf pine historically stood. Over 120 individuals, including Montessori students, Boy Scouts, and their parents all offered their assistance to help plant the seedlings. There were short presentations on the history of Arbor Day, longleaf pine in Charles Towne Landing, and how to plant and care for the seedlings before the planting began.

The event kicked off with a warm welcome from Rob Powell, manager of the State Historic Site. David Quick, a writer and photographer, co-organizer of the event, gave a brief synopsis of the history of Arbor Day nationwide, as well as within South Carolina. The park's historian, John Hiatt, told the story of Charles Towne Landing and the longleaf pine that used to dominate the landscape. Renee Chewning, a Project Learning Tree Representative and co-organizer of the event, delivered a wonderful message about how important trees are in education. To finish the presentation, Berkeley/Charleston/Dorchester Project Forester Jacqueline Forsyth demonstrated the correct way to plant and care for the young longleaf pine seedlings.

This project has been years in the making. Charles Towne Landing has been planning longleaf pine restoration projects since Hurricanes Hugo, Florence, and most recently Dorian. Longleaf pine are native to this historic site and there have even been a couple of historical items found throughout Charles Towne Landing that supported using longleaf sap.



Forsyth shows the crowd what tools to use to plant the longleaf seedlings.



David Quick, co-organizer of the event, gave the history of Arbor Day.



Charles Towne Landing Historian John Hiatt told of the history of the Landing and longleaf on the site.



Charles Towne Landing Manager Rob Powell helps plant a seedling.



Participants plant seedlings.

All photos provided by Nicole Isenbarger, Charles Towne Landing archaeologist and site photographer.

Santee Unit

- Jacqueline Forsyth

State Youth Deer Hunt Held at Niederhof

Niederhof Forestry Center hosted the QDMA State Youth Deer Hunt Dec. 13-14. Eleven children, ages 11-19, participated on the hunt Friday afternoon and Saturday morning in cold, rainy conditions. The hunt was sponsored by Quality Deer Management Association, the Forestry Commission, the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources Take One, Make One (TOMO) program and the Outdoor Dream Foundation.

Most of the children enjoyed the hunt and six harvested deer. During the hunt, 81 deer were seen on the property and all but one of the children saw deer.

Before lunch there was an orientation on the property and hunting program and hunt guidelines. After lunch, the children were paired with a mentor, sighted their guns in on the range and drew for stands. They received a safety briefing before the afternoon hunt began.

QDMA Regional Director Rick Counts presented SCDNR and the Forestry Commission with certificates for their coordination in winning the QDMA State Event of the Year for 2018.

QDMA provided meals, mentors, and some gifts for the hunters. The Take One Make One program provided guns for those who didn't have one. Bitter End Plantation provided lodging for the hunters and their family members. The Forestry Commission provided the instruction, location, and transportation to and from the stands. Everyone enjoyed the fun and fellowship in the cool outdoors at the last hunt of the year.



Hunters and other participants at the QDMA State Youth Hunt Dec. 13.



Hunter Charlie Bratton gets ready to target his rifle with the help of Coastal Assistant Regional Forester Kip Terry and DNR TOMO Coordinator Mark Ferrell.



Mentor Ashley Smith with hunter Wyatt Boatwright in the deer stand.



Hunter Nick Abrams shows the app and viewfinder that he uses to see through his scope.



Gauge Hernandez takes aim at the target.



Austin Weatherford gets ready to shoot the target.



Hunters Saturday morning with Christian' Moravek's doe.

Hitchcock Woods is Home to National Champion Pine

Aiken has a new national champion. It's not a basketball squad, a golf team, a horse or even a boxer. Instead, the latest No. 1 with local ties is a tree – a longleaf pine that stands in Hitchcock Woods.

Based on three measurements and a points system, the woody perennial plant is the largest of its kind in the United States. Aiken's longleaf pine is 105 feet tall and has an average crown spread of 56 feet. The circumference of its trunk is 140 inches, which is more than 11 feet. Those statistics earned the tree 259 points and a place in American Forests' National Register of Championship Trees for 2019. Its status as the top longleaf pine became official in December.

"It's a special tree," said Hitchcock Woods Superintendent Bennett Tucker, who nominated the longleaf pine to be considered for national champion status. "I think the take home message is that it is another reason to celebrate the resources of the local Aiken community, the gift the Hitchcock family left to Aiken and the Hitchcock Woods Foundation."

Hitchcock Woods, which covers approximately 2,100 acres, is one of this country's largest urban forests. After the death of Lulie Hitchcock in a hunting accident, the Hitchcock family donated 1,120 acres of forestland and established a foundation to protect and preserve it. Other property was added later.

