

# Tree Country

April 2024



the employee newsletter of the South Carolina Forestry Commission



from the desk of  
FLEET & EQUIPMENT MANAGER  
**Doug Mills**

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Happy spring, everyone! As many of you know, the last few years have been quite challenging when it comes to equipment and vehicle acquisitions, both in the private sector and in state government. We always hear about the “supply chain crisis,” but what exactly is the supply chain? It is defined as the interconnected journey that raw materials, components and goods take before their assembly and sale to customers.

We are all customers in the supply chain, and while we like to think that the South Carolina Forestry Commission is a large customer that deserves high priority, we really aren’t a drop in the bucket when it comes to sales volume for vehicle and equipment manufacturers. Therefore, we must get in line and wait for our products just like everyone else.

Due to the supply chain issues since Covid, we are still waiting on vehicles and equipment that we ordered in fiscal year 2021-22! Recently we have received most of these items, but we still

have not received many of our slip-on firefighting units for new pickup trucks. I have been asked many times, “Doug, where is my new truck?!” and I really wish I had better news for everyone. I have been in contact with our vendors, and they are working very hard to fulfill our orders.

Now, the good news is I am seeing a slight turn around in the build time for vehicles and dozers as of the last few months. Car dealers are starting to offer vehicles for sale on their lots instead of through order processes, so their inventories have increased significantly.



A new unit with a lift plow.



New units before they were distributed around the state.

Our most recent order of Caterpillar bulldozers is already starting to roll off the assembly line and arrive at Blanchard Machinery in West Columbia. Transport truck dealers have started to call and ask how many trucks we need to purchase this year because they too have a larger inventory. So, I think we are seeing a glimpse of the light at the end of the tunnel of this supply chain crisis.

I appreciate everyone’s understanding and patience as we have navigated through these difficult times. If anyone has any comments or suggestions concerning current equipment or the equipment we purchase in the future, please find your local equipment committee member (see list below), and give them your ideas. I am always happy to take your calls, texts and emails, or you can just grab me and talk to me whenever you see me!

Have a great April!!

### **Equipment Committee Members**

**Coastal Region** - Andrew Williams, Robert Johnson, Thad Wimberly, Lowell Parnell, Ron Clark, John Wilson, Scotty Harrington, Michael Black and Jonathan Berry

**Pee Dee Region** - James Brunson , Wayne Smith, George Martin, Shawn Feldner, Eric Brown

**Piedmont Region** - Brad Bramlett, Brian Moran, Clay Howard, Bruce Ballentine, David Taylor, Ray Cassell, Derek Adams



Kenworth transport trucks decalced and ready to go.



**ON THE COVER**

The cover photo features new units distributed in 2023.



## **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.)





## Five Communication Responsibilities

Fire leaders work to instill the Five Communications Responsibilities in the culture of all crews, teams, and units. These responsibilities are not just tactical tools but apply to the staff and management environment.

In high risk environments, the best level of protection against errors and accidents is effective team communication. Therefore, everyone—regardless of position—has an obligation to communicate critical information.

Fire leaders use the Five Communications Responsibilities to enable everyone at all levels to develop good communications practices.

### Five Communications Responsibilities:

**Brief**—use briefings to ensure accurate situation awareness.

**Debrief**—use After Action Reviews to build accountability and learn from experience.

**Acknowledge and understand messages**—acknowledge and ensure clarity of received communications on conditions, assigned tasks, intent, and other important information.

**Communicate hazards to others**—use hazard identification, a key component of risk management, to identify personal, tactical, situational, political, or organizational hazards. Good leaders ensure that team members are vigilant for hazards and communicate identified hazards effectively.

**Ask if you don't know**—guard against making false assumptions when the picture is not clear.



Effective team communication is essential for a safe environment.

### Discussion Points

- What makes a good briefing?
- Describe a time where a hazard was not communicated to you.
- Why do or don't you ask if you don't know?



April 2024

Provided by Training & Safety Manager Stephen Patterson

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



# Human Resources

## Employee News

Please welcome the following new employee who started with the agency in March:



Ray Allsbrook

**Ray Allsbrook** is the new Mechanic in the Pee Dee Region. He started March 18 and will be stationed at the Kingstree Shop. Ray lives in Sumter and has been a self-employed heavy vehicle repairman for years.

