

South Carolina Forestry Commission
Strategic Plan



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Our Mission

To protect, promote, enhance and nurture the forest lands of South Carolina and educate the public about forestry issues in a manner consistent with achieving the greatest good for its citizens.

Enhance the Resource

*A*n ample, productive forest land base and an economic climate conducive to forestry-based business are essential if forest landowners of South Carolina are to practice sustainable forest management.

Goal 1: Serve as a catalyst for promotion, development and expansion of the forest resource and forestry-related industry in the state.

Action 1. Provide leadership in the identification, recruitment, and development of appropriate primary and secondary forest industries.

Action 2. Cooperate with national, state, regional and local economic development organizations to promote forestry-based businesses in South Carolina.

Action 3. Expand delivery of forestry-related Rural Development programs in cooperation with other agencies/entities.

Action 4. Identify and recommend mechanisms that would encourage management of forest lands for products and forest-related amenities.

Action 5. Develop mechanisms to recognize and compensate landowners who provide ecosystem services that benefit the public.

Goal 2: Improve contacts and communication with state and local levels of government concerning forestry-related issues.

Action 1. Encourage active participation in forestry issues at all organizational levels. Identify specific audiences to be reached by each program and/or operating segment of the SCFC.

Action 2. Increase participation in public hearings, including county council and planning commission meetings.

Action 3. Invite legislative staff to participate in high profile forestry events, and plan periodic field trips for legislative staff and the Governor's office staff, focusing on all services provided to citizens of the state.

Action 4. Address regulatory and liability issues associated with forest management practices such as prescribed burning, use of pesticides, and timber harvest.

Action 5. Train personnel to be effective communicators.

Goal 3: Provide policy makers, the forestry community and the interested public accurate and timely information on the state's forest inventory and health of the forest.

Action 1. Maintain funds and personnel to re-measure the state's Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) plots on a five-year cycle.

Action 2. Survey adequate forest plots to ascertain a picture of forest health.

Action 3. Continue to collect and provide information about land use, fragmentation, and ownership issues.

Goal 4: Provide landowners with optimum quality forest tree seedlings to meet needs not filled by the private sector.

Action 1. Establish 3rd generation orchards for loblolly pine seed production.

Action 2. Partner with nursery and tree improvement organizations to maintain access to technical expertise, high value plant material, and funding sources.

Action 3. Continue to move nursery operations toward self-sustainability.

Protect the Resource

*T*o ensure their future health, South Carolina's forests must be protected from harm due to natural and human-caused factors.

Goal 1: Ensure prompt and effective response to wildfires and other natural disasters.

Action 1. A primary point of contact for 9-1-1 centers, fire departments and the public, Forestry Commission dispatch operations will be kept current with technology, equipment, and staffing to support the agency's statewide fire dispatch, smoke management and emergency communication roles.

Action 2. Increase emphasis on training Forestry Commission personnel and cooperators in the Incident Command System (ICS) and general wildfire suppression tactics. Seek out non-fire and additional opportunities to use ICS and complete task books.

Action 3. Cooperate with Emergency Management Division, fire departments, and other emergency response organizations. Explore opportunities to train and utilize private and/or non-traditional cooperators.

Action 4. Evaluate staffing, equipment and technology to ensure adequate response to all wildfires and other disasters within the scope of the SCFC's mission.

Goal 2: Evaluate wildfire protection strategies, priorities and capabilities as urban development into forested areas creates additional hazards.

Action 1. Redefine and strengthen the cooperative relationship with local fire departments as urban developments expand into forested areas.

Action 2. Implement low-impact suppression techniques where applicable.

Action 3. Incorporate a Firewise approach to wildland urban interface areas by identifying communities at risk through hazard assessment, developing wildfire protection plans for communities, developing education/awareness efforts for communities, and developing fuels management strategies.

Action 4. Emphasize wildfire prevention through the deployment of fire prevention teams during Fire Prevention Week and periods of high wildfire occurrence.

Action 5. Seek out non-traditional partners who may provide assistance with changing fire protection issues.

Goal 3: Lead in law enforcement services in wildfire and forest product theft and fraud arenas.

Action 1. Provide forest product theft awareness and prevention training to SCFC personnel, landowners, and cooperators.

Action 2. Develop and enforce a standardized procedures manual for field investigation and prosecution.

Action 3. Continue to implement a Class 1 Certification Program for SCFC officers and investigators.

Action 4. Review law enforcement officer staffing levels and adjust accordingly.

Goal 4: Re-evaluate programs to ensure prompt response to insects, other forest pests, and disease outbreaks and concerns.

Action 1. Provide training to agency foresters, technicians, and cooperators (consulting foresters, industrial foresters, federal agencies in combination with USFS, other state agencies, i.e., PRT, DNR, DOT, etc.) on survey techniques, identification and control of forest pests, and integrated pest management.

Action 2. Maintain continuous monitoring of forest insect and disease activity, including invasive species.