Even way back in the 1930s, the champion longleaf pine had been around for a long time. Tucker estimated the tree is "300 to 350, or 400" years old. But Tucker didn't realize such a big longleaf pine existed until several years ago. "I think it was probably 2012 or so," he said.

Tucker and Dion Meeling, a former woods technician he worked with, noticed there were some trees that had come down in a storm on a slope below a ridgeline. "We were cutting up some stumps from those 'windthrows,' and we looked up and saw this monster of a longleaf," Tucker said. "It was kind of hidden by midstory trees and brush, but we realized it was a massive tree."

When others who knew trees well saw it, they told Tucker that the tree's size might make it unique. Tucker and Dr. Ken Perrine, a photographer and author, measured the longleaf pine, and Tucker submitted the information to American Forests last year.

The efforts to protect and preserve Hitchcock Woods also have contributed to the longleaf pine's longevity. "This land has been taken care of," said Randy Wolcott, a member of the Hitchcock Woods Foundation's board of trustees. "There were small homesteads on it, but it wasn't plowed over and put into agriculture. And it never was timbered to the point that a lot of the big trees were cut down."

While Tucker, Wolcott and others associated with Hitchcock Woods are proud to have a champion in their forest, there are no plans to put up signs showing where the longleaf pine is located because of concerns that individuals or a large number of visitors might damage the tree and its environment.

"Our feeling is that we want to take care of it because it is special," he said. "If anyone is interested in the tree, we would show them where it is because we want people who will appreciate it to see it."

The national champion longleaf pine also is on the list of South Carolina champion trees, which is maintained by Clemson University.



The new National Champion longleaf pine stands in Hitchcock Woods in Aiken.

https://www.aikenstandard.com/news/hitchcock-woods-home-of-national-champion-longleaf-pine/article_210e66e4-106b-11ea-a434-072ec976ffa8.html

Caught ON Camera

December 10, 2019

at the HQ Christmas Lunch



Scott Phillips



Tim Adams



Joe Mills



Jerry Shrum



Larry Moody & Melissa Fleming



Gene Kodama



Brad Bramlett & Miles Knight



Edgar Arias



Mike Bozzo & Bob Ford



John Dickinson & Jimmy Walters



Erica Brazile



Jack Gould and Scott Phillips



Pete Spearman



Jack Gould, Russell Hubright, John Dickinson



Vicki Davis & Carrie Morris



Debbie Dickinson, Frances Waite, John Dickinson



Dean Carson



Carrie Morris, Vicki Davis, Soni Rai, Erica Brazile, Debbie Kiser, Allison Doherty, Susan Brogdon



Wray Freeman & Jeff Baumann



Debbie Kiser & Allison Doherty



Tyler Greiner & Lenora Stukes



Beth Foley & Mike Bozzo



Leslie Woodham



Tonya Steadman



Debbie Kiser, Allison Doherty, Susan Brogdon, Tammy Fidler, Soni Rai, Carrie Morris, Vicki Davis



Matt Schnabel, Beth Foley, Lynn Rivers

Waterford Ridge Becomes 37th SC Firewise Community

Waterford Ridge Firewise Chairman Glen Warren proudly holds their new Firewise USA sign recognizing the Waterford Ridge Community as a Firewise community. Waterford Ridge located on Lake Keowee in Oconee County became the 37th Firewise Community in South Carolina in December.



Firewise

- Chris Revels

John Wilson Recognized as Hometown Hero

Aiken/Barnwell Sector Forestry Technician John Wilson was recognized in his local newspaper, The Aiken Standard, as a Hometown Hero in December. Submissions were sent to the paper from the public. John's wife submitted John as a hero and stated why:

My local hero is my husband, John Wilson. He is a Wildland Firefighter for the S.C. Forestry Commission and has been to several states, as well as locally to help save homeowners from wildland and brush fires. In addition, he volunteers his time as captain of a local fire department, where he also the training officer and also a fire instructor for the S.C. Fire Academy. He is an amazing man, husband and mentor and is always giving to others. He owns his own wildlife control business as well. He deserves to be recognized because he is the true definition of a hero.



https://www.aikenstandard.com/hometown-heroes/article_c919d412-22d7-11ea-8333-ffd158149f36.html

Bill Coker Featured on Netflix Show

Black River Unit Forester Ron Holt was watching Netflix over the Christmas holidays and was shocked when he saw a fellow employee on the screen. Clarendon/Sumter Sector Forestry Technician Bill Coker was featured in the Netflix series "Rotten." The series is about foods and this particular episode in season 1 was about chicken production. The documentary, titled "Big Bird" aired in 2018, shows the ruthlessly efficient world of chicken production pits vulnerable growers against each other and leaves them open to vicious acts of sabotage.