**Human Resources**

—Krista Emory

## Farewells

Pee Dee Dispatcher **Lakisha Handy** separated from the agency March 8.  
FIA Forester **Carson Parham** separated from the agency March 15.

## Retiree News

Retired Richland County Warden **Butch James** passed away March 2.  
Please keep their families in your thoughts and prayers.



# NEWS

## Jenna Powell Delivers a Baby Boy

Congratulations to Pee Dee Dispatcher Jenna Powell and husband Devin on the birth of their son Nicholas Kip Powell. He was born Feb. 23, weighing 7 lbs., 3 oz. and 20 inches long. This is Jenna's first child. Mother and baby are doing great. Congratulations, Jenna!



Nicholas Kip Powell

# Guess Who...

Please send in a photo before you worked with the Commission or even earlier and let employees guess who you are. If you are willing to participate, please send in your photo to [mjohnson@scfc.gov](mailto:mjohnson@scfc.gov).

**Do you recognize your fellow co-worker?**



HINT: This handsome little boy fulfilled his dream of becoming a doctor. Do you know who it is?

## TREE JOKES

**What type of tree likes to give high fives?**

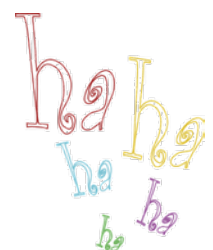
**A palm tree.**

**How do you know when a tree has had too much root beer?**

**He won't stop texting his axe.**

**What's a tree's favorite radio station?**

**One that plays poplar songs.**



# HELP WANTED

## Volunteers Needed for Annual Woodland Clinic May 2

The annual **Woodland Clinic** will be held at the Connie Maxwell Farm in Greenwood **Tuesday, May 7**. The date is a bit later than usual this year due to a scheduling conflict. May 9 is the alternate date if severe weather is forecast.

Forestry Commission personnel (and retirees) are needed to help with the events and interact with the high school kids. If you wish to volunteer, please contact retiree Jimmy Walters at (864) 992-0252 or by email at Jimmy.3t@gmail.com.

# Employee Service Awards



## SERVICE AWARDS FOR APRIL

Employee's Name	Position	Location	State Service
Mandy Burge	Dispatcher	Piedmont	20 years
John Wilson	FMO	Edisto Unit	10 years

## Specht Attends Municipal Forestry Institute

During the last week of February, Coastal Urban Forester Cara Specht attended the Urban and Community Forestry Society (UCFS) 2024 Municipal Forestry Institute (MFI) in Jekyll Island, GA. More than 75 other attendees and facilitators attended the institute. Facilitators ranged from nonprofit work, municipal workers, consulting and private tree care companies. Most attendees were from a municipality, some were from a state agency and others were nonprofit organizations. MFI is geared towards those who are in the urban forestry field. It offers tools to help and promote the greater mission and vision of your professional goals that align with your personal values.



