

# Tree Country

July/August 2021



the employee newsletter of the  
**South Carolina Forestry Commission**

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*from the desk of*  
**STATE FORESTER**  
**Scott Phillips**



In this issue of Tree Country, I want to highlight a couple of recent agency accomplishments, both of which are very significant. These are not victories for any one person or division in our agency. These achievements are the result of all of our employees focusing on common priorities, setting goals and then doing the work as a team to be successful.

The first major success is the agency's FY2022 Budget. Each year the agency's leadership team reviews current funding levels and puts together business cases to address long-term critical needs and/or strategic business opportunities. From these business cases the agency's budget request is created. This year with the support of Governor McMaster's Office and the General Assembly we were able to check-off of our list two long-term critical funding needs by having our #1 and #2 budget priorities fully funded.

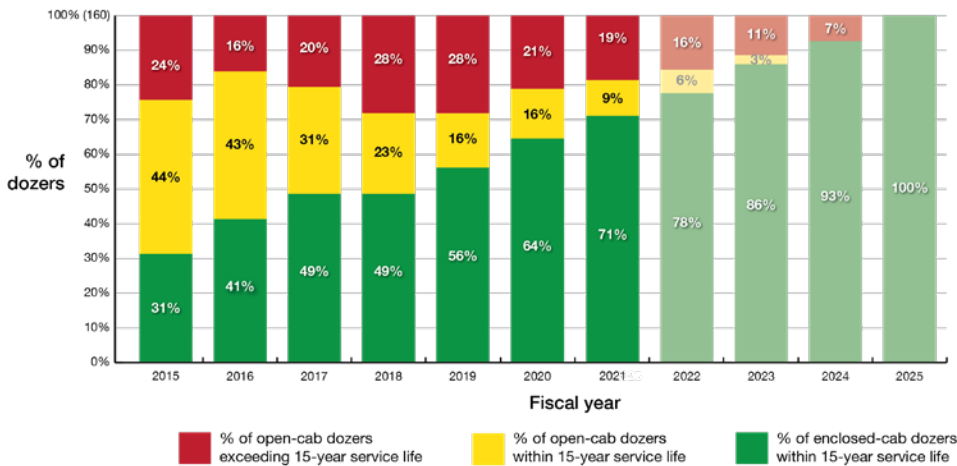
Having our firefighting request, which was our #1 priority, fully funded this year is huge! We have been striving to secure the funding necessary to replace our fleet of aging frontline firefighting units for nearly a decade. This year we secured the recurring money our agency needs to replace all of our open-cab bulldozers, with safer enclosed-cab

units, by the end of calendar year 2025 and maintain this fleet on a 15-year safe replacement cycle going forward. Securing this \$1 million recurring, and an additional \$1 million non-recurring, for firefighting equipment is a major win for our agency and will increase the safety of our firefighters allowing them to better protect the public and the forests of our state from wildfires.

The General Assembly also fully funded our Information Technology and Security request, which was our #2 priority, this year (\$590,000). Limited IT staff capacity and funding has restricted our ability to leverage technology to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our agency. Being fully funded, the agency gained three positions and the operating money needed to leverage newer technologies to better serve our employees while also

## Replacement Schedule of Frontline Firefighting Units

based on secured recurring funding



better protecting private information and improving cyber-security.

The second major success I want to highlight is the progress we have made in making the Forestry Commission a more desirable place to work. In this issue of Tree Country, we are releasing the results of the 2021 Employee Engagement Survey that was completed earlier this summer. This survey is a follow-up to an almost identical survey that we conducted in 2018. I say almost identical because while we used the same questions as in 2018, we did add one new demographic question to allow us to differentiate between work locations to see how that factors into the way employees feel about the agency.

Before I dive into the results, I want to take a minute and say THANK YOU to everyone who participated in the survey. I also want to remind you of why these surveys are important.

Employee engagement surveys give every employee in the agency an equal opportunity to voice their perception of the Forestry Commission in a way that is 100% anonymous and 100%

confidential. The results from these surveys give us a clearer vision of our agency's strengths, weaknesses and opportunities for improvement from the perspective of our employees. This feedback is extremely valuable as we seek to make the Commission a more desirable place to work.

The survey results are also important because they establish benchmarks against which progress can be measured as we implement changes to improve employee engagement and create an environment where all employees feel valued and are motivated to help the Commission be successful. By measuring employee engagement using a repeatable methodology we can see what has changed since 2018 and if the actions we implemented in response to your feedback lead to improvements.

The 2021 results are extremely positive! Comparing the two surveys you can quickly see significant improvements in every category measured. In fact, when looking at the individual questions only one question had a less positive response in 2021 than in 2018, and for this one question a lower positive response indicates improvement. This is quite remarkable, especially given that we are conducting

this survey after a year of challenges due to COVID-19.

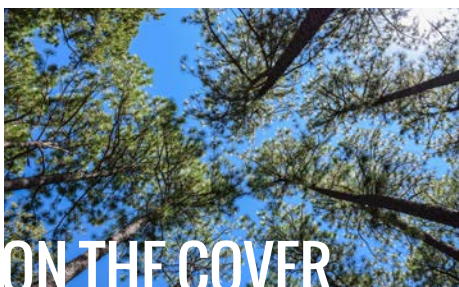
Overall, the survey indicates that Forestry Commission employees are feeling better about the agency at a remarkably high level. Nathan Strong, the contractor that conducted these surveys for the agency, said that the results of the Forestry Commission's 2021 Employee Engagement Survey are "the best he has ever seen" and he would "rate the agency at 9.5 out of 10 for employee engagement." This is high praise given Mr. Strong's long and very successful career in Human Resources.

For me, two statistics from the survey highlight the progress we have made best. First, when asked if the Forestry Commission is a good place to work 79% of the 2021 respondents gave a positive response, an increase of nearly 20% compared to 2018. This is huge, much higher than is reported by other state agencies! The industry average is only 60% positive responses for this question. So this is a super high number and something we should be proud of. Second, when asked if the SCFC has a real interest in the welfare and satisfaction of our employees, 54% of the 2021 respondents gave a positive response, an increase of 22%. Again this is huge progress, an almost complete reversal of what I found to be one of the most disturbing findings from the 2018 survey where 42% gave a negative response.

While the overall results of the 2021 employee engagement survey are extremely positive and show significant progress, the survey also highlighted several opportunities for improvement.

The most negative responses in the survey are related to compensation and the recognition of exceptional performance. This is not a surprise as these were also the top concerns raised in the 2018 survey. It is important to

(continued next page)



ON THE COVER

The cover photo features a pine canopy at Harbison State Forest.

## 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.)

(continued)

note that the 2021 survey results show that we have made significant progress in this area. Negative responses to questions in the compensation, rewards and recognition category dropped nearly 25% when comparing the 2021 and 2018 survey results. If we look just at the questions related to pay, the results are even more dramatic with negative responses dropping nearly 33%. I'm sure much of this improvement is related to the work we have done to create a compensation system that differentiates employees based on experience, qualifications and performance.

Since the original survey the Forestry Commission has invested more than \$2 million to increase base pay for employees and address salary compression issues, differentiating employees with more experience. We also created career paths for employees and implemented a program to provide periodic salary increases, for most employees, as they gain additional skills and knowledge that make them more qualified to do their job.

But there is still more to do regarding how the agency recognizes and compensates employees for a job well done. Just this year, we initiated a new performance-based pay program by allocating nearly \$26,000 for performance increases to employees who are not covered under the additional skills and knowledge program. The concept for this new program revolves around annual opportunities for small performance increases to incentivize sustained performance. Developing compensation systems takes time, but I am committed to this concept and we will continue this program and look for ways to expand performance based pay to more employees without compromising our additional skills and knowledge program.

Knowing that we have limited money for salaries and bonuses and that we need to find other ways to recognize exceptional performance, earlier this year we also initiated the development of an employee recognition program. A small team led by Director of Communications Doug Wood has been

diligently working to develop this new program, and I am pleased to say that they are announcing the brand new SCFC Employee Recognition Awards program in this copy of *Tree Country* on page 13.

Another significant finding from the survey is that employees still have some degree of skepticism regarding senior management. Major improvements have been made, with negative responses decreasing 10-22% for related survey questions. However, the survey indicates that employees still feel that senior management doesn't listen to them, is not aware of problems at their level and that they could be more involved in the decision-making process. One interesting point that I learned during this year's survey is that our employee's concerns with senior management is not strictly focused on executive staff in the Columbia office. The results this year clearly broaden the scope to include a more diverse group of senior managers in our agency.

In 2018, in response to these concerns the agency reestablished a number of committees made up of diverse groups of employees from throughout the organization. These committees act as feedback loops for the agency, and each committee has a focal area where members evaluate areas of concern and make recommendations to leadership. A great example of one of these committees in action is the work of the Uniform Committee highlighted on page 15. This committee led by Holly Welch solicited feedback from employees and worked with agency leaders to create innovative solutions to provide more uniform choices for employees and increase the number of items field employees can order while staying within the agency budget. As the leadership team reviewed the results of the engagement survey we noted that many employees might not be aware of the activities of these committees and their opportunities to engage via these channels. So to improve communications and facilitate increased engagement with your local representatives, a full listing of the committees are included on page 14.