The story featured chicken production in Clarendon County, concentrating on Bill and one other grower for Pilgrim Farms. It shows how hard they work and looked back to 2015 when Bill's chicken houses and several other houses in the area were devastated in a five week span. W.L. Coker Farms in Alcolu, SC lost several hundred thousand birds due to sabotage when someone messed with the warmers in the houses and they either got too hot or too cold. The series also has episodes on honey, avocados, garlic, and others and showing the dark side of marketing, importation, and how people steal and sabotage to get ahead.



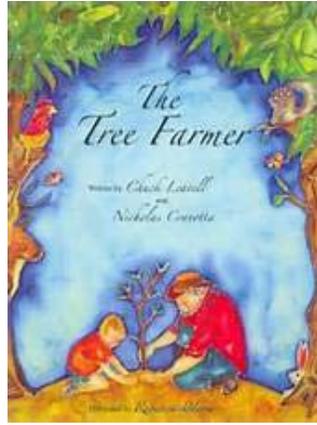
Clarendon/Sumter Sector Forestry Technician Bill Coker was featured on Netflix series "Rotten" in 2018.

SAF Place Books in SC Elementary School Libraries

The Society of American Foresters and the American Tree Farm System embarked on an ambitious project to place copies of the children's book, *The Tree Farmer*, in all public and private elementary school libraries in South Carolina.

Gene Kodama, Vice-President of the Society of American Foresters and former State Forester, recently delivered copies of *The Tree Farmer* to Susan Gilmore, librarian and teacher at St. John's Christian Academy, and to Jennifer Kelly, school administrator, at Living Oaks Academy, both in Monck Corner.

The project is funded by members of the Society of American Foresters and the South Carolina Tree Farm Committee. These organizations represent foresters and forest landowners who actively manage forest in South Carolina for all the benefits they provide. Members volunteer their time to distribute books throughout South Carolina.



Gene Kodama delivered books to Jennifer Kelly at Living Oaks Academy in Moncks Corner.



Gene Kodama delivered copies of *The Tree Farmer* to Susan Gilmore, librarian and teacher at St. John's Christian Academy.

CAN YOU RECOGNIZE THESE CURRENT EMPLOYEES?



HINT: He works with vehicles and still has this car - his first one!



HINT: This employee also works with vehicles. Here he poses with a 62 Chevy 2 Nova.

(ANSWERS on last page)

Caught ON Camera



The Piedmont Dispatchers celebrated Christmas with the help of Piedmont Regional Forester Mike Bozzo, Assistant Regional Forester Brad Bramlett and Communications Manager David Morrow. Dispatchers from right to left: Tracy Fulmer, Tammy Kitchen, Karly Cassada, Mandy Burge, and Lisa Stribble.



Coastal BMP Forester Andrew Williams listens as Edisto Unit Forester Pete Stuckey tells a story.



Coastal Assistant Regional Forester Kip Terry and Allendale/Hampton/Jasper Sector Forestry Technician Lowell Parnell drive back from the target on the shooting range at a hunt at Niederhof Forestry Center.



Berkeley/Charleston/Dorchester Project Forester Jacqueline Forsyth and Urban Program Coordinator Frances Waite celebrated with a Christmas lunch Dec. 13 in Charleston.



Congratulations to Pee Dee Administrative Specialist Kacee Collins on the birth of her beautiful baby girl, Mary Katherine. "Mary Kate" was born Jan. 13 weighing 7 lbs, 2.9 oz. and was 19 inches long. Kacee and the baby are doing great!



Pee Dee Assistant Regional Forester James Bbrunson and Regional Forester Mike Ney have their "peeps" ready for the SC AgriBiz & Farm Expo show.



Abbeville/Greenwood/Laurens Sector FMO Dale Curry caught Piedmont Regional Forester Mike Bozzo enjoying the scenery of Big Knob in Laurens County.

Dispatcher Thompson Meets Others in Forestry While on Vacation

Coastal Dispatcher Sherry Thompson celebrated her 21st anniversary with husband Bruce with a trip to Sandals Ochi Resort in Ochos Rios, Jamaica back in December.

On their trip, they met two other couples who work in forestry and had a great time hanging out together the rest of their trip.

While sitting at a table at the beginning of their trip, she overheard one of them telling another at the table that they worked in forestry. She later asked, and their relationship grew from there. It was just a coincidence that they were all at the same table to start their trip.

Linda and Scott have worked in forestry in Idaho with the Department of Lands, 30 years and 20 years, respectively. Stacy and Jenny are from Missouri and have worked in forestry nine and 10 years, respectively.

Happy Anniversary Sherry!