**Urban Forestry**  
- Cara Specht

# CURRENT JOB OPENINGS

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

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Job Title:</b> Assistant Director Wee Tee<br><b>Agency Hiring Range:</b> Min: \$65,029.00<br><b>Location:</b> Williamsburg County, South Carolina          | <b>Closing Date/Time:</b> 4/4/2024 11:59 PM Eastern<br><b>Max:</b> \$75,383.00  |
| <b>Job Title:</b> RE-ADVERTISEMENT Pilot I<br><b>Agency Hiring Range:</b> Min: \$45,530.00<br><b>Location:</b> Colleton County, South Carolina                | <b>Closing Date/Time:</b> 4/5/2024 11:59 PM Eastern<br><b>Max:</b> \$45,530.00  |
| <b>Job Title:</b> Assistant Director<br><b>Agency Hiring Range:</b> Min: \$65,029.00<br><b>Location:</b> Chesterfield County, South Carolina                  | <b>Closing Date/Time:</b> 4/17/2024 11:59 PM Eastern<br><b>Max:</b> \$75,383.00 |
| <b>Job Title:</b> Dispatcher -Night Shift (36 hours)<br><b>Agency Hiring Range:</b> Min: \$25,896.00<br><b>Location:</b> Darlington County, South Carolina    | <b>Closing Date/Time:</b> 4/11/24 11:59 PM Eastern<br><b>Max:</b> \$25,896.00   |
| <b>Job Title:</b> Dispatcher (2 positions)<br><b>Agency Hiring Range:</b> Min: \$28,774.00<br><b>Location:</b> Darlington County, South Carolina              | <b>Closing Date/Time:</b> 4/11/24 11:59 PM Eastern<br><b>Max:</b> \$28,774.00   |
| <b>Job Title:</b> Coastal BMP Forester<br><b>Agency Hiring Range:</b> Min: \$61,070.00<br><b>Location:</b> Colleton County, South Carolina                    | <b>Closing Date/Time:</b> Continuous<br><b>Max:</b> \$68,733.00                 |
| <b>Job Title:</b> Stewardship Forester II<br><b>Agency Hiring Range:</b> Min: \$61,070.00<br><b>Location:</b> Darlington County, South Carolina               | <b>Closing Date/Time:</b> Continuous<br><b>Max:</b> \$68,733.00                 |
| <b>Job Title:</b> Forestry Technician I<br><b>Agency Hiring Range:</b> Min: \$30,079.00<br><b>Location:</b> Georgetown County, South Carolina                 | <b>Closing Date/Time:</b> Continuous<br><b>Max:</b> \$31,582.00                 |
| <b>Job Title:</b> Forestry Technician I<br><b>Agency Hiring Range:</b> Min: \$30,079.00<br><b>Location:</b> Jasper County, South Carolina                     | <b>Closing Date/Time:</b> Continuous<br><b>Max:</b> \$31,582.00                 |
| <b>Job Title:</b> Forestry Technician I<br><b>Agency Hiring Range:</b> Min: \$30,079.00<br><b>Location:</b> Allendale County, South Carolina                  | <b>Closing Date/Time:</b> Continuous<br><b>Max:</b> \$31,582.00                 |
| <b>Job Title:</b> Project Forester<br><b>Agency Hiring Range:</b> Min: \$47,509.00<br><b>Location:</b> Hampton County, South Carolina                         | <b>Closing Date/Time:</b> Continuous<br><b>Max:</b> \$50,834.00                 |
| <b>Job Title:</b> RE-ADVERTISEMENT Project Forester I<br><b>Agency Hiring Range:</b> Min: \$47,509.00<br><b>Location:</b> Williamsburg County, South Carolina | <b>Closing Date/Time:</b> Continuous<br><b>Max:</b> \$50,834.00                 |
| <b>Job Title:</b> Re- Advertisement Supply Manager I<br><b>Agency Hiring Range:</b> Min: \$36,453.00<br><b>Location:</b> Richland County, South Carolina      | <b>Closing Date/Time:</b> Continuous<br><b>Max:</b> \$44,977.00                 |
| <b>Job Title:</b> RE-ADVERTISEMENT Project Forester I<br><b>Agency Hiring Range:</b> Min: \$47,509.00<br><b>Location:</b> Orangeburg County, South Carolina   | <b>Closing Date/Time:</b> Continuous<br><b>Max:</b> \$50,834.00                 |
| <b>Job Title:</b> RE-ADVERTISEMENT Project Forester I<br><b>Agency Hiring Range:</b> Min: \$47,509.00<br><b>Location:</b> Sumter County, South Carolina       | <b>Closing Date/Time:</b> Continuous<br><b>Max:</b> \$50,834.00                 |



Public Information Coordinator Justin Holt and Assistant Environmental Education Coordinator Beth Foley, whose collaboration produced the agency's kid-friendly tree identification guide, accepted the award presented by the SC State Library.

## SCFC wins 8th SC State Notable Document Award in 10 years

For the eighth time in 10 years, the Forestry Commission has won a prestigious South Carolina State Library (SCSL) Notable State Document Award.

The award-winning publication, *UnbeLEAFable: A kid-friendly, self-led guide to identifying trees in Harbison State Forest*, was the brainchild of Assistant Environmental Education Coordinator Beth Foley, who conceived the publication for her capstone project in the Palmetto Environmental Education Certification (PEEC) program. Public Information Coordinator Justin Holt designed the booklet, providing all artistic direction and illustrated content.

