

Tree Country

May 2020

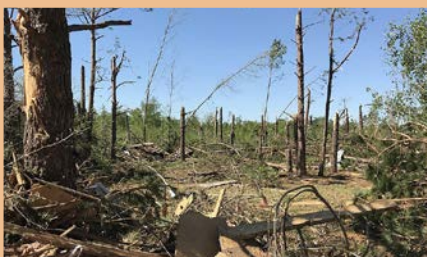


the employee
newsletter of the
**South Carolina
Forestry Commission**

INSIDE THIS ISSUE



Success Story: SCFC Assists with Storm Damage
Page 9



Tornadoes Rip Through SC
Pages 10-11



Osborne Swamp Fire
Page 15

from the desk of
FOREST HEALTH COORDINATOR
David Jenkins



When I was hired onto the South Carolina Forestry Commission team as Forest Health Coordinator in August of 2015, I didn't know much about forestry. I had studied entomology and plant diseases and spent over a decade working with pests, diseases and pollinators of tree fruit crops. I figured I had time to learn what I needed to know, and I love learning new things! Within a month of my arrival South Carolina was hit with historic flooding from Hurricane Joaquin.

I learned that the Forest Health team would play an integral role in assessing damage after storms. Assessing damages after the flood of 2015 seemed like a daunting task at the time, something I wasn't prepared for. How do you accurately measure the damage caused by such flooding, especially when much of the damage would not show for a year or more?

I had lots of help. Then-Southern Pine Beetle Coordinator Chisolm Beckham was and is an encyclopedia of forestry and forest health information. Chisolm and Forestry Aide Vince Cannarella

(now retired) helped orient me during that first assessment and during my first year with the agency. They passed on the finer points of aerial survey and damage assessment, as well as Forestry 101.

Since that flood in 2015, there has been one natural disaster or another every fall that has required the agency's attention. There was the Pinnacle Mountain Fire in 2016. There was Hurricane Irma in 2017. Hurricane Florence in 2018. And we had Hurricanes Dorian and Michael in 2019.

The agency's Type 2 Incident Management Team (IMT) was activated



Forest Health Coordinator David Jenkins and SPB Coordinator Tyler Greiner set up a beetle trap.



Forest Health Staff: Tyler Greiner, Forestry Technician II Kevin Douglas, and Coordinator David Jenkins.

for each of these events, and I was privileged to work on these teams with many agency employees with whom I don't normally get to interact. I was humbled by the competence of the team members, their willingness to volunteer to help the citizens of South Carolina and be away from their families during times of need. I enjoyed the camaraderie of the team.

I also saw this spirit and camaraderie when I volunteered for Wood Magic Forest Fair the first time. I saw so many talented people taking time out of their work days, expounding on the benefits of forestry to children. And I always learned something, too!

I quickly learned that our agency's richest resource is its people. The South Carolina Forestry Commission is full

of people who are willing to share their knowledge or lend a hand when you need it, and I am proud to be part of that team!

David



Jenkins (second from right) was a part of the IMT at several events.



On the Cover

The cover photo features sunrise on Coosaw Island in Beaufort County.

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.)





CHAINSAW SAFETY

Always wear proper PPE (personal protective equipment) when handling or working around chainsaws.

- Eye protection – approved goggles or safety glasses.
- Hearing protection – ear plugs or muffs.
- Helmet.
- Chainsaw Chaps – proper size and length.
- Gloves – proper size.
- Long sleeve shirt – no loose sleeves.
- Leather boots – no loose boot laces.

Take the time to inspect the chainsaw before operating the saw.

- Check the chain and bar – sharpness of chain, bar seated correctly.
- Check the bolts and screws all around the saw – no missing screws or bolts.
- Check the casing of the saw – no cracked or missing plastic.
- Felling axe and wedges in good condition.
- Saw gas and bar oil in sufficient quantities to meet objectives.
- Basic saw maintenance tools on site and specific to saw in use.
- Review fuel geysering indicators/potential.



Wear proper PPE when operating a chainsaw.

Make sure you're aware of your surroundings while operating the chainsaw.

- Look for and anticipate people working in your area – the chainsaw operator is responsible for controlling the cutting area and communicating with others in the cutting area.
- Look for any snags or overhead hazards in your area – maintain recommended spacing of falling teams or others working in the cutting area.
- Establish consistent communications with spotters/swampers – always minimize personnel working directly at the stump or in the felling area.
- Are there other risk factors that increase the complexity of the job – loose soils, rocky ground, steep terrain, weather factors or poor visibility, tree condition, others?

Complete a personal risk assessment to determine if you are comfortable completing the task at hand – don't let job performance pressure force you in over your skill level.

Provided by IMT Safety Officers Kip Terry and Michael Weeks



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



Human Resources

Employee News

New Employees

Please welcome new Pee Dee Dispatcher **Lisa C. Downer**. Lisa started April 2 and lives in Florence. She graduated Florence-Darlington Technical College with an associate's degree in Criminal Justice Public Service. She also attended Francis Marion University majoring in sociology, and Western Oregon University receiving a sign language/deaf services counseling certificate. Lisa has previous experience as a job coach at the South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Department for 16-and-a-half years. In her spare time, Lisa enjoys photography, gardening, reading and spending time with her cat.