Stacey and Jenny, Coastal Dispatcher Sherry Thompson, and Linda and Scott enjoy their time together in Jamaica.



Coastal Dispatcher Sherry Thompson, her husband Bruce Thompson, Stacey, Jenny, Linda and Scott (kneeling in front) had a great time together on the trip.

CAN YOU SPOT THE SNAKE?



Can you find the juvenile copperhead snake in the bark of this tree?

Young copperheads are more grayish in color than adults and possess a bright yellow or greenish yellow tail tip.

Programs

Programs

Conservation Development Guide Grant

The SCFC Urban program recently completed project work on a grant focused on developing new strategies and principles with a conservation approach to development in communities. The Forest Connectivity Guide, written and developed by the grant's main partner The Green Infrastructure Center (GIC), led by Director, Karen Firehock, outlines a research-based development process that considers the value, retention, protection and management of forests and other natural resources during development of urbanized areas. This guide will serve as a resource for planners, engineers, development groups and others involved in the planning and development process to promote more conservative approaches and more connected landscapes, while reducing high level disturbance and fragmentation during urbanization. Here is a link to the Forest Connectivity Design Guide: <https://www.state.sc.us/forest/urbconnectguide.pdf>

Community Forestry

- Dena Whitesides

The Long Branch Development tract, an approximately 750-acre property located in rural Greenville County near Simpsonville, served as the grant's project site and research base. The tract includes hundreds of acres of forest, multiple creeks and a 50-acre lake. Piedmont Urban Forester, Dena Whitesides, worked with the GIC team during the initial site assessments to help determine the forested conditions and suitability for commercial and residential development in various areas of the property. This was based on many factors, including, location/access, quality (timber and wildlife values), health, site conditions, site indicators and building constraints. This field assessment work helped



Piedmont Urban Forester Dena Whitesides bores into a tree to find its age.

layout the design concept and separated high quality sites/stands, worthy of protection with increased buffers and responsible forest management, from lower quality, less desirable areas, more suited for development. The GIC team and property owner then worked closely with a local developer on the community design and mapping, which included various types of dwellings, such as high-density or clustered-residential, large lot-residential and commercial business areas.

Many thanks to a team of Piedmont Region foresters and supervisors who also collaborated on this project to provide valuable expertise in wildland fire prevention and forest management. The SCFC team involved on this project, included: Anderson/Greenville/Oconee/Pickens Project Forester Trey Cox, Piedmont Assistant Regional Forester Brad Bramlett, Piedmont Fire Prevention Coordinator Chris Revels, Greenville Pickens Sector Fire Management Officer Ray Cassell and FireWise Coordinator, Drake Carroll.

The support and insight this team provided has contributed to the success of this grant project.



Dena working with a Green Infrastructure Center employee doing fieldwork on the site during the project.

Recommendations from the team included understory management, select harvest, additional firebreaks and existing firebreak expansion, the use of firewise landscaping and building materials and opportunity for funding through the fuels mitigation program. These recommendations have also been incorporated into the conservation development guide and help promote the importance of active forest management to sustain healthy forests in South Carolina as urban development continues and cities and towns in South Carolina become more populated.

Programs

Programs

More Improvements to Harbison Trails and Signs

The Communications and Public Information Division recently finished replacing the last of the old educational signs and repairing foot bridges along the educational walking trails on Harbison State Forest in January. The trails included the Crooked Pine, Discovery, and near the Gazebo Field.

Most of the old signs were installed in the late 1990s and early 2000s and were in poor condition. The new signs are updated with new information and made of better materials that will resist weathering. Forest Health Coordinator David Jenkins helped with the information for the “Trees Get Sick” series of signs along the Discovery Trail.

The next time you come visit Harbison State Forest, please download your trail map (<https://www.state.sc.us/forest/refhartg.htm>) and see the work we’ve been doing to educate the public about forestry and forest ecology.



Environmental Education Coordinator Matt Schnabel gets ready to put up the signs at the triple kiosk at the gazebo..

Education

- Matt Schnabel



Schnabel clears the area with a chainsaw on the Crooked Pine Trail.



Foley poses with the finished “Trees Get Sick” sign.



Assistant Education Coordinator Beth Foley gives a “thumbs up” to the new educational sign featuring the role of fire in the forest. This sign was placed at the shed near the fire tower behind the Environmental Education Center on Harbison State Forest.



Schnabel likes the new “Forest Invaders” sign.

Programs

Arbor Day Celebration with Heyward Tech Students

The SC Forestry Commission Education Staff partnered with SC Wildlife Federation's Habitat Education Manager Jay Keck for a late Arbor Day celebration Dec. 13. Fourteen Heyward Career and Technology special needs students visited Harbison State Forest for an educational program on trees.