Only 1 percent of all South Carolina state agency publications are recognized as notable documents each year.

The guide, one of only five publications statewide recognized in the award program's monograph category, is designed for families to use while visiting Harbison State Forest in Columbia to learn more about the

basics of tree identification. The guide includes leaf characteristics, types of fruit/flowers, bark characteristics, the difference between hardwoods and softwoods, common tree species found on Harbison and fun facts from Serrated Sam, the leaf character featured on the cover.

The guide also directs families to go on a tree ID activity on the state forest's Crooked Pine Trail, encouraging them to try identifying 10 different tree species marked on the trail by using a key, which is in the form of a flowchart with characteristics of each tree species and leaf images.

The State Library's Notable Documents Awards recognize state governmental publications of outstanding merit and usefulness to the citizens of South Carolina "South Carolina state documents provide a wealth of information, statistics, and share a broad range of knowledge about our state," said SCSL Director Leesa Aiken. "I am pleased that we are able to publicly recognize these important

publications as notable documents."

The *UnbeLEAFable* tree ID guide will be available for pickup by visitors at the Harbison State Forest office later this spring; in the meantime, it

can be viewed/downloaded at: <https://www.scfc.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/UnbeleafableKidsTreeIDBook.pdf>



# Tree Farm Legislative Day at the Statehouse

Tree Farmers from across the state visited the Statehouse March 7 to speak with their Senator and Representative about the importance of forestry to our state and vital issues affecting them as forest landowners.

This year the group invited legislators to a breakfast which provided an informal setting for discussions.

The event was well-attended with 62 legislators and other elected officials, and over 40 Tree Farmers participating.



Tree Farm participants on the front steps of the Statehouse.



SCFC Chair Walt McPhail, who is also a tree farmer, speaks with Senator Thomas C. Alexander of Oconee and Pickens counties and President of the SC Senate.



State Forester Scott Phillips speaks with Representative Ben Connell of Kershaw County in the lobby of the Statehouse.



Tree Farm participants wait to be recognized in the balcony of the House.



House members acknowledge the SC Tree Farm Committee members.



SC Tree Farm Committee Member Tom Brant talks with Representative Craig A. Gagnon of Abbeville, Anderson and Laurens counties.

Attendees are recognized in the Senate Chambers.



# Manchester Hosts MTR Horse Ride

The Manchester Trail Riders (MTR) held their Spring Trail Ride March 14-17 at Mill Creek on Manchester State Forest with 192 riders.

This is the 45th year that MTR has held two rides every year; the fall ride is held around Halloween and the spring ride near St. Patrick's Day. When the group started in 1979, they had 21 riders. The rides hit their prime in the late 1990s and early 2000s when they had over 300 riders at each event.

This event is a fun weekend for horse enthusiasts from around the southeast. Attendees start arriving with horses and campers on Thursday. They have food trucks and catered meals throughout the event. A dance with a DJ is held Friday night with the organized ride beginning at 10 a.m.

Seventy-eight-year-old MTR member Thomas Charles parades around the campground with an American flag during the national anthem and the chaplain delivers the ride prayer before the riders head out of camp at 10. A hamburger lunch is served on the trail, and then riders return to camp after the 15-mile ride. They have live music Saturday night after dinner, and a chaplain holds a church service Sunday morning.

Representative Dennis C. Moss from District 29 attended the ride and helps support equine efforts in the state. Young and old enjoyed this ride on a beautiful day after rain on Friday dampened the trail for perfect riding conditions.



Thomas Charles rides around the camp with an American flag during the national anthem before the trail ride.



Representative Dennis C. Moss enjoyed his ride through the longleaf pines.



Manchester State Forest Assistant Director John Bryan speaks with riders along the trail.





## Employees Assist with Wildfires in Oklahoma

Edgefield/McCormick/Saluda Sector FMO Colton Webb, Piedmont West Assistant Unit Forester Trey Cox and Berkeley/Upper Charleston Sector FMO Wade Truesdale were assigned to the position of heavy equipment boss and heavy equipment boss trainee (Wade) on wildfires in Oklahoma. The trio left Feb. 3 and returned Feb. 17 in their SCFC engines.