One of the more interesting findings from the survey is the impact that job location has on how our employees feel about the agency. Where you work within the agency makes a big difference, but the variances are complex! In general employees that work in the SCFC Headquarters and Coastal Region had more positive outlooks. While employees on State Forests were the most negative. The response rate from our Dispatchers was too low to make a determination as to how they feel, but the results from that small sample were pretty negative. As a first step to addressing the concerns of these groups, I plan to schedule listening sessions with all of our State Forests and Dispatch employees over the next several months. I look forward to hearing from these employees as we seek ways to make all of our employees feel valued and respected.

These are just a few findings from the employee engagement survey. There are many lessons to be learned from your feedback and many potential actions to take as we seek to make the Forestry Commission a more desirable workplace. I encourage all employees to read the [full survey report](#), think about how the results apply to your work area, and seek opportunities at your level to make the Commission a better place to work as it will take our whole agency working as a team to create the work environment our co-workers deserve.

We have made tremendous progress over the last three years! But as we seek to create an environment where all employees feel valued and motivated to make the Forestry Commission successful, there is not a finish line ahead where we declare victory. Our focus must be on continuously improving our workplace and ourselves. If we do that, we can take the Forestry Commission to heights we never thought possible. Thank you for all you do for the Commission and the people of South Carolina. Let's keep our success going!!





## Instructions and Assignments Not Clear

Every firefighter will give and receive briefings at some point on the job. Briefings are an effective way to disseminate information that can make the firefighter's job safer and easier. When giving a briefing, it is important to keep the following questions in mind and remain perceptive to how the audience is receiving the information:

- Did you use the Incident Response Pocket Guide (IRPG), PMS 461, standards briefing checklist?
- Did they ask questions? Do you get empty stares? What feedback are you looking for to ensure they understand you?
- Talk with coworkers about what it is like giving a briefing.
- Did they take notes? What kind of information would you like to see people write down?
- Did they repeat information back? What other ways can you identify that your briefing is understood?
- Did you give all the necessary information? How will you ensure that you covered everything necessary?
  - Task
  - Location
  - Communications
  - Hazards
  - Who, when, etc.

It is also important for the firefighter who is receiving instructions to be mindful of the following during the briefing:

- Did you really listen? What do you do to make yourself pay attention to everything being said?
- Did you understand the assignment, location, and the nature and location of hazards? Do you expect to figure it out for yourself when you get out there or do you step forward and ask questions?
- You must know the location of the assignment and:
  - What is to be done.
  - Who you are to report to and how often to report.
  - Expectations for completing the assignment.
  - Hazards.
  - Communication plan frequencies.
  - Weather and fire behavior.
  - Status of adjoining forces.



The Incident Command System (ICS) is used to provide uniform chain of command on all incidents. This Watch Out shows an engine crew working in a counterproductive manner, without clear instructions towards an expected outcome. Read about all [18 Watch Out Situations](#).

# Human Resources

## Employee News

Please welcome the following new employees who started with the agency in June and July.



Chase Waites

**Chase Waites** is the new Forestry Technician I for the Fairfield/Newberry Sector. Chase started June 2 and lives in Pomaria. He attended Mid-Carolina High School in Prosperity. Chase has previous experience as an equipment operator. In his spare time Chase enjoys hunting, fishing and playing music.

**Brandon Benedict** is the new FIA Forester for the Pee Dee Region. Brandon started June 17 and lives in Florence with his wife Catherine. Brandon attended the State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry in Syracuse, New York. He has experience as a forestry technician, nutritionist, personal trainer and rehabilitation aide. In his spare time, Brandon enjoys photography.



Brandon Benedict



Randy Rollings

The new Director of Information Technology **Randy Rollings** started June 17. Randy came to the Forestry Commission from the University of South Carolina where he served as the IT Director for UofSC's Department of Athletics. Randy has a Bachelor of Science in Computer Science from UofSC and more than 16 years of experience working and leading in the IT environment. Randy and wife Becky live in Cayce. In his spare time, Randy enjoys spending time outdoors, boating and kayaking.

**Mikayla Folk** is the new Administrative Specialist II for the Coastal Region. Mikayla started July 19 and lives in Ehrhardt. She attended the University of South Carolina Salkehatchie in Allendale.



Mikayla Folk



Melonye Turner

**Melonye Turner** is a new Dispatcher for the Pee Dee Region. She started July 19 and lives in Darlington. Melonye attended Maine-Endwell High School in Endwell, New York. She has a lot of experience in customer service. In her spare time, Melonye enjoys crafting.

**Andrew Belville** is a new Dispatcher for the Pee Dee Region. He started July 19 and lives in Florence where he earned a B.S. in Political Science at Francis Marion University. He also has a M.A. in Education from the University of Illinois in Springfield, Illinois. Andrew previously taught social studies at a magnet school in Lake City. In his free time, Andrew enjoys video games, kettleballs and outdoor recreation.



Andrew Belville

**James Brian Moran** is the new Mechanic for the Piedmont Region in Newberry. Brian started July 19 and lives in Prosperity.

Please welcome all these new employees to the agency!



James Brian Moran

## Employee Actions

Coastal Dispatcher **Christina Riley** was promoted to the position of Coastal Dispatch Manager July 2. Manchester General Maintenance Technician **Clay Howard** accepted the position of Spartanburg/Union Sector FMO July 17.

Piedmont Dispatcher **Tracy Fulmer** accepted the Administrative Specialist II position for the Piedmont Region July 17. Congratulations, Christina, Clay and Tracy!

## Farewells

Kershaw/Lee Sector Forestry Technician I **Wes McCathern** retired July 14. Pee Dee Administrative Specialist **Kacee Collins** resigned July 15 to pursue a nursing career.

**Human Resources**

—Lynn Rivers

# CURRENT JOB OPENINGS

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

No current job openings.



## Mark your Calendar – Columbia Workplace Preventive Screening

The Columbia office is offering a workplace preventive screening August 24. The screening is offered at no cost to employees, retirees, COBRA subscribers and covered spouses whose primary insurance coverage is the State Health Plan (Standard or Savings Plan). Employees and subscribers who are in this area on this date are welcome to participate. We will send more information in the near future.

## Adoption Assistance Program

Eligible state employees can receive financial assistance to help pay some expenses when adopting a child. Assistance is limited to the amount of funds authorized each year for the program. Eligible employees include permanent or probationary, full-time or part-time employees of any department, institution, board, commission, council, division, bureau, center, school, hospital or other agency of the state of South Carolina, including temporary grant and time-limited employees. Employees must participate in PEBA insurance benefits and be employed when the adoption is submitted, when the adoption is finalized and when benefit is paid. Assistance is available for a child younger than age 18 who is adopted. The maximum amount for adopting a non-special needs child is \$5,000, and the maximum amount for a special needs child is \$10,000.

Eligible expenses include:

- Licensed adoption agency fees.
- Legal fees (attorney's fees and costs of legal proceedings).
- Fee for obtaining investigations and reports as required by S.C. Code Ann. 20-7-1740 (1976).
- Fee of the individuals required to take the consent or relinquishment as required by S.C. Code Ann. 20-7-1705 (A) (1976).
- Fee of a guardian ad litem appointed pursuant to S.C. Code Ann. 20-7-1732.
- Reasonable fees to sending agencies as defined in S.C. Code Ann. 20-7-1980 (2) (b) (1976), the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children.
- Costs, at the rate allowed for state employees traveling on official business. This includes transportation, lodging and food for both the adoptive child and the adoptive parents when necessary to complete the placement or adoption process, including obtaining physical custody of the adoptive child.
- Medical costs, not paid by insurance, Medicaid or other such available resources, of the biological mother relating to the birth of the adopted child.

The application period is July through September each year for eligible employees who finalized an adoption the previous fiscal year (July 1 through June 30). Once the adoption is finalized through a court system, eligible employees should contact PEBA to request an application. An application must be received by PEBA no later than 5 p.m. on the last business day in September. Adoption benefits are paid directly to the employee and are awarded in November after the application process. PEBA administers the State Employee Adoption Assistance Program. For more information, call (803) 734-1696 or visit the PEBA website at [www.peba.sc.gov/adoption-assistance](http://www.peba.sc.gov/adoption-assistance).

**Human Resources**  
–Chetna Patel

(continued next page)

# THE Benefits Beat



(continued)

## Be Aware of Phishing, Scam

This important article is being shared from the PEBA Update dated July 6, 2021.

Phishing is just one of the many types of social engineering attempts to gain unauthorized access to information. Some of the most common approaches include phone calls and emails. Emails are designed to look like they are from a legitimate organization. We've all heard about scams involving people claiming to be with the IRS in which they ask for money for tax payment, something the IRS doesn't do by phone. At PEBA, we take the security of your information very seriously and know you do, too. Here are a few tips that can help you determine if a phone call or email you receive is really from PEBA.