These students regularly partner with SCWF to make a variety of bird nesting boxes for SCWF to sell. Unfortunately, it rained during the Arbor Day celebration, so this outdoor program was moved inside. Students still made the most of it and learned all about the importance of trees and forests for humans and wildlife. They got to hear about the forest management practices used at HSF and numerous native wildlife species that can be found within it.

Several Project Learning Tree and Project WILD activities were facilitated to reinforce the topics covered, including "Tree Cookies", "Every Tree for Itself", and "Oh Deer". These students come out to Harbison State Forest twice a year for education programs and are a joy to work with!

Education

-Beth Foley



Environmental Education Coordinator Matt Schnabel leads the PLT activity "Every Tree for Itself" where students have to collect basic resources trees need to survive.



SC Wildlife Federation's Habitat Education Manager Jay Keck talks about the native bird species that use the nest boxes made by Heyward Tech students.

Growing Our Future

2020 Annual Forestry Meeting



The Growing Our Future – Annual Forestry Meeting has become a staple of the forest management community. Every year experts from various fields of study are brought together to share their work and knowledge with professional foresters and landowners alike.

This year the program will feature:

- Scott Jones (Forest Landowners Association, CEO) – The Importance of the Private Forest Landowner
- Dr. Roger “Tripp” Lowe (UGA) – Technology in Silviculture
- Dr. Stephen Peairs (Clemson) – Hardwood Silviculture
- Kellee Melton (USDA) – Federal Cost Share Opportunities
- Chisolm Beckham (SCFC) – State Cost Share Opportunities
- Landowner Report – Personal Experience with Hardwoods
- Agency Updates from: Dr. Tom Dobbins (Clemson Extension), Tom Patton (SC Forestry Commission), Cam Crawford (SC Forestry Association), and Dr. Walt McPhail (SC Tree Farm)
- Forestry vendors, product displays, and door prizes

Continuing Education Credits are Available!

- Forester CFE – 6hrs Category 1

REGISTER HERE: <https://tinyurl.com/GOFAM2020>

You may also call (803)840-6124 in order to pay by cash, check, or card. The deadline to register is April 24. Late registration will be an additional \$10. *No refunds after April 20.*



Clemson University Cooperative Extension Service offers its programs to people of all ages, regardless of race, color, gender, religion, national origin, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital or family status and is an equal opportunity employer.

April 29, 2020

8:00 am – 4:30 pm

Location

T&S Farms
3500 Pond Branch Rd.
Leesville, SC 29070

Cost

General Admission - \$20

Foresters w/ CFE's - \$80

College Student - \$10

Includes breakfast and lunch catered by Shealy's BBQ

Contact

Ryan Bean
(803)840-6124
rbean@clemson.edu

Register Online:

<https://tinyurl.com/GOFAM2020>

Should you require special accommodations due to a disability, please notify our office ten days prior to the event.

PHOTOS FROM AROUND THE STATE



SCFC Chairman Walt McPhail spoke at the Greenville Forestry and Wildlife Society Dec. 16.



Manchester State Forest Assistant Forest Director Ben Kendall took this photo one foggy morning on the forest.



Billy Kodama, brother of retired State Forester Gene Kodama, took this photo of a perfectly round tree with perfect circular rings.



Edisto Unit Forester Pete Sruckey took a photo of several baby alligators at the pond at Niederhof Forestry Center.

South Carolina Firsts

This milestone occurred in South Carolina and was the first of its kind in the United States.