Action 3. Provide detailed field or lab evaluation of specific forest pest problems for use by land managers. Cooperate with Clemson Plant Pest Regulatory agency.

Action 4. Maintain staffing, technology and equipment to combat forest pest problems on a timely basis and as required by state law.

Goal 5: Enhance water quality protection by increasing awareness and compliance with South Carolina Best Management Practices for Forestry (BMPs).

Action 1. Improve delivery of pre-harvest planning and BMP recommendations through the Courtesy Exam Program to protect water quality and site productivity during forestry operations.

Action 2. Provide classroom and field BMP training for forestry contractors, private landowners, industry, SCFC employees, and other agencies through the Timber Operations Professional logger training program, in cooperation with industry and through SCFC workshops.

Action 3. Encourage contractors to include BMP compliance statements in their contracts.

Action 4. Work with SC Forestry Association, Association of Consulting Foresters, Clemson University, SC Department of Health and Environmental Control, SC Timber Producers Association, county landowner associations, and other organizations to encourage landowners, loggers, foresters, and contractors to request courtesy BMP examinations.

Action 5. Continue BMP monitoring to document success and provide opportunities for education of landowners, loggers, and forestry professionals.

Action 6. Respond to BMP complaints and provide technical expertise to appropriate enforcement agencies.

Action 7. Periodically review Best Management Practices (BMP) guidelines and update as needed to better protect water quality.

Action 8. Update cooperative agreements with state and federal regulatory agencies, forest industry, and private organizations to protect environmental functions.

Goal 6: Promote the responsible use of prescribed fire.

Action 1. Continue to monitor and research smoke management guidelines to maintain air quality standards.

Action 2. Maintain an active role in leadership of the SC Prescribed Fire Council.

Action 3. Examine regulations and liability issues concerning prescribed burning and seek solutions that will provide for public safety while permitting prescribed burning.

Manage the Resource

*F*orest landowners, communities, and the public expect the South Carolina Forestry Commission to deliver financial and technical assistance while addressing social and environmental concerns.

Goal 1: Provide improved land management services to landowners of South Carolina.

Action 1. Continually identify our customers' needs and take a proactive approach. Offer forest management services that the SCFC can reasonably provide to landowners to improve timber production, aid in efficient utilization of the timber resource, foster conservation and multiple use of the forest resource, and manage and maintain healthy urban forests.

Action 2. Periodically perform internal study of current services provided by the SCFC. Solicit input from employees on how services can be better performed.

Action 3. Provide forest management assistance to public entities that hold forested lands. Conduct annual planning meetings to discuss upcoming projects, review fee structure, and discuss expansion of services.

Action 4. Stay current with new management techniques and methods of forest management to ensure delivery of the best possible advice.

Goal 2: Administer reforestation programs and provide technical forest management assistance designed to meet landowners' goals.

Action 1. Develop specialized management strategies applicable to landowners with small tracts. Utilize the Stewardship program to deliver comprehensive management plans to all landowners with multiple natural resource management objectives.

Action 2. Improve utilization of trained forest technicians.

Action 3. Provide special services, for a fee, that are not adequately provided by the private sector, such as prescribed burning, firebreak plowing, and water bar construction.

Action 4. Continue to re-evaluate use and administration of current reforestation funds. Actively seek partnerships that increase the diversity of sources for reforestation assistance and the funding available for forestry practices.

Goal 3: Provide technical, educational and financial assistance in urban and community forestry to local governments and organized groups living and working within established developing and populated areas.

Action 1. Meet with local government personnel, advocacy groups and professional organizations periodically to assess needs and provide technical assistance in the development and management of public trees and forests.

Action 2. Develop and/or acquire tools to facilitate technical, educational and financial assists and services.

Action 3. Administer the community forestry grant program as available and provide information on other available sources of grants and funding to assist in the development and management of public trees and forests.

Action 4. Conduct on-site programs, provide literature and web site information, and work through partners to sponsor / present information regarding arboriculture, community forestry issues, and the value of ecosystem services to targeted audiences.

Action 5. Offer expertise to other SCFC program areas and support opportunities for professional development and technical skill enhancement of agency foresters regarding arboriculture and/or community forestry issues and involve them in local forestry issues within their assigned areas.

Action 6. Work through local, regional, and state partners to educate them on the workload and financial challenges of the community forestry program and encourage them to advocate for state support and funding.

Goal 4: Use landholdings to demonstrate innovative forest management techniques as well as for in-house training and applied research.

Action 1. Develop relationships with educational institutions and research organizations to encourage the use of state forest lands as potential research sites.

Action 2. Work with Clemson University Extension, local forestry landowner organizations, and other partners to promote state forests as forestry practices demonstration sites.

Action 3. Actively seek out grants, federal funds and other income sources to expand the state forest system, with the primary goal of acquiring tracts contiguous to existing properties.

Raise Awareness about the Resource

*W*e must raise the awareness among decision-makers and the public in general concerning the environmental and economic benefits of sound forest management.