Please note that someone from PEBA will never cold call you and ask you to divulge personally identifiable information (PII) or personal health information (PHI). Someone from PEBA will never cold call you and ask you for your password or personal identification number (PIN). If someone from PEBA does call you about your benefits, either returning your call or because we have identified an issue we need to discuss with you, and you do not feel comfortable providing PII, you can always ask for the employee's phone number and return the call to further verify that it is someone from PEBA.

Emails from PEBA can come from an individual or department. The emails come from [peba.sc.gov](http://peba.sc.gov). You receive some emails, such as the one through which PEBA Pulse is distributed, through Constant Contact. The Constant Contact emails also come from a [peba.sc.gov](http://peba.sc.gov) email address.

We encourage you to avoid clicking on links in the emails you receive if you have any concerns about or don't know the sender. It's always safer to open your browser and search for the appropriate link to conduct business. For example, if someone from PEBA sends you an email that includes links to online resources, you can hover over the link in the email and compare it to the link on PEBA's website. When in doubt, never click on the email link.

If you have questions regarding phishing, please reach out to IT Manager Scott Drafts [spdrafts@scfc.gov](mailto:spdrafts@scfc.gov) or Director of Technology Randy Rollings [rrollings@scfc.gov](mailto:rrollings@scfc.gov).

If you have questions or need assistance with any of this month's newsletter topics, please contact me at (803) 896-8874 or via email at [cpatel@scfc.gov](mailto:cpatel@scfc.gov).

### Human Resources

—Chetna Patel



### Chetna Patel

Benefits Administrator  
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## 2022 Holiday Schedule

<u>Holiday</u>	<u>Observed on This Day</u>
New Year's Day	Monday, Jan. 3
Martin Luther King, Jr. Day	Monday, Jan. 17
George Washington's Birthday/Presidents Day	Monday, Feb. 21
Confederate Memorial Day	Tuesday, May 10
National Memorial Day	Monday, May 30
Independence Day	Monday, July 4
Labor Day	Monday, Sept. 5
Veterans Day	Friday, Nov. 11
Thanksgiving Day	Thursday, Nov. 24
Day After Thanksgiving	Friday, Nov. 25
Christmas Eve	Friday, Dec. 23
Christmas Day	Monday, Dec. 26
Day After Christmas	Tuesday, Dec. 27



# NEWS

## Sullivan Gives Birth to First Son

Congratulations to Coastal Dispatcher **Tiffany Sullivan** who had a baby boy June 15 in Charleston.

Owen Liam was born at 3:49 a.m. measuring 8 lbs. and 19 3/4 inches long. Tiffany and the baby are doing well. This is Tiffany's first son. She has two daughters.



Owen Liam Sullivan



## Webb Adds a Daughter

Congratulations to Edgefield/McCormick/Saluda Sector FMO **Colton Webb** and his wife Erica who gave birth to a daughter June 22. Avery Joan Webb was born at 8:12 a.m. weighing 7.7 lbs. and 20 inches long. Mother and baby are doing great, and Colton is over the moon!



Colton holds baby Avery at the hospital.



Colton holds two-year-old Cannon while wife Erica holds baby Avery.



## Spearman Welcomes Daughter

Coastal Stewardship Forester Vaughan Spearman is the proud father of a baby girl. Vaughan and his wife Kelly welcomed Meadow Aster Spearman into the world at 1:42 a.m. July 29 weighing 8 lbs., 4oz. Both mother and baby are doing fine. Congratulations!



Meadow Aster Spearman

## Greiner Welcomes Son

Congratulations to SPB Coordinator Tyler Greiner and his wife Meghan who gave birth to a son, Arthur Robert Greiner July 28. Arthur weighed 7 lbs., 6 oz and measured 20-and-one-half inches long.



Arthur Robert Greiner

AttaBoy

In a note to Fiscal Analyst Tammy Cummings, Colleton County landowner Harold Rhodes, Jr. expressed how pleased he was with the firebreak plowing that Bamberg/Colleton Forestry Technician I **Michael Tumbleston** did on his on property and he recommends the Forestry Commission to everyone!

AttaGirl



In an email to State Forester Scott Phillips dated July 20 regarding Urban Coordinator **Frances Waite's** involvement with Tree City USA and the Arbor Day Foundation:

*Dear Scott,*

*I am reaching out today to celebrate the accomplishments of urban forestry in South Carolina. I am pleased to share that even during a year filled with uncertainty the programs we partner on were able to have the biggest impact to date.*

*For many years, the hard work and partnership between state forestry agencies, the U.S. Forest Service, and the Arbor Day Foundation has educated and assisted communities on the importance of managing and expanding the public trees in their community. This past year we have been able to work closely with **Frances Waite** on the Tree City USA, Tree Campus Higher Education and Tree Line USA programs. The knowledge and expertise that she provides in South Carolina is very much appreciated and invaluable to the growth of these programs. Millions of Americans have a better quality of life because of your leadership. We thank you for your hard work and partnership with these programs.*

*Lauren Weyers  
Program Manager  
Arbor Day Foundation*

## Law Enforcement Chief Swears In Three New Officers



Law Enforcement Chief Tommy Mills, left, swore in three new officers June 29 at the Columbia headquarters: Georgetown Sector FMO Jon Thomas, Chesterfield/Lancaster Sector FMO Glen Lampley and Aiken/Barnwell Sector FMO John Wilson.

Law Enforcement Chief Tommy Mills swore in three new officers June 29.

Georgetown Sector FMO Jon Thomas and Chesterfield/Lancaster Sector FMO Glen Lampley graduated from the South Carolina Criminal Justice Academy Basic Law Enforcement Course June 11. Aiken/Barnwell Sector FMO John Wilson graduated June 25.

Jon Thomas was a Distinguished Graduate. A Distinguished Graduate is one that has a 96 or better average on all written tests and passes all practical test on the first attempt. Congratulations, Jon!

And congratulations to all three on their graduation.

# Employee Service Awards



## SERVICE AWARDS FOR JULY

Employee's Name	Position	Location	State Service
Kenny Robertson	Lynches River Unit Forester	Pee Dee	30 years

## SERVICE AWARDS FOR AUGUST

Employee's Name	Position	Location	State Service
Tommy Mills	Law Enforcement Chief	Columbia	30 years

### Congratulations to Jeff Rogers on his Retirement!



Retiree Jeff Rogers received his service certificate and retirement plaque (left) June 7 from Horry/Marion Sector FMO Brandon Craig. The Sector also gave him an engraved knife (right) for his 24 years of service.



### Fulmer Heads Down the Hill to Regional Office



Piedmont Dispatcher Tracy Fulmer accepted a reassignment to the Piedmont Regional Office as the Administrative Specialist II beginning July 19. The Piedmont dispatchers celebrated with Tracy on her last day in dispatch July 14 with a cake.





SUCCESS STORIES

## Employee engagement survey results overwhelmingly positive

Agency-wide temperature check reveals progress, areas for improvement

In August 2020, the South Carolina Forestry Commission contracted with Strong Performance-Based Solutions, LLC to conduct another employee engagement survey in which everyone in the agency had an equal opportunity and voice to make themselves heard. This was the second of the agency-wide surveys, which occur every three years; periodic “pulse” surveys of smaller sample sizes are conducted in intervening years.

The survey, which was open from mid-April to mid-May, was administered electronically to all current (372) full-time-equivalent and temporary employees. The survey identified four demographic characteristics of every respondent in an attempt to isolate the greatest areas of both improvement and concern:

- job category
- gender
- work location
- length of service

The survey contained 66 statements on topics ranging from motivation and compensation to work environment and safety (and more) to which respondents could indicate their level of agreement. Employees were also given five open-ended questions to which they could provide narrative responses.

A total of 258 surveys were completed, yielding an excellent response rate of 76.3%. This was more than four points higher than the return rate of the original 2018 survey, which is remarkable since the 2021 survey was done 100% via computer with no paper surveys distributed like in 2018.

### Analysis

The overall response to the survey was overwhelmingly positive. Fifty-two of the (66) multiple choice statements received greater than a 50% positive response rate (combination of strongly agree and agree responses).

Only three of the 66 statements received 33% or greater negative response rate (combination of disagree and strongly disagree responses) compared to 14 statements in 2018.

***The key takeaway, however, was that improvement was indicated on 94% of the questions (62 of 66). Only one question had a decrease, but a decrease for that question represents an improvement. The other three questions received nearly identical scores in 2018, and those scores were overwhelmingly positive.***

Thirty-seven statements received a positive response rate of 70% or higher compared to 17 in 2018, and only one statement received a negative response rate of 50%.

While improvement of this scope is definitely an encouraging trend, the survey results also bore out that several areas for improvement among key categories and demographics have persisted since the 2018 survey. Agency leadership will continue to focus on these issues of concern in an effort to remediate their impact in the future.

### Where things stand: the positive

Employees felt the most positive about the other employees in their work groups (95% positive responses), their supervisors (11 responses to survey statements that were at the 70% positive or greater), their job clarity (82% positive responses) and the match of their personal skills to their work (81% positive responses). They indicated high levels of enthusiasm in other areas as well: work-life balance, access to information needed to perform their work successfully, the work itself, and the sense that safety was a high priority for the agency.