First ice transported commercially – 1799

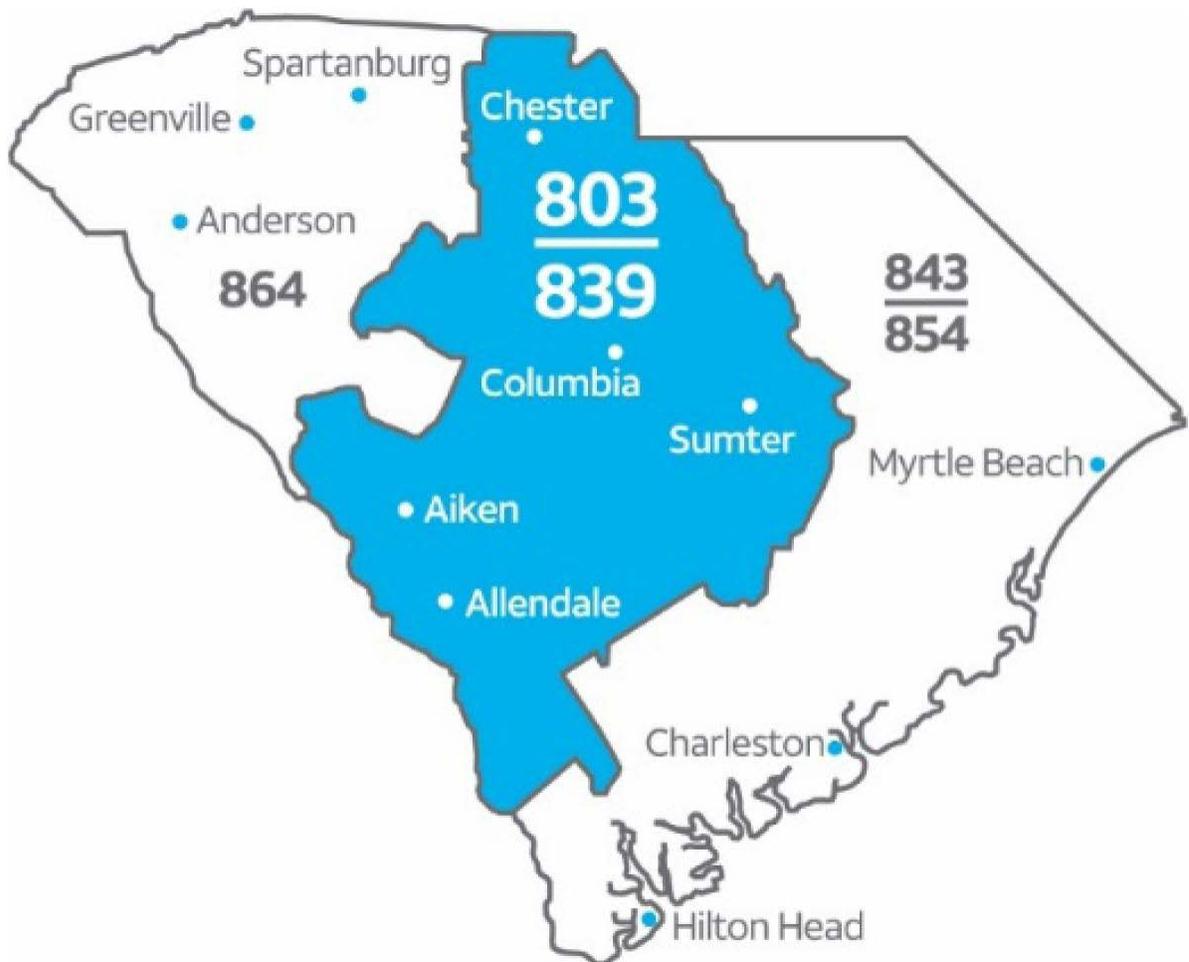
Ice was transported by ship from New York to Charleston.

EFFECTIVE APRIL 25, 2020

GET READY TO CHANGE THE WAY YOU DIAL YOUR LOCAL CALLS!

To ensure a continuing supply of telephone numbers, the new 839 area code will be added to the area served by 803.

All customers with South Carolina 803 area code must dial area code + telephone number for all local calls.



Stronger Than Steel, Able to Stop a Speeding Bullet—It's Super Wood!

Some varieties of wood, such as oak and maple, are renowned for their strength. But scientists say a simple and inexpensive new process can transform any type of wood into a material stronger than steel, and even some high-tech titanium alloys. Besides taking a star turn in buildings and vehicles, the substance could even be used to make bullet-resistant armor plates.

Wood is abundant and relatively low-cost—it literally grows on trees. And although it has been used for millennia to build everything from furniture to homes and larger structures, untreated wood is rarely as strong as metals used in construction. Researchers have long tried to enhance its strength, especially by compressing and “densifying” it, says Liangbing Hu, a materials scientist at the University of Maryland, College Park. But densified wood tends to weaken and spring back toward its original size and shape, especially in humid conditions.

Now, Hu and his colleagues say they have come up with a better way to densify wood, which they report in *Nature*. Their simple, two-step process starts with boiling wood in a solution of sodium hydroxide (NaOH) and sodium sulfite (Na₂SO₃), a chemical treatment similar to the first step in creating the wood pulp used to make paper. This partially removes lignin and hemicellulose (natural polymers that help stiffen a plant's cell walls)—but it largely leaves the wood's cellulose (another natural polymer) intact, Hu says.

The second step is almost as simple as the first: Compressing the treated wood until its cell walls collapse, then maintaining that compression as it is gently heated. The pressure and heat encourage the formation of chemical bonds between large numbers of hydrogen atoms and neighboring atoms in adjacent nanofibers of cellulose, greatly strengthening the material.