Colton and Wade were initial attack resources in the Delta Group and were pre-positioned daily based on fuel conditions and weather. These locations were in Fort Supply, Elmwood and Bryan’s Corner. Trey was in the alpha group staged at other locations.



Wade Truesdale was stationed at a firing operation on the 28 Road Fire to shore up on the line in anticipation of shifting winds and high wind speeds.



The Delta Group poses near wind turbines in Oklahoma. Wade Truesdale is third from right, and Colton Webb is sixth from right on the front row. This group was called the “Kings of the Panhandle.”



A dozer from Tennessee uses a lift plow to put in a line to contain the blaze.



A North Carolina Forest Service dozer cleans up a line while Colton Webb and another NCFs employee monitor in their truck.



The sun sets over the lightning-caused 28 Road Fire that burned 181 acres.

# Caught ON Camera

WILDLIFE



Lexington/Richland Sector Forestry Technician I Jason Duck snapped this photo of a rabbit camouflaged in brush during a 75-acre prescribed burn Feb. 27 in Richland County.



Land & Water Solutions hosted a celebration at Millaree Hunt Club in Hopkins Feb. 22 to commemorate the procurement of mitigation land related to the Scout Motors plant in Blythewood, nearly 5,000 acres of which will ultimately be transferred to the stewardship of the Forestry Commission. This beautiful cardinal looks on as attendees arrive.



This fence lizard was scurrying around on the trail watching the horses and riders go by March 16 on Manchester State Forest.



Pee Dee Urban Forestry Specialist Ann Huyler snapped this photo of a bee in a camellia.

## Have you seen this tiny spring flower blooming?

This is a field pansy, or Johnny-jump-up, and is one of our native violets, *Viola bicolor*. About 70 violet species live in North America and Hawaii. The field pansy makes a home in most of the continental US, except for some western and northern states. This violet is a spring blooming annual with ballistic seed dispersal, ejecting seeds up to 15' away.

In South Carolina, the field pansy provides an early source of nectar and pollen to bees. This violet, and all other violets, are the preferred food for caterpillars of the greater and lesser fritillary butterflies.

—Ann Huyler

The US Forest Service has stated, “Without violets,

there would be no fritillaries.” Also, our native mining bee, *Andrena violae*, is equally dependent upon our violets. This bee is a specialist pollinator, and violets are its sole food source.

Humans also consume the flowers and leaves of violets. The roots are not edible. In the United Kingdom, violet flowers are added to cakes, candy, cream, vinegar, syrup, and tea. The leaves are high in Vitamin C and are used in salads and soups. As a note of caution, some violets are better digested than others, and you should eat violets at your own risk.



Communications & Public Information Director Doug Wood's family got a birdfeeder camera for Christmas, and they have enjoyed sharing pictures of the different species in his backyard in Columbia.

Here a crow – can't tell if it's an American Crow or Fish Crow – snacks on a peanut.

# Caught ON Camera



Environmental Education Coordinator Matt Schnabel sent in these photos from a 51-acre prescribed burn he assisted with in Union County March 20. (top photo left to right) Mechanic Kevin Garner, Piedmont East Assistant Unit Forester Jon Barker and Lexington/Richland/Union Project Forester Taylor Cabe watch the fire activity before continuing to string fire. Pictured below right is a low-intensity line of fire backing into the pine stand.



Pee Dee Dispatcher Cindy Gardner sent in this photo of the Easter-themed decorated tree in the dispatch center.



# Youth Turkey Hunt Begins Season at Niederhof

Turkey season began on Niederhof Forestry Center with a Youth Turkey Hunt March 16. The first of three turkey hunts to be held this year started with three hunters looking for their first gobbler of the season. No turkeys were harvested but the children learned a lot about turkeys and forestry.

State Forester Scott Phillips, Piedmont Regional Forester Pete Stuckey and Edisto Unit Forester Kip Terry were the guides for the hunters.



The three youth hunters with their guides. The hunters hold up pine seedlings to be planted at Niederhof.