### Where things stand: areas for improvement

As might be expected, the least positive responses involved issues of compensation and

rewarding exceptional performance. Other negative responses related to career advancement, internal agency communication and decision-making, especially that of senior level managers.

### Demographic variances

Female employees at the agency had similar responses to males for most questions in contrast to having more negative responses in 2018. Employees who worked in the State Forests were dramatically less satisfied than the employees in other categories. They were more negative about career opportunities, training, communication, accountability, decision-making, policy application, equipment, and the role of senior level management.

With regard to an employee's length of employment with the Forestry Commission, the differences in responses were informative. Employees with fewer than 10 years of service found the job more interesting. Employees with between 11 and 20 years of service were generally less satisfied about their job and their work, felt others were less accountable, had less confidence in the application of agency policies and overall fairness, and they were somewhat less positive in their feeling about senior level management. Interestingly, the 11 to 20 years of service group overlaps with the middle management group, which also has these concerns. Employees with greater than 20 years of service, on the other hand, were generally more positive about training, communication, safety and equipment, policies and decision-making.

### Compensation

The most negative responses in the survey pertained to employee compensation, although the percentage of negative responses was significantly less than the 2018 results. Twenty-four percent thought the current pay system rewarded exceptional performance compared to just 7% in 2018. Similarly, 23% positively responded when asked if they believed their pay was competitive to similar organizations in their community compared to 7% in 2018.

Perhaps the most telling observation relating to employees' dissatisfaction with compensation appeared in the open-ended responses to the question, "If you were the State Forester for a day, what one change would you put into effect that would have the greatest impact on the agency?" Forty-four respondents said they would issue pay increases, provide incentives or recognize employees.

### Leadership

The 2021 survey results show significant improvement in how employees feel about senior level management. Four statements about senior level management had an increase of 10% or more positive responses compared to the 2018 results, including being open to new ideas (29% to 40%) and being aware of the problems at employees' level of the organization (35% to 46%).

Despite most people responding positively to statements about their own supervisors, the lowest positive response rates were reserved for the statements that addressed senior management decision-making (38%).

The need for senior level management to be more visible to the field personnel was a theme that ran through several of the categories of comments. Employees in the field want to be communicated with more often, involved in decisions that affect their jobs (like choosing and purchasing equipment and tools for work), and most of all feel that they have been listened to by upper management. The responses to this entire section indicate there is still a credibility gap between senior level management and the rest of the agency.

As such, rebuilding this credibility will be a top priority for agency leadership in the coming years.

### Open-Ended Questions

The open-ended questions were also significantly more positive in 2021. When asked what are the three most positive things about working for the SCFC, the top two responses are related to our agency's values of community and service as defined in our newly developed strategic plan.

When asked what are the three biggest challenges facing the SCFC, compensation, recruitment of new qualified employees and old equipment were the top three responses. Compared to 2018, both compensation (156 to 86) and old equipment (65 to 33) saw a drop in mentions in the 2021 survey.

### How to view the survey results

The full survey report can be downloaded at <http://trees.sc.gov/employeeengagementsurvey.htm>. The 2018 survey report is also available for download at this link.

## How we improved: tracking employee engagement metrics from 2018 to 2021

	2018	2021
How many survey statements received 50% or greater positive response rate?	41	52
How many survey statements received a 33% or greater negative response rate?	14	3
How many survey statements received a positive response rate of 70% or higher?	17	37





## EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION AWARDS

### **New employee recognition awards program a first for the agency**

The Forestry Commission is excited to announce the agency's first employee recognition awards program. An outgrowth of executive leadership's desire to continue increasing morale, job satisfaction and most of all appreciation for the contributions our employees make toward advancing the agency's mission while embodying the agency's values, the annual awards program will give every employee the opportunity to be recognized for outstanding achievement in their line of work.

The following five awards will be presented to deserving candidates every June. The nomination period will be from April 1 – May 31. A selection committee will be formed to review nominations and recommend award winners to the State Forester. The eligibility criteria for the awards follows each listing.

#### **Forest Protection Distinguished Service Award**

This award is open to eligible employees who go above and beyond their normal duties by demonstrating exceptional accomplishment in support of the agency's fire prevention, suppression and investigation objectives; exhibiting exemplary commitment to safety and leadership; and/or personifying the Wildland Fire Values & Principles.

#### **Forest Management Distinguished Service Award**

This award is open to eligible employees who go above and beyond normal duties by demonstrating exceptional accomplishment in conserving and enhancing the forest resources of South Carolina.

#### **Communicator of the Year**

This award is open to all eligible employees who go above and beyond normal duties to support external outreach to media, landowners and/or the general public in an effort to raise awareness about our forests.

#### **Team Player Award**

This award is open to all agency employees who go above and

beyond their normal duties by demonstrating impeccable and sustained internal service in support of the agency's mission in a way that is reflective of the agency's values of safety, integrity, community, service and/or commitment.

#### **State Forester's Award for Distinguished Service**

This award, which will be the highest honor of the five, is open to all agency employees who go above and beyond normal duties by demonstrating an exceptional and sustained level of excellence, customer service, innovation, process improvement and/or accomplishment with courtesy, promptness, thoroughness, enthusiasm and the utmost professionalism.

#### Eligibility limitations

All employees are eligible for the Team Player Award and the State Forester's Award for Distinguished Service. For the other three awards, there will be limited eligibility restricted to field level employees. All nominees must have worked with the agency at least a year.

#### **Employee Recognition Committee**

The employee recognition awards program was developed by the Employee Recognition Committee chaired by Director of Communications Doug Wood. The other members of the committee are Human Resources Director Lynn Rivers, Deputy State Forester Tom Patton, Forest Management Chief Russell Hubright, Director of Administration Cathy Nordeen, Protection Chief Darryl Jones, Pee Dee Regional Forester Mike Ney and Piedmont Regional Dispatch Manager Karly Cassada.

# Standing Committees

In an effort to engage employees who wish to become more involved in some of the Forestry Commission's non-executive-level issues and decision-making, we want to encourage all personnel to familiarize themselves with the following standing committees.

These committees are composed of employees across every region, job classification and length of service, and their rotating membership creates constant opportunities for new members to participate and give their input on a wide range of issues that affect agency operations.

If you'd like to serve on any of these committees when vacancies are available, please contact the chair of each committee (chairs are indicated in bold print).

## Training Council

**Stephen Patterson, chair**

Kip Terry  
James Brunson  
Brad Bramlett  
Brian Davis  
Russell Hubright  
Randy Rollings  
Cathy Nordeen  
Byron Rominger  
Lynn Rivers  
Kelly Banks

## Uniform Committee

**Holly Welch, chair**

Anneta Pritchard  
Ben Kendall  
Kenny Robertson  
Jarrod Brucke  
Jonathan Calore  
Russell Hubright  
Past Chair- Calvin Bailey

## Safety Committee

**Stephen Patterson, chair**

Doug Mills  
James Douglas  
Brad Bramlett  
Kip Terry  
James Brunson

## Communications Equipment Committee

**Lloyd Mitchell, chair**

Kip Terry  
Scott Ulmer  
Robert Browning  
Brad Bramlett  
Dale Curry  
Blair Long  
James Brunson  
Cody Watts  
George Martin  
Steve Ward  
Jonathan Calore

## Equipment Committee

**Doug Mills, chair**

### Coastal Equipment Committee

Kip Terry  
Norris Bryant  
Thad Wimberly  
Neil Murdaugh  
Ron Clark  
John Wilson  
Ronnie Jones  
Scotty Harrington  
Michael Black  
Jonathan Berry

### Pee Dee Equipment Committee

Dennis Weaver  
Shawn Feldner  
Roger Horton  
Eric Brown  
Wayne Springs  
Brandon Craig  
James Brunson

### Piedmont Equipment Committee

Tony Ashley  
Dale Curry  
Jarrod Brucke  
Phillip Reddick  
Sam St. Louis  
Joe Johnson  
Matt Gordon  
Kevin "Rooster" Garner  
Brad Bramlett

## Employee Recognition Committee

**Doug Wood, chair**

Lynn Rivers  
Tom Patton  
Russell Hubright  
Cathy Nordeen  
Darryl Jones  
Mike Ney  
Karly Cassada

# Programs

## Programs

### Uniform Update

The Uniform Committee has been working diligently on a new uniform contract for the last 12 months. We have built off of the work of previous committees and are excited about the new items and policies outlined below.

The start of a new contract allowed us the opportunity to add, change and remove uniform items for the first time in five years. We gathered input from across the agency and spent a significant amount of time looking through uniform company offerings and catalogs from other state and federal agencies. The items we have to offer now will remain in place for the next five years so we hope you are pleased with the result. The new items we have added include two new types of pants, a new vent-back tactical button down shirt, a wicking T-shirt, short and long-sleeved polos (in cotton and performance fabric), a sweatshirt, windbreaker, soft shell coat, fleece jacket, knit cap, black belt and vest. In addition we will continue to offer many of the items we have had in the past such as the Carhartt rain jacket and winter coat, cotton short and long sleeved shirts and coveralls.