The results are impressive. The team's compressed wood is three times as dense as the untreated substance, Hu says, adding that its resistance to being ripped apart is increased more than 10-fold. It also can become about 50 times more resistant to compression and almost 20 times as stiff. The densified wood is also substantially harder, more scratch-resistant and more impact-resistant. It can be molded into almost any shape. Perhaps most importantly, the densified wood is also moisture-resistant: In lab tests, compressed samples exposed to extreme humidity for more than five days swelled less than 10 percent—and in subsequent tests, Hu says, a simple coat of paint eliminated that swelling entirely.

A five-layer, plywoodlike sandwich of densified wood stopped simulated bullets fired into the material—a result Hu and his colleagues suggest could lead to low-cost armor. The material does not protect quite as well as a Kevlar sheet of the same thickness—but it only costs about 5 percent as much, he notes.

The team's results “appear to open the door to a new class of lightweight materials,” says Ping Liu, a materials chemist at the University of California, San Diego, unaffiliated with the *Nature* study. Vehicle manufacturers have often tried to save weight by switching from regular steel to high-strength steel, aluminum alloys or carbon-fiber composites—but those materials are costly, and consumers “rarely make that money back in fuel savings,” Liu says. And densified wood has another leg up on carbon-fiber composites: It does not require expensive adhesives that also can make components difficult, if not impossible, to recycle.

Densified wood provides new design possibilities and uses for which natural wood is too weak, says Peter Fratzl, a materials scientist at the Max Planck Institute of Colloids and Interfaces in Germany who did not take part in the study. “Instead of creating a design for the material at hand, researchers can create a material to suit the design they want,” he says, alluding to a familiar process among aerospace engineers who have a long history of developing ever-stronger alloys to meet their needs.

One possible obstacle to the widespread use of densified wood will be engineers' ability to scale up and accelerate the process, Liu notes. Hu and his team spent several hours making each coffee-table book-size slab of densified wood used for testing. But there are no practical reasons the process could not be sped up or used to make larger components, Hu contends.

Although Hu and his team have sought to enhance wood's strength, other researchers have pursued more unusual goals—such as making it transparent. One team, led by materials scientist Lars Berglund at the KTH Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm, has come up with a way to make windowpanes of wood. The first step in that process (as in Hu's) is to remove lignin, a substance that not only stiffens wood but also creates its brownish color. The researchers infuse the lignin-free wood with a polymer called methyl methacrylate (MMA), a material better known by trade names such as Plexiglas and Lucite.

Research like Hu's and Berglund's can only add to the wild prospects for the future of materials science. Someday soon it might be possible to live in a home made almost completely from one of Earth's most abundant and versatile building materials—from floors to rafters, walls to windows. In the garage there may be a car whose chassis and bumpers could be composed of densified wood rather than steel and plastic—knock on wood.

https://getpocket.com/explore/item/stronger-than-steel-able-to-stop-a-speeding-bullet-it-s-super-wood?utm_source=pocket-newtab



New techniques for “densifying” wood can turn the ubiquitous substance into a super-material suitable for constructing buildings and body armor. Photo by mack2happy / Getty Images .

Fire Weather Outlook

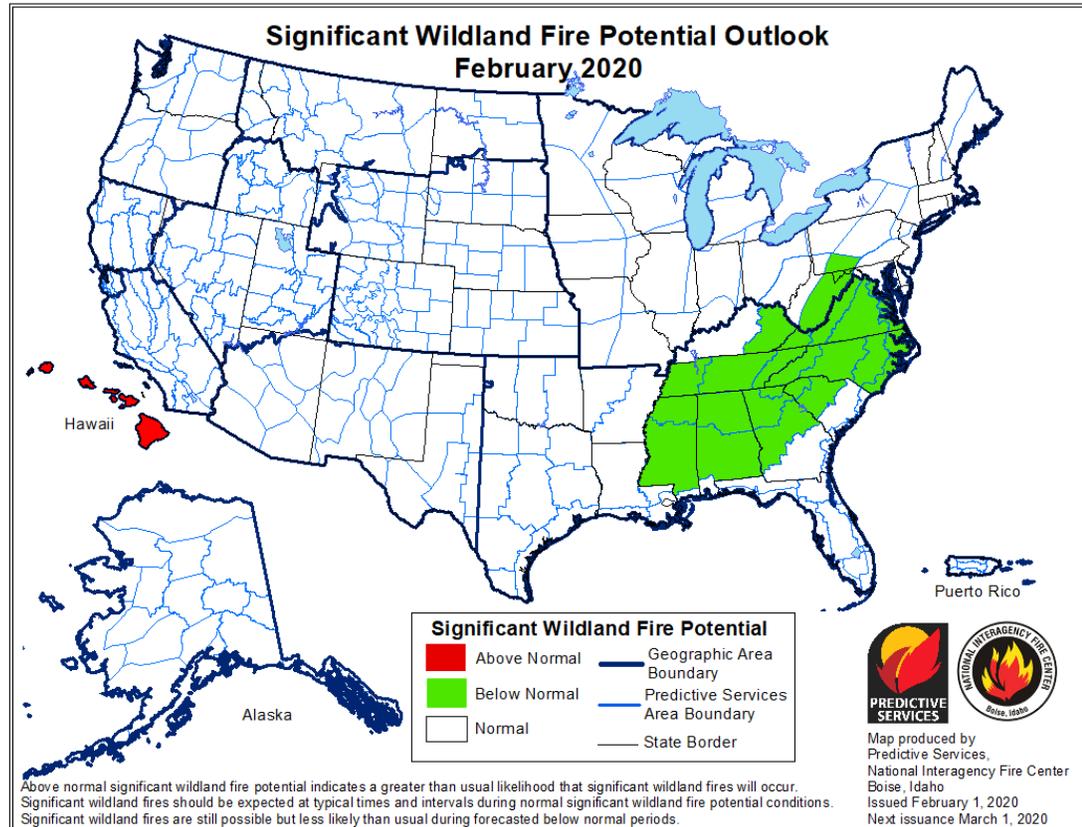
National fire activity was minimal in January as most of the country remained out of season. Shifting weather patterns became more aligned with long range outlooks. This added clarity to an early spring fire season outlook that suggests that some regions may experience elevated significant large fire potential heading into the pre-greenup period in March.