One of the hunters takes a nap while waiting on turkeys with his guide, Piedmont Regional Forester Pete Stuckey.

## Photos from Wildfire in McCormick County



Edgefield/McCormick /Saluda Sector Forestry Technician I Derek Adams and Aiken/Barnwell Sector Forestry Technician I Randy Hill scout where to establish a line to the top of a pine ridge on a 67-acre wildfire in McCormick County March 21.



Derek Adams snapped this photo after the fire was contained.

## TREE RIDDLES

What kind of stories do giant sequoia trees tell?

Tall tales.

What is the most frustrating thing about being a tree?

Having so many limbs and not being able to walk.

What is every tree's favorite shape?

A treeangle.

What gets a year older whenever it rings?

A tree.



# Programs

## Darlington's Crape Myrtle Pruning Workshop

The City of Darlington held a Crape Myrtle Pruning Workshop on Orange St. near the Trinity United Methodist Church March 7. The Planning & Development Director for Darlington Merry Morgan Smith created and organized the workshop. Attending the workshop were Merry Morgan Smith, the Department Supervisor of Streets and Sanitation Johnathan Boatwright and his crew, George Lyles, Monty Toney and Carlos Montano.

Beau Cumbie, an ISA-certified arborist and the owner of Hill Creek Landscaping and Tree Care LLC, and Pee Dee Urban Forestry Specialist Ann Huyler, led the workshop. The crew learned hands-on pruning of crape myrtles to minimize future growth of sprouts back into the right-of-way and also to minimize dieback of pruned limbs. Proper pruning can reduce the frequency of pruning and encourage healthy limb growth away from streets and sidewalks.

Huyler and all of the other SCFCUrban & Community Forestry staff are ISA-certified arborists.



Beau Cumbie (far right) and Ann Huyler (center) give hands-on training to the Darlington Street & Sanitation crew.



Cumbie (left) explains to crew member George Lyles how to prune a crape myrtle.

## Have you Seen Redbuds Flowering?

The Eastern redbud, *Cercis canadensis*, is one of South Carolina's earliest spring flowering native trees. Eastern redbud is a short-lived deciduous tree that can grow 20' – 30' tall and wide. The genus name, *Cercis*, comes from Greek "kerkis" meaning a "weaver's shuttle," in reference to the shape of the seed pods. However, Canada is not this tree's native home despite the species name, *canadensis*. Eastern redbud makes its home in our eastern, midwestern, and southern states.



Map of the home range of the Eastern redbud.

As expected from its large home range, Eastern redbud readily grows in a wide range of clay and sandy soils, though, preferably fertile and well drained. This tree adapts poorly to coarse sand sites and to soils that are frequently saturated or flooded. In hot climates, such as ours, this tree would prefer some shade from the sun.

Eastern redbud belongs in the pea family, Fabaceae, and is classified as a legume. The flowers range from pink to purple, occasionally white, and sprout directly through the bark of branches, limbs, and trunks. These flowers provide early sources of nectar and pollen. Bees are the main pollinators, and occasionally, ruby-throated hummingbirds will feed on the nectar. Fertilized flowers produce leguminous seed pods that can remain on the tree through winter. Cardinals, bobwhites, squirrels, and white-tailed deer have been seen feeding on the seeds.

### Urban

—Ann Huyler

This Eastern redbud on the campus of Coastal Carolina University had beautiful pink blooms.



# MEMORIES FROM A RETIREE

## Charles Ramsey Employed by SCFC 1974-2009 (Retired)

When I saw the Facebook post (pictured to the right) showing the new fire suppression units vs. the units of old, it brought to mind a memory when I was in high school, way before I ever had an idea that I would someday work for the South Carolina Forestry Commission.

It was on a Sunday afternoon near Monticello in Fairfield County some time around 1967 to 1969 that my close friend Grady Fuller and I spotted a large smoke plume between Monticello and Salem Crossroads. Being young teenage boys, it was our duty to go and check this out! We had never seen a forest fire up close, so we were not going to miss this opportunity.