There is a box of sample items in each region that are available for you to look at before you order. If you haven't seen the new items yet, contact the closest regional office and they will be able to tell you where they are currently located. We strongly encourage you to look at the items in the next few weeks so that you know how the items look and feel before you order. In addition, Jonathan Calore and our talented Communication department designed a new law enforcement patch that will replace the SCFC patch on the tactical button down shirt and jackets for all LE personnel.

The main concern we heard in conversations was that the \$200 annual allotment wasn't enough for field personnel to replace the items that were wearing out each year. To address this issue we designated uniformed employees into one of two groups which allowed us to increase the annual allotment for those that need it. Employees that primarily work in the field will be allotted \$300 per year. Those that work mainly in an office environment but need uniforms for occasional field work, attending meetings and representing the Forestry Commission at events will be allotted \$200 per year.

State Forester Scott Phillips and Deputy State Forester Tom Patton have allocated carry-forward money this year for all uniformed employees to restock on necessary items and pick out a few of the items that have never been offered before. This year, all uniform program employees will receive \$500 in addition to their regular annual allotment. That means field focused employees will have a total of \$800 to spend and office focused will have \$700.

The big question is when ordering will open. We are currently working on the final details with the uniform company. If everything goes as planned, ordering should be open by mid-September at the latest.

Finally, a big THANK YOU to all the members of the Uniform Committee for their hard work. Members are Santee Unit Forester Annetta Pritchard, MSF Assistant Forest Director Ben Kendall, Coastal Regional Forester Calvin Bailey (Past Chair), Environmental Program Manager Holly Welch (Chair), Lynches River Unit Forester Kenny Robertson, Anderson/Oconee Sector FMO Jarrod Brucke, Assistant LE Chief Jonathan Calore and Forest Management Chief Russell Hubright with the support of Procurement Director Victoria O'Cain and Deputy State Forester Tom Patton. If you have any questions or would like to share additional feedback please reach out to any one of us.



Draft of the new Law Enforcement patch.

**Uniforms**  
—Holly Welch

# Programs

## Programs

### Junior Forester Program Launches at Harbison State Forest

Looking for something fun AND educational to do with your children on weekdays this summer? Come out to Harbison State Forest to participate in the Forestry Commission's new Junior Forester program!

Families can visit the state forest's Environmental Education Center to check out a backpack loaded with nature investigation supplies. They'll also receive a grade level appropriate activity book (K-2 or 3-5) containing hands-on learning experiences that the children will complete while taking a self-guided hike in the forest.

"I'm so excited to unveil this program for families who visit the forest. With the school year ending, this is a great way to get children outside while continuing their learning over the summer," said Assistant Environmental Education Coordinator Beth Foley. "The self-guided program is designed for families to learn together as they explore the forest."

Armed with a clipboard, magnifying lens, binoculars and other tools, children embark on fun activities like a "Cool Critters" scavenger hunt, a seed-collecting mission, a tree ring study and wildlife tracking adventure, among others.

Once the activity guide has been completed, the children bring it back to the Ed Center where they will receive a signed Junior Forester certificate, a wooden Junior Forester badge and a Smokey Bear "schwag bag."

The Junior Forester program is free of charge and available from 8 a.m.-2 p.m. Monday through Friday. Walk-ins are welcome, but reservations are encouraged. Please call Beth Foley at (803) 896-8890 to make a reservation or to ask questions about the program.



Children complete their activity guide for a reward.



The self-guided program is designed for families to learn together as they explore the forest. This family (some from Virginia) enjoyed the activity together.

#### Education

—Beth Foley



The Fender family was the first to complete the Junior Forester program! (left to right) Douglas, Dena, Virginia, and Waylon



Forest Resource Analyst Scott Danskin's son JD and his friend Gunner enjoyed participating in the Junior Forester activity July 9 at Harbison State Forest. (left) JD Danskin showing off a cool plant he found on the Learning Trail.



(right) JD and Gunner looking at an organism up close in a viewfinder.

# Invasive Bradford Pear and Other Species to be Banned for Sale in SC

South Carolina will become only the second state in the United States to ban the nursery sale of Bradford pear trees and any other pear trees grown on the commonly used *Pyrus calleryana* rootstock. The ban on sales will begin **Oct. 1, 2024**, which is the annual nursery licensing renewal date in South Carolina. Ohio will become the first state on Jan. 1, 2023, after passing regulations banning the sale of the species in 2018 with a 5-year grandfathering period.

The additions of *Pyrus calleryana* — or Callery pear — along with three species of *Elaeagnus* to the State Plant Pest List met the approval of state agency representatives and the director of Clemson's Regulatory and Public Service Programs. The clock is now ticking on a grandfathering period of a little more than three years for the nursery industry to comply with the new regulations by ceasing sale of these plant species.

**While the ban on these plants will make them illegal to sell or trade within South Carolina, it's important for the public to know it will not be illegal to possess them on their property or to keep what they have.** "In regulating a plant that's actively traded in the nursery industry that is known to be invasive, you have to start somewhere. We believe that by listing these plants now and continuing to encourage citizens to remove what they have, we can, in time, eliminate them from the landscape and thereby eliminate their deleterious effects on the landscape and environment," said Steven Long, the state's State Plant Regulatory Official and chairman of the South Carolina Invasive Species Advisory Committee.

"It has all the characteristics of a noxious weed," said David Coyle, assistant professor of Forest Health and Invasive Species at Clemson. Bradford pears were once touted as sterile, but it turns out that if pollen from any other *Pyrus* species gets into Bradford pear flowers, the trees can make viable seeds. Those seeds are then eaten by birds and other animals and spread across the Southeastern landscape, contributing directly to one of the worst invasive plant species in the region — the Callery pear. Noxious weeds are weeds that have been designated by an agricultural or other governing authorities as a plant that is injurious to crops, ecosystems, humans or livestock.

Not only do Callery pears have nasty thorns that can damage everything from tractor tires to livestock, but they also damage the ecosystem by crowding out native plants while providing little to no food for insects. "There are several ways to attack the problem, and one of those ways is to just stop it from being sold," Coyle said. "As part of Clemson Extension's Bradford Pear Bounty program, we're trying to teach consumers that there are better things to plant and, essentially, teach them not to buy those non-native species. But you can't reach everyone that way, so we're trying to come at it from another way and just make it illegal to sell them."

Typically, when a species is added to the State Plant Pest List, the change goes into effect immediately and it becomes illegal to move or sell it that same day. But since the Bradford pear and other similar cultivars are being actively sold, officials felt a transition period was required for the benefit of industry. "That's no short process," Long said. "There are nurseries that have lots of money invested in Bradford pear crops because they had no idea that it was being made illegal. Without giving them some lead time, you're going to cost folks a whole lot of money. That's why we supported the 3-year grandfathering period."

Along with *P. calleryana*, three (of several) species of *Elaeagnus* — *Elaeagnus umbellata*, *Elaeagnus angustifolia* and *Elaeagnus pungens* — were also added to the State Plant Pest List, which includes all the species of plants, insects and otherwise that are regulated in the state.

The efforts have been spearheaded by the South Carolina Invasive Species Advisory Committee, which is required by law to include members from Clemson's Department of Plant Industry (the State Plant Regulatory Official), the USDA State Plant Health Director, a Clemson Cooperative Extension representative and at least two at-large representatives from other stakeholder agencies, such as the S.C. Department of Natural Resources, S.C. Forestry Commission or S.C. Department of Agriculture, and also includes the South Carolina Green Industry Association. The committee meets annually to review the list of invasive species for additions and deletions, as well as to discuss new pests on the horizon that could soon become a factor.

But the process wasn't nearly as simple as getting the committee together and making the call. All told, it was a two-year journey from the Committee making its recommendation to the director receiving and processing the information. Much of the delay was caused by COVID and the inability to meet according to internal mandates. Once received, the next step was to gauge industry stakeholders on the feasibility of making the species illegal.

Long said surveys were sent out and open forums were held, resistance to the ban was minimal and industry support was high. The next step was to gain approval from Clemson's Director of Regulatory Services & Public Service Programs, Stephen Cole.

"I was very vocal in our advisory committee meeting — that this is something we need to do," said Coyle, who two years ago began the Bradford Pear Bounty program, which allowed residents to exchange Bradford pears for up to five young, healthy, native trees free of charge. "And I realize that stopping the sale of Callery pear in South Carolina is not going to magically wipe out Callery pear in the eastern U.S., but we've got to take some steps somewhere. I think there's value in being one of the first or leading states to take these steps. It's setting an example," Coyle added.

<https://news.clemson.edu/invasive-bradford-pear-3-other-species-to-be-banned-for-sale-in-sc/>



Bradford pears are one of worst invasive plant species in the region

# Programs

## Welch Hosts Podcast on Water Protection Programs

Environmental Program Coordinator Holly Welch recently co-hosted a podcast titled “State and Federal Funding Sources for Water Protection” for KeepingForests.org. Holly shared tips for seeking state and federal funding sources for water protection programs.