Southern Area:

Below Normal significant large fire potential is expected across the southern Appalachians and the portions of the deep south February through April. South Texas should be monitored for elevated potential in February and South Florida should be monitored for elevated potential in May. Other areas can expect Normal significant large fire potential during the outlook period.

Ocean temperatures in the tropical Pacific are expected to remain an ENSO neutral state. Modelling from the world's major forecast centers continuing to indicate the neutral phase will likely continue into early summer. This situation, along with higher frequency varying atmospheric factors should result in average to above precipitation trends within an active and more highly variable weather setup for the rest of winter and spring.

With the continuing exception of persisting limited areas of drier fuels in parts of western Oklahoma and west Texas, fuel moistures since November have trended well above critical thresholds and currently near or above 20%. KBDI values mostly mirror this moist situation as frequent rain events have produced above average soil moisture and stream flow conditions. The one primary exception is southern Florida where precipitation has been below average. Depending on how the rain pattern develops over the next few months, this area could see elevated fire activity.



Current Fire Numbers for South Carolina

MONTH-AND YEAR-TO-DATE COMPARISON TO PREVIOUS 5- AND 10-YEAR AVERAGE

Time Period	JANUARY		JULY - JANUARY		FISCAL YEAR	
	FIRES	ACRES	FIRES	ACRES	FIRES	ACRES
5-Year Average	109	497	525	4,286	1,418	10,600
10-Year Average	167	811	691	4,013	1,764	12,044
Current FY ¹	44	142	649	4,061	649	4,061

¹To date for current fiscal year



ANSWERS to Employee Photos:
 1. Pee Dee Mechanic III Allen Land
 2. Pee Dee Mechanic III Dennis Weaver

THE TREES

*Time is never wasted listening to the trees;
 If to heaven as grandly we arose as these
 Holding toward each other half their kindly grace,
 Haply we were worthier of our human place.*

*Bending down to meet you on the hillside path,
 Birch and oak and maple each his welcome hath;
 Each his own fine cadence, his familiar word,
 By the ear accustomed, always plainly heard.*

*Every tree gives answer to some different mood;
 This one helps you, climbing, that for rest is good;
 Beckoning friends, companions, sentinels, they are;
 Good to live and die with, good to greet afar.*

*Dear, inspiring, friendly dwellers of the wood,
 Always reaching downward something grand or good,
 From the lofty spaces where you breathe and live;
 Royally unconscious, careless what you give!*

*O ye glorious creature, heirs with us of earth!
 Might we win the secret of our loftier birth—
 From our depths of being grow like you and climb
 To our heights of blessing—life would be sublime.*

--By Lucy Larcom

Taken from the book titled "Poems, Prose and Songs of Trees and Woodlands for South Carolina", published by the S.C. State Commission of Forestry.

Quote of the Month

*"Talent is God-given.
 Be humble. Fame
 is man-given. Be
 grateful. Conceit is
 self-given. Be careful."*

John Wooden

Photo of the Month



Edisto Unit Forester Pete Stuckey took this photo of a seagull flying near fishing boats in McClellanville in the fall.

Please send in your photos or news to Michelle Johnson at mjohnson@scfc.gov.