When we got to the fire, there were a good many curious folks parked on the side of the road watching the fire burning in a young pine pulpwood stand. We saw SCFC Ranger Bob Patrick's yellow SCFC pickup parked along the road, and the suppression unit was just pulling up to the fire. Mr. Patrick was sizing up the fire, so one of the bystanders, Gordon Ragsdale, went over to help SCFC Fire Warden Ed Mills unload the tractor plow unit. The ramps and stiff knees had to be manually lowered as back then there was no cable or hydraulic mechanisms to lower the ramps. In the heat of the excitement, Ed was attempting to unload the tractor as fast as he could. The truck was parked on the shoulder of the road with a slight lean toward the ditch. Gordon had moved over to the ditch side of the truck as the tractor was being backed off.

When the tractor tracks reached the metal ramps, the tractor began to slide off the ramps sideways toward the ditch where Gordon was standing. I was standing on the opposite side of the road. When the tractor slipped completely off the ramp onto its side, it looked to me like the tractor had fallen on top of Gordon and crushed him into the ground. We all gasped.

When I ran up closer to the tractor it was a miracle to see Gordon standing perfectly straight up within the tractor cab which was on its side, and he was holding Ed in his arms! The tractors at this time were not enclosed as you can see from the picture of the old unit. The guardian angel for fire fighters was working overtime this day. Both of the men were luckily unharmed. The tractor, a John Deere- 350, was pulled back upright using the transport truck and the fire was plowed out. Just another typical day in the life of a wildland firefighter.



It's #ThrowbackThursday! Check out the difference between this suppression unit from 1960 compared to today's unit.



Throwback Thursday Facebook post that made Charles remember a scary incident with an open-cab dozer.



# Fire Weather Outlook

**Southern Area:** An early green-up has been the rule for the majority of the Southern Area, which is likely to be most impactful in reducing wildfire risks in grass- and hardwood-dominant areas. Local reports and webcams at higher elevations in the Appalachians indicate that shading from the tree canopy is still at least several weeks away, while leaf on has rapidly progressed from the coastal plain into portions of the Piedmont. Lack of snowfall in most of the Appalachians this winter has left leaf litter less compacted, which allows it to dry more rapidly during periods of abnormally low humidity. This may factor into fuel availability until the canopy fills in.

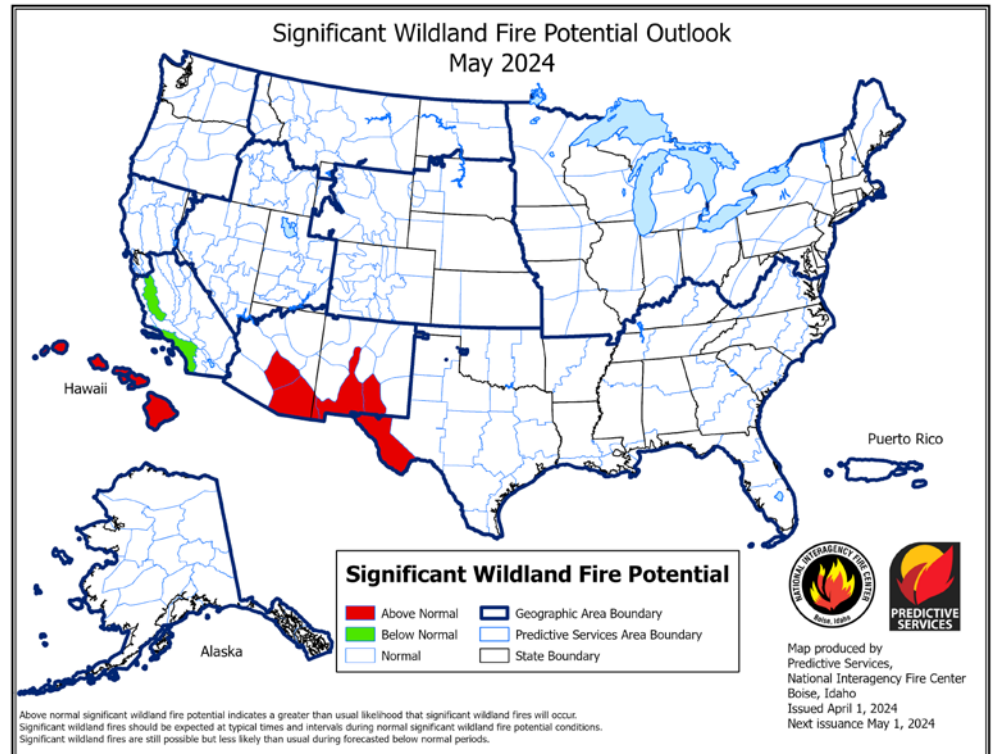
Most of the Southern Area is free of drought, but drier conditions have expanded across portions of Texas and Oklahoma, in addition to scattered areas of the Florida peninsula.