Listen to Episode 7 on [How the River Flows](#) on their website, Apple Podcasts, or wherever you get your podcasts!

In this episode, Holly speaks with Kara Goodwin and James Kilgo about innovative funding options available for Source Water Protection, a proactive approach to safeguard drinking water quality, and the areas through which water travels. Goodwin works with regional, state and local partners at the EPA to integrate Source Water Protection across environmental programs. Kilgo is a water protection specialist with the South Carolina Rural Water Association, with experience working with water utilities, forest landowners and watershed-based planning. They discuss the current fiscal challenges facing water utilities and the growing urbanization of forest lands, explaining emerging funds that support greener infrastructure and partnerships to facilitate those projects, including the Clean Water State Revolving Fund.

**BMPs**

—Tim Adams

### EVER WONDER...

Why is it called “after dark” when it is really “after light”?

Is it good if a vacuum really sucks?

Why is the third hand on the watch called the second hand?

Why do psychics have to ask you for your name?

What do you call a male ladybug?

## Charleston/Dorchester Sector Employees Put Up St. George Office Sign



Charleston/Dorchester Sector employees put up the new St. George office sign July 14. Assisting with the project were Berkeley/Charleston/Dorchester Project Forester Austin Phillips, Charleston/Dorchester Sector Forestry Technician Is Jeffrey Kemmerlin, David Linnen and Greg Reeves, Forest Warden Rob Browning, Forestry Technician Is David Hardy and Rickey Hill and Sector FMO Ron Clark. Other offices will be receiving signs in the near future.

# Programs

## Programs

### Walterboro Becomes a Tree City USA

Congratulations to Walterboro on becoming South Carolina's newest Tree City USA!

The Tree City USA program has been greening up cities and towns across America since 1976. It is a nationwide movement that provides the framework necessary for communities to manage and expand their public trees.

More than 3,400 communities have made the commitment to becoming a Tree City USA. They have achieved Tree City USA status by meeting four core standards of sound urban forestry management: maintaining a tree board or department, having a community tree ordinance, spending at least \$2 per capita on urban forestry and celebrating Arbor Day.

There are 43 Tree City USA communities in South Carolina. See the updated numbers for South Carolina on the next page.

The Tree Cities in South Carolina are: Aiken, Anderson County, Beaufort, Bennettsville, Camden, Charleston, Cheraw, Chesterfield, Clemson, Clinton, Columbia, Conway, Darlington, Dillon, Florence, Fountain Inn, Greenville, Hartsville, Hilton Head Island, Irmo, James Island, Joint Base Charleston, Lexington, Manning, Marion, McClellanville, Mount Pleasant, Myrtle Beach, Newberry, North Augusta, North Myrtle Beach, Patrick, Rock Hill, Shaw AFB, Sullivan's Island, Summerville, Sumter, Surfside Beach, Tega Cay, Town of Bluffton, Town of Winnsboro, Travelers Rest and Walterboro.

#### Urban Forestry

—Frances Waite



Members of Walterboro's Tree Protection Committee accepted the Tree City USA award and flag from Urban Coordinator Frances Waite. From left to right, Committee members Mike Ferrari, Coastal Regional Forester Calvin Bailey, Walterboro Parks Director Ryan McLeod, Frances Waite and Mitzi Carter.

### TREE JOKES

Why do *Platanus occidentalis* have to see the doctor more than any other trees?

Because they are sycamore.

How do you get down from a tree?

You don't. Down comes from a duck.

Why do trees hate tests?

Because they get stumped by the questions.



### South Carolina Firsts

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

#### First Historical Zoning Ordinance – Oct. 13, 1931

The Charleston City Council passed a Historic Preservation ordinance.



# SOUTH CAROLINA

# 2020

**TREE CITY USA**  
An Arbor Day Foundation Program

## BY THE NUMBERS

**43**  
TREE CITY USA  
COMMUNITIES  
1 NEW

**23.26%**  
OF STATE  
LIVES IN A TREE CITY  
USA COMMUNITY

LONGEST-RUNNING  
ACTIVE TREE CITY USA  
COMMUNITY:  
**Columbia**  
42 YEARS

**100%** RECERTIFICATION RATE

**\$10,711,671**  
SPENT ON  
URBAN FORESTRY  
MANAGEMENT



REPORTED NUMBER OF  
**TREES PLANTED 8,487**

### LARGEST

**Anderson County**  
POPULATION 157,161

### SMALLEST

**Patrick**  
POPULATION 342



**\$8.94**  
average per capita



**4** Growth Award  
Recipients

LONGEST ACTIVE GROWTH AWARD

**Florence**  
16 YEARS

**0** NEW Growth  
Award Recipients

## BEYOND TREE CITY USA

**TREE  
CAMPUS**  
HIGHER EDUCATION  
An Arbor Day Foundation Program

**7** Recognized  
South Carolina Schools

**0** NEWLY  
Recognized Schools

**TREE  
LINE USA**  
An Arbor Day Foundation Program

**3** Tree Line USA  
Utilities

LONGEST ACTIVE UTILITY:  
**Gaffney Board of Public Works**  
21 YEARS

**TREE  
CAMPUS**  
HEALTHCARE  
An Arbor Day Foundation Program

Recognized Healthcare Facilities:



 **Arbor Day Foundation**  
arborday.org

50085109

# Pee Dee Chainsaw Training Held at Manchester

The Pee Dee Region held a chainsaw training class May 25-27 at Manchester State Forest. Tim Ard with Forest Applications Training, Inc. taught the class which covered chainsaw safety, maintenance and operation. Twenty-two employees from the Pee Dee Region and two state forest employees attended the training organized by Assistant Regional Forester James Brunson. The classroom portion was held the first day, and the group was then divided into two groups for the field portion held May 26-27.

Attending were: Bobby Watts, Wesley Cain, George Martin, Clay Cooper, Jacqueline Welch, Billy Green, Austin Huggins, Johnny Wilkins, Alex Griffith, Bert Kelley, Jonathan York, Brad Jones, Kent Johnson, Caleb Watson, Josh Thompson, Joseph Marlowe, Butch Lowder, Jordan Barnette, Matt Davis, Mason White, AJ Wallace and Davis Martin. Sand Hills' Adam Smith and Manchester's Jonathan Owen attended from the state forests.



The classroom portion of the training was held May 25 at the Manchester shop.



Instructor Tim Ard shows the class how to get the height of a tree.



Clarendon/Sumter Project Forester Davis Martin cuts a notch.



Clarendon/Sumter Forestry Technician I Butch Lowder watches his notch fall.



Class participants get the height of the tree to cut.



A tree falls after notches are cut.



Chesterfield/Lancaster Sector Forestry Technician I Johnny Wilkins makes bore cuts.



Ard demonstrates how to perform bore cuts.



Sand Hills State Forest RCW Technician Adam Smith cuts one side of a double-stemmed tree.



Georgetown Sector Forestry Technician I Bobby Watts cuts his notches.

# Programs

## Programs

### SC PLT Facilitator Refresher at Harbison State Forest

SC Project Learning Tree (PLT) Facilitators gathered from across the state at Harbison State Forest July 20 for an annual refresher and reunion. A facilitator is someone who has been trained to lead PLT professional developments events for adults who teach youth about forestry, conservation and the environment. Adults use the activities from the different PLT guides for preschool through high school children. Facilitators come from many different backgrounds but all share the same mission to educate our youth about natural resource conservation.

At the refresher, facilitators first learned about changes to the national and state PLT programs. Then everyone was trained in the brand new *Explore Your Environment K-8 Activity Guide* by Assistant Environmental Education Coordinator Beth Foley and Environmental Education Coordinator Matt Schnabel. The new guide contains 50 activities that are correlated to SC Department of Education standards in math, science, social studies, and English language arts and are used by formal and non-formal educators.

After lunch from Groucho's Deli, facilitators took a tour of Harbison State Forest given by HSF Forest Manager Trip Miller and Recreation Specialist Brad Phillips, stopping at different sites to see and learn how the forest is managed for multiple uses. They saw the results of a recent fuel-chip, final harvest and seed-tree harvest operation and learned that the state forests generate income to finance their operations, maintenance and to pay staff salaries. Facilitators learned how prescribed fire is used to manage forests for regeneration, site preparation and wildfire risk reduction at multiple stands in the forest.

SC PLT facilitators present at HSF represented a wide array of education and natural resource organizations: Florence County School District 3, SC Forestry Commission, Richland and Orangeburg Soil & Water Conservations Districts, Clemson Extension Forestry, Rock Hill School District, Hobcaw Barony Discovery Center, University of SC, and the Savannah River Ecology Laboratory.

More information about the new *Explore Your Environment K-8 Activity Guide* can be found at: [www.plt.org](http://www.plt.org).



Facilitators Diane Curlee, Hope Matthews and Holly Rose DeVault diving into a new PLT activity.

**Education**  
-Matt Schnabel



HSF Recreation Specialist Brad Phillips and Forest Management Chief Russell Hubright explain management strategies near the Crooked Pine Trail.



Facilitators and coordinators standing in front of a recent growing-season burn site.