Goal 1: Develop and promote forestry education programs for all audiences.

Action 1. Continue to develop Harbison State Forest and the Piedmont Forestry Center as forestry education centers, and expand programs to selected field locations.

Action 2. Promote conservation education programs such as Wood Magic, Project Learning Tree and Teaching KATE (Kids About The Environment). Increase SCFC personnel participation in education programs.

Action 3. Continue annual teacher's tour and development of forestry educational material.

Goal 2: Enhance the image of the Forestry Commission as an initial source for forest management information and assistance in South Carolina.

Action 1. Develop creative approaches to reaching landowners through civic involvement, group meetings, tours, workshops, advertising and other opportunities.

Action 2. Explore diverse methods for marketing the agency's programs and promoting services to new audiences (continually reference "Manage the Resource" Goal 1, Action 2 in doing so).

Action 3. Maintain and continually update the Forestry Commission website.

Goal 3: Utilize all media to reach targeted audiences with relevant forestry information.

Action 1. Research potential audiences to develop targeted information and/or education campaigns.

Action 2. Develop audio-visual, print, and exhibit material, promoting forestry and forest management, for use by agency personnel in their communities. Encourage use of these items through assignment of EPMS goals.

Goal 4: Increase interaction, cooperation, and communication with other state agencies, local governments, forestry organizations, universities, professional societies, environmental and conservation groups.

Action 1. Partner with the South Carolina Forestry Association (SCFA), American Forest and Paper Association (AF&PA), Association of Consulting Foresters (ACF), Clemson University, the National Association and Southern Group of State Foresters (NASF, SGSF) and other sister organizations to identify common messages and deliver to targeted audiences.

Action 2. Improve contacts and communication with local governments.

Action 3. Encourage SCFC personnel to participate in landowner associations and other forestry and conservation-related organizations.

Action 4. Provide leadership for state agencies to cooperatively provide forest conservation information to landowners in forest management, recreation, wildlife management and wildland/urban interface concerns.

Prepare to Meet Future Demands

***T**o meet future demands and provide quality customer service, the South Carolina Forestry Commission must have well-trained, qualified staff that enjoy a safe and rewarding work environment.*

Goal 1: Strive to maintain a capable, satisfied and diverse work team.

Action 1. Provide forward-thinking leadership that is creative, clear, innovative and demanding of excellence.

Action 2. Actively recruit and employ highly-qualified, diverse individuals who are committed to providing public service.

Action 3. Encourage continuous improvement through individual and team efforts.

Action 4. Ensure an organizational culture that promotes high performance, access to educational opportunities, and employee accountability.

Action 5. Continuously assess the organization's future human resources needs and identify the potential of staff for advancement opportunities.

Action 6. Develop and implement strategies to promote positive agency and employee morale.

Goal 2: Enhance professional development for agency personnel to efficiently, safely, and professionally provide better services.

Action 1. Encourage foresters to pursue various specialties (e.g. hardwood management, GIS, arboriculture, taxation issues) as well as basic forest management.

Action 2. Provide informational sessions and educational material to SCFC employees on the services provided by the agency.

Action 3. Identify training needed through self-assessment processes and a training council. Send employees to outside training if necessary and utilize them as instructors for the balance of staff.

Action 4. Evaluate and adopt appropriate technology to improve the efficiency of SCFC personnel so that they may provide improved services to customers.

Action 5. Encourage and facilitate employees in pursuing State Government's Associate Public Manager (APM) and Certified Public Manager (CPM) awards and SC Executive Institute.

Action 6. Support professional development of personnel. Encourage membership in professional societies that allow employees to develop skills and contacts outside their normal work routine.

Goal 3: Review staffing levels and organizational structure to ensure the agency is in a position to supply needed services.

Action 1. Performance measures will be generated for each program area.

Action 2. Perform unit forest management and forest protection reviews on a timely basis and utilize results to examine staffing level at unit offices.

Action 3. Support changes in legislation that would alter the status of county forestry boards, as recommended by the Legislative Audit Council.

Action 4. Review workforce planning status (i.e. TERI, retirement eligible employees) and develop a preparation plan for staff changes.

Goal 4: Implement plans and establish performance measures to reduce the number of job-related injuries.

Action 1. Implement applicable safety regulations and guidelines and develop procedures to ensure agency compliance.

Action 2. Maintain the physical fitness standards based on job requirements.

Action 3. Provide information to employees on the benefits of adopting a healthy lifestyle and encourage employee participation.

Goal 5: Establish goals and implement vehicle and equipment operation safety training to reduce the number of accidents.

Action 1. Provide Driver Improvement and Fire Suppression Equipment Operator Task Training programs and make improvements as needed. Ensure employees who drive state vehicles on a regular basis have completed Driver Improvement training.

Action 2. Evaluate the need for additional vehicle and equipment operator training and other specialized training such as chainsaw use. Develop programs needed.