The spring fire season in the South normally lingers into the first half of April, with a decreasing trend in most areas through the month due to green-up. The Florida peninsula is one exception to this, with an increasing trend in April that carries into June, before the rainy season sets in. The Gulf Coast and Southeast Coast can also see increasing activity during late spring and summer when drought and hot weather align.

Heat waves will become increasingly likely from May into the summer as the expected La Niña begins to influence the pattern. A warmer planet can paradoxically lead to higher rainfall from thunderstorms and tropical cyclones while at the same time creating unusually dry conditions elsewhere, all depending on the source region for a region's air masses. Another impact from the unusually warm Atlantic will be an increased risk for tropical cyclones this year. Record warm sea-surface temperatures in the north Atlantic may support activity beginning earlier than normal, but there is little skill this early in predicting what parts of the Southern Area could see heavy rainfall from tropical systems later in the summer or fall.

Below normal significant fire potential is forecast during April along most of the Gulf Coast and East Coast, to include much of East Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, and portions of the Carolinas into Florida. Early green-up and recent wet weather are the main drivers of continued lowered risks in these areas.

Uncertainty is higher than normal for the Appalachians. Below normal significant fire potential was considered in the Southern Appalachians in April due to the early green-up, but wildfires will be possible until leaf on is complete. Above normal significant fire potential cannot be ruled out in coastal and pine-dominant areas later in the period, but confidence is too low for now. Any extended periods of below normal rainfall concurrent with above normal evaporative demand, should they occur, may result in rapidly changing conditions by summer.



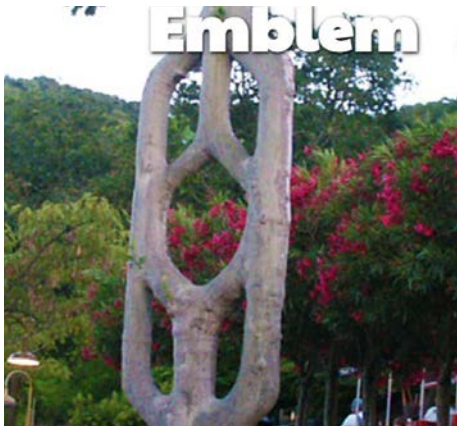
## Current Fire Numbers for South Carolina

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

Time Period	MARCH		JULY-MARCH		FISCAL YEAR	
	Fires	Acres	Fires	Acres	Fires	Acres
5 Year Average	246	2,652	851	5,944	1,269	8,357
10 Year Average	287	2,907	968	7,314	1,381	9,736
Current FY <sup>1</sup>	143	1,410	827	4,618	927	4,618

# Amazing Trees

## CIRCUS TREES



The Circus Trees were originally grown and created by Axel Erlandson, son of a Swedish immigrant. Inspired by observing a natural graft between two sycamore trees, Erlandson began to shape trees using intricate techniques. His techniques resulted in woven wonders made from living wood. Straight tree trunks and branches were carefully bent, rather than cut, and became complex and compound designs in shapes like hearts, lightning bolts, basket weaves and rings. Erlandson claimed to be divinely inspired and spent over 40 years of his life shaping and grafting the bodies and arms of trees. <https://www.gilroygardens.org/>



## Quote of the Month

*“If what I say resonates with you, it is merely because we are both branches on the same tree.”*

**W. B. Yeats**

## Photo of the Month



Urban Staff Forester Lowe Sharpe took this photo at his home as the shadows were being cast. Notice the appearance of a face on the tree!

Please send in your photos or news to Michelle Johnson at [mjohnson@scfc.gov](mailto:mjohnson@scfc.gov).