HSF Manager Trip Miller explaining the final harvest, site prep burn, and planting of a stand.

# Caught ON Camera



Environmental Education Coordinator Matt Schnabel took a vacation at the end of June to Grand Canyon National Park and Zion National Park. He hiked the Bright Angel Trail at Grand Canyon NP starting at 4:40 a.m. at the South Rim and hiked 19 miles down to the Colorado River, back up and out to Plateau Point, and then back up to the trail head in one day. The top right picture at the trail head sign is after he finished and was very tired and dehydrated! The bottom right photo is Zion Valley in Zion NP in Utah.

Kershaw/Lancaster/Lee Project forester Gwyn Cloninger sent in this photo of a rainbow behind her house in Lancaster June 22.

## Massive Bear Seen on Camera in SC

A massive black bear that could be among the biggest in South Carolina has appeared in a single trail camera photo in Sumter National Forest.

The image shows the bear on its hind legs, head up and mouth open — as if caught in a roar. Deer hunter Allen Shelor says it was taken June 25 in the Mountain Rest area of Oconee County, eight miles from his home in Walhalla.

“He’s huge. That’s the biggest bear I’ve ever seen and I grew up in this area,” Shelor said.

“It’s hard to say how big. The state record is around 600 pounds and I believe he’d be close to that and will only get bigger through the summer. “He had been in a blackberry patch, eating. There are a lot of blackberries there and he’s covered in blackberry juice,” Shelor said.

Average weight for a male bear in South Carolina is up to 350 pounds, the state says. However, the record is 609 pounds (shot in 2013), and multiple bears in the 590- to 597-pound range have been killed in the recent years.

Shelor’s photo was posted on Facebook by his sister, Lee Boling, and it has gotten hundreds of reactions and shares. Commenters wonder not only how big it is, but also what it was doing: Dancing or scratching its back against a tree?  
<https://www.yahoo.com/news/massive-bear-seen-camera-sc-180836505.html>



The bear stands tall in Oconee County.

# YEAH BABY!

## *Doherty becomes a U.S. citizen*

Everybody knows Allison Doherty.

As the Forestry Commission's human resources assistant, Allison is one of the very few people in the agency who actually meets every employee upon their hiring and onboarding.

Everybody also knows Allison has a way of speaking that immediately lets people know that she, well... "isn't from around here." At least not originally.

The thick Scottish brogue by which Allison is recognized betrays her Glaswegian roots – "Glaswegian" means a native of Glasgow, Scotland – but endears her to everyone she meets, even if they have to ask "come again?" every few words or so.

Accent notwithstanding, Allison is more recently celebrated because of an accomplishment she's had in her sights for years now – becoming an American citizen. Having completed a lengthy and rigorous application process, she joined the roughly 750,000 other naturalized immigrants who become full-fledged U.S. citizens every year in pledging her allegiance to the stars and stripes the Thursday before the Fourth of July.

"I became a citizen on July 1," she said, "which is also 'Canada Day,'" the national holiday of our great white neighbor to the north, of which she is also, interestingly, an official citizen.

Doherty moved to Canada in 1987 through a family sponsorship visa program; her older siblings were already naturalized Canadians. She lived there until 2008, when she moved to Syracuse, N.Y., on a green card employer sponsorship via her husband Eddie's company. She found her way to South Carolina in 2017 when he changed jobs.

The road to naturalization isn't as easy as it may appear from news headlines. Once an applicant has a green card for five years with no break in residency, individuals can apply for the naturalization program. They complete a 23-page

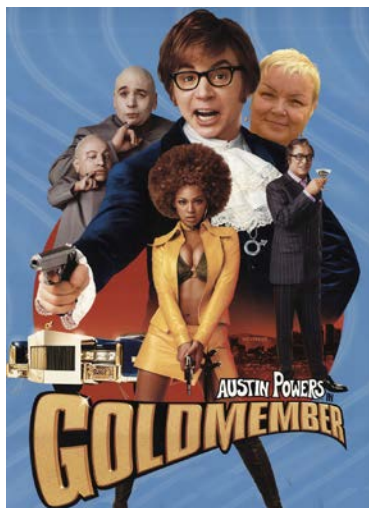


Doherty proudly displays her citizenship certificate after her swearing-in ceremony. Congratulations, Allison!

application, pay a fee and provide fingerprint records before being scheduled for consideration at a final appointment. There applicants must answer various U.S. civics and history questions and pass an English reading/comprehension test before being sworn in as citizens.

With her third citizenship in hand, Allison says she's so excited to be an American now. "I really like collecting passports just like Austin Powers. I'm a Mini Cooper-driving international person of mystery," she says in jest, "but honestly, I have been very happy living and working here, and I don't plan to live in Canada or UK again, so it just made sense to take that final step..."

"Plus there's no snow in South Carolina... yeah, baby!"



# Programs

## Saluda Office Parking Lot and Drive Get Gravel

The Saluda office recently received gravel for the parking lot and drive. A big THANKS goes to Forestry Technician I Tony Ashley who spread the gravel out and leveled off the parking lot making it look good.



### Piedmont Region

—Colton Webb

## Pickens Office Holds Successful Work Day

The Piedmont West Unit office in Pickens is looking good! Greenville/ Pickens Sector FMO Ray Cassell held a work day August 2 for him and his technicians to complete several projects around the office. Construction & Property Manager David Owen brought the new agency sign and assisted with its construction. Other offices will be receiving signs in the near future.

Personnel also cleaned the gutters, assembled a new pressure washer, mounted a new bench vice, installed new LED emergency lights and new smoke detectors. They also cleaned the office and put up a new handicap sign. Great job!



### Piedmont Region

—Ray Cassell

# Programs

## Programs

### Timber Product Output Survey

Since 2018, the Timber Product Output (TPO) survey has been conducted annually for a stratified random sample of the almost 100 primary mills operating across our state.

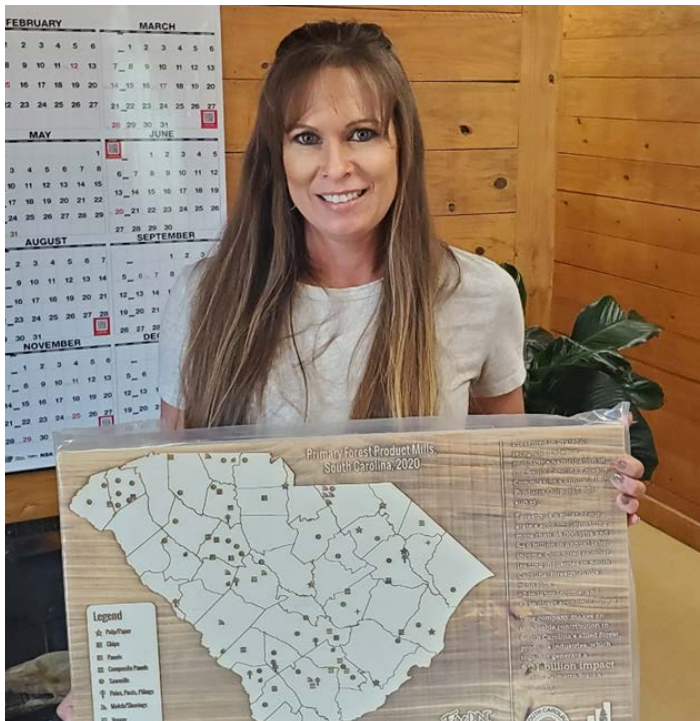
This year, with COVID travel restrictions limiting our opportunities to visit with industry personally, we provided an added incentive to survey participants. For each survey conducted we provided a complimentary 19” x 24” solid wood map of wood-using mills.

The maps were produced by a homegrown company from Ridgeland, South Carolina, called Fire & Pine. The signs consist of laser-etched 1-inch thick white pine boards.

Many thanks to our very own Communications design team and the helpful people at Fire & Pine for making these beautiful maps! And of course, thanks to all the industry participants in this year’s survey with 100% of our mills completed by June 1!

**Forest Resource**

—Scott Danskin



Callie Fields of South Carolina Shavings Providers, a happy participant in this year’s survey.



Steve Salisbury of West Fraser in Newberry hopes to hang the sign in his new office soon.

### Did you Know?

**In spring, a single oak tree produces both male flowers (in the form of catkins) and small coon flowers (female flowers). Oak trees have male flowers on one part of their branch, and female flowers on another part of the same branch.**

# Caught ON Camera



Kershaw/Lancaster/Lee Project Forester Gwyn Cloninger sent in this photo of baby brown thrashers taken May 31 in her yard. And mama thrasher, pictured below.



Fiscal Analyst Tammy Cummings took this photo of spider lillies on the Catawba at Landsford Canal State Park.



Fiscal Analyst Tammy Cummings caught this osprey in its nest at the Kempson Bridge on the Saluda.



This whitetail deer cools off in the edge of a pond in Sumter County.

# New Chief of the Forest Service Named

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced Randy Moore, Regional Forester in the Pacific Southwest Region as the 40th Chief of the Forest Service June 28. Current Forest Service Chief Vicki Christiansen will step down from her role on July 26. Chief Christiansen and Regional Forester Moore will continue to collaborate on an intentional leadership transition between now and then as the Forest Service gears up for a tough summer of predicted elevated fire activity across the Western United States.

“Randy Moore has been a catalyst for change and creativity in carrying out the Forest Service’s mission to sustain the health, diversity and productivity of the nation’s forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations,” said Secretary Vilsack. “In his role as Regional Forester, Randy has been a conservation leader on the forefront of climate change, most notably leading the Region’s response to the dramatic increase in catastrophic wildfires in California over the last decade. His proven track record of supporting and developing employees and putting communities at the center of the Forest Service’s work positions him well to lead the agency into the future at this critical time in our country.”

Upon swearing in, Moore will serve as the first African American to hold the role of Chief of the Forest Service.

Current Forest Service Chief Vicki Christiansen will step down from her role on July 26. Chief Christiansen and Regional Forester Moore will continue to collaborate on an intentional leadership transition between now and then as the Forest Service gears up for a tough summer of predicted elevated fire activity across the Western United States.

Randy Moore has been serving as Regional Forester in the Pacific Southwest Region in California since 2007 where he has responsibility for 18 national forests, covering one-fifth of the state on 20 million acres of land. Additionally, he oversees State and Private Forestry programs in Hawaii and the U.S. affiliated Pacific Islands.

Previously, Moore served as the Regional Forester for the Eastern Region headquartered in Milwaukee, Wisc., for five years. Moore started his career in conservation in 1978 with USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service in North Dakota. His Forest Service career began on the Pike and San Isabel National Forests in Colorado and the Comanche and Cimarron National Grasslands in Kansas. He served as Deputy Forest Supervisor on the National Forests of North Carolina and the Mark Twain National Forest in Missouri before serving as Forest Supervisor of the Mark Twain National Forest. Moore also has national-level experience in Washington, D.C., serving as acting Associate Deputy Chief for the National Forest System and the National Deputy Soils Program Manager.

Moore earned a bachelor’s degree in plant and soil science from Southern University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. He and his wife Antoinette have two sons, a daughter-in-law, and two grandsons.



New USFS Forest Chief Randy Moore

## DID YOU KNOW?

The Cottonwood tree has long been a staple of the outdoors in America. Typically being one of the larger trees with wonderful thick and long branches, the Cottonwood creates an almost magical presence dotting the landscape across the central and eastern regions of the U.S.

A lesser known fact about the Cottonwood is that they hold a secret in their branches that has a long history among Native Americans and the early settlers. When you find a small branch or twig from Cottonwood and break it at one of the many growth rings, inside you may see a “star” pattern. The growth ring or wrinkle of a Cottonwood branch produces a simple but distinct five-point star design that has been the topic of discussion handed down from generation to generation. Some twigs might be too green or may be rotten but many will have a perfect five pointed little star on the broken end.



# Spot the Differences

Can you find the 10 differences between the top photo and the bottom photo below?



Gervais Street Bridge in Columbia.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_

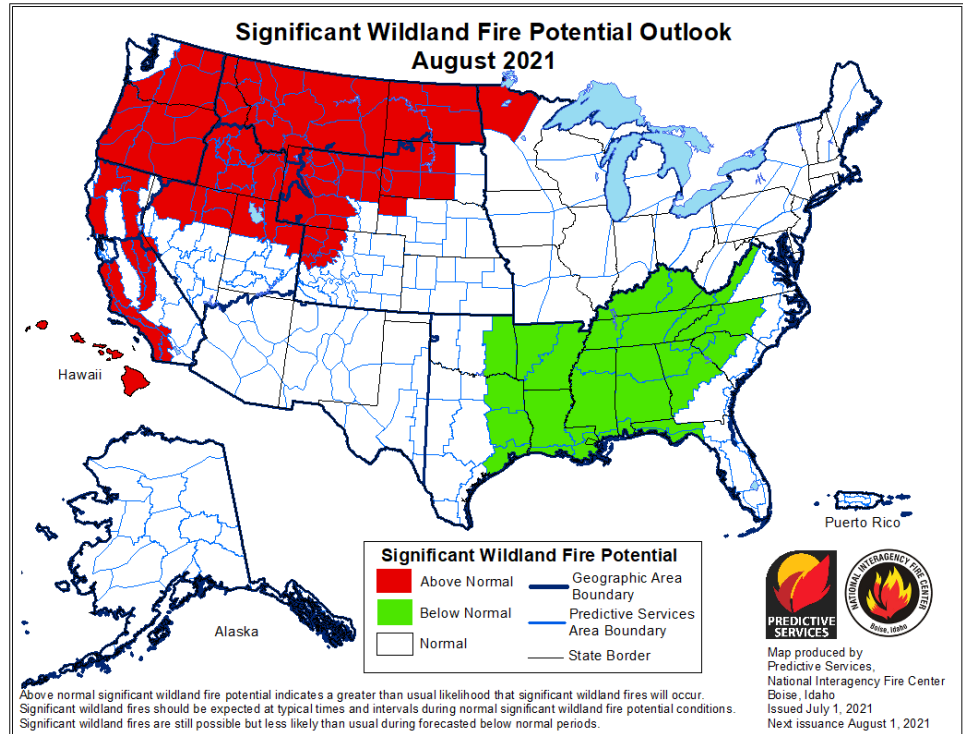
(Answers on last page)

# Fire Weather Outlook

**Southern Area:** Below average-to-average fire potential is expected across the Southern Area through September as a humid pattern continues to produce average to above average rain totals. Through the next two months, the area of highest rain potential is expected to move west out of the Southeast and towards the central Mississippi Valley area. This change should cause ridging and subsequent average to drier than average conditions for our Atlantic states through the fall. Due to the ridging, this area of the South is where drying fuels during fall could produce conditions for average to above average fire potential in October and November. However, this could change pending rain from any tropical storms or hurricanes.

Relatively frequent frontal incursions into the Southern Area along with humid conditions and daytime heating produced a pattern of almost daily widespread shower and thunderstorm activity. With the above average rainfall, live and dead fuel moistures remain at well above seasonal averages and are preventing drought conditions from developing. The one exception is the presence of moderate drought in western Virginia and North Carolina. The latest drought outlook keeps the Southern Area out of drought through October. Over the past month, most of the precipitation anomalies across the South are at or above 150% of average.

Neutral ENSO conditions in the tropical Pacific, a favorable position of the subtropical Atlantic high, which continues to funnel moisture into the South from the Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico, and favorable phases of the Madden-Julian Oscillation are producing an enduring wet pattern for the Southern Area, which should last into September.



## Current Fire Numbers for South Carolina

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

Time Period	JUNE		JULY-JUNE		FISCAL YEAR	
	Fires	Acres	Fires	Acres	Fires	Acres
5 Year Average	64	261	1,350	10,518	1,350	10,518
10 Year Average	100	566	1,709	11,824	1,709	11,824
Current FY <sup>1</sup>	43	135	1,056	7,203	1,056	7,203

<sup>1</sup>To date for current fiscal year

Time Period	JULY		JULY-		FISCAL YEAR	
	Fires	Acres	Fires	Acres	Fires	Acres
5 Year Average	75	391	75	391	1,363	10,869
10 Year Average	108	783	108	783	1,505	10,306
Current FY <sup>1</sup>	22	110	22	110	22	110

<sup>1</sup>To date for current fiscal year



# Poems & More...

OF TREES AND WOODLANDS

## MADE OF WOOD (To be sung to the tune of "America the Beautiful")

The ships hard fought by John Paul Jones,  
The rails that Lincoln split;  
The synonym of grit;  
Mount Vernon's halls and columned porch  
Where Washington once stood;  
America these mean to us, And all were made of wood.

The musket butt the Minute Man  
Pressed hard to sturdy shoulder;  
The high stockade of Dan Boone's fort  
That thwarted redskin murder;  
The ramrod Molly Pitcher snatched,  
All red with loyal blood;  
America these mean to us, And all were made of wood.

The staff that held fort Moultrie's flag,  
By gallant Jasper raised;  
Bold Perry's fleet from forest hewed  
That doomed a foe amazed;  
The wagon trains that won the West  
And every fear withstood;  
America these mean to us, And all were made of wood.

The pines that clothe the south plains,  
The big trees of the West;  
The Douglas fir on Cascade slopes,  
The spruce o' the Rockies' crest;  
The white pine of New England's hills,  
That hemlocks on Mount Hood;  
America these mean to us, Pride, beauty, wealth in wood.  
- L. C. Everard

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.

## Photo of the Month



Pee Dee Regional Forester Mike Ney took this photo of a mill pond in Darlington May 22.

## Spot the Differences

1. Branches on right are missing.
2. Clouds are missing.
3. Yellow bird added.
4. Two geese added.
5. Bridge light poles missing.
6. Third bridge support painted.
7. Live oak leaves mixed in with river birch leaves.
8. Lois Edwards and Frances Waite kayaking.
9. Boat speeding by.
10. Dead branch under bridge missing.

## Quote of the Month

*"Hope is the tree that holds the world."*

Pliny, the Elder

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