Lisa C. Downer

Farewells

Pee Dee FIA Forester **Kyle Goeke Dee** resigned April 16.

Pee Dee Dispatcher **Ren DeCoan** resigned April 24.

Retiree News

Retired Jasper County Warden **Charles (Rodney) Malphrus**, W-6-3, passed away April 13. He retired in 2006 after working almost 38 years with the agency as a firefighter. With the on going coronavirus pandemic, the family will have a memorial service for him after the virus restrictions are lifted. Please keep his family in your thoughts and prayers.

Retired Sand Hills Forest Technician **Steve Marshall** passed away April 18. Steve retired in 2018 after working a little over 26 years with the agency.

Human Resources

- Lynn Rivers

Coronavirus Information for SCFC Employees

Please visit www.trees.sc.gov/coronavirus.htm for constantly updated information about agency status, work-at-home guidance, leave procedures and frequently asked questions.

UPCOMING STATE HOLIDAYS

Confederate Memorial Day	Monday, May 11, 2020
Memorial Day	Monday, May 25, 2020

Human Resources

Year-End Close/Compensated Absences

As part of the year-end close, the agency is responsible for completing the Compensated Absence Summary Report. This report includes the liability of all employees accumulated unused annual leave earned, accumulated unused holiday compensatory time and accumulated unused overtime compensatory time. It is important for employees and supervisors to ensure that leave in any of these categories taken or leave projected to be taken by June 30 is entered and approved in SCEIS before that date. Please contact the Human Resources Office at (803) 896-8879 if you have any questions.

Human Resources

- Lynn Rivers

Child Care Assistance for Essential Workers

As part of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES) funding, the South Carolina Department of Social Services (DSS) is offering child care assistance for parents who have been deemed essential employees and are required to report to work during the COVID-19 Pandemic. According to DSS, in order to qualify, employees must be currently working at an essential business or government agency, the employee must need child care to continue to work, and the employee must complete a child care application.

DSS has provided information regarding the child care assistance, as well as an application for assistance. If you have questions regarding the child care assistance, please contact Christi Jeffcoat with DSS at christi.jeffcoat@dss.sc.gov or (803) 898-2741.



SERVICE AWARDS FOR MAY

<u>Employee's Name</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>State Service</u>
Dennis Weaver	Mechanic	Pee Dee Region	30 years

Home Delivery Options for Prescription Medication

As part of the Public Employee Benefit Authority's (PEBA) effort to ensure the safety and wellbeing of their membership, PEBA is providing a list of pharmacies that are offering prescription home delivery service. This list was compiled by the S.C. Pharmacy Association and is based on data as of March 31, 2020. Store hours and delivery capability may be adjusted due to COVID-19. Be sure to call or check the pharmacy's website for the latest information on hours and delivery options.

Your medications may be mailed to you. Simply contact Express Scripts at (855)612-3128 to have Express Scripts Home Delivery fill and mail your prescription to you. CVS, Walgreens and Rite Aid are also offering home delivery service to State Health Plan subscribers on a temporary basis. Check your local CVS' or Walgreen's website for the latest information. Rite Aid customers must call their local store to enroll in this option.

It's important to remember the State Health Plan does not offer out-of-network coverage for prescription drugs. Employees can find a network pharmacy by logging in to your Express Scripts account at www.express-scripts.com or using the Express Scripts app pharmacy locator feature loaded on a smartphone.

For a copy of the list of pharmacies that are offering prescription home delivery service or questions regarding the Express Script app, please contact Allison Doherty at adoherty@scfc.gov or call (803)896-8872.

Benefits/Health

- Allison Doherty

Use PEBA's Online Resource To Manage Health Benefits

MyBenefits is the fastest, most convenient way for subscribers covered by PEBA-administered insurance programs to manage their health benefits. Employees can use My Benefits to:

- View current benefits
- Make changes to benefits due to birth, marriage, divorce or adoption.
- Upload any required documentation.
- Update beneficiary information for Basic Life and Optional Life insurance.
- Change your address and contact information.

Learn how to register for MyBenefits by following the instructions on the MyBenefits flyer in this month's newsletter.

New Feature Added to Member Access

Active Police Officer Retirement System (PORS) and South Carolina Retirement System (SCRS) members may now change their beneficiary designations by logging into Member Access. Members will select the Beneficiaries link which allows them to designate one or more people or their estate as beneficiary for their retirement contributions and/or survivor benefits.

To make a change, members will need to have all beneficiary information, such as full names, dates of birth and Social Security numbers. Any beneficiary changes they make will override their prior designations and will take effect immediately. Before making any changes, members may wish to consult an attorney/estate planner.

Members must complete a paper Active Member Beneficiary Form (Form 1102) or Beneficiary/Trustee Designation Form (Form 1103) if they choose to designate any of the following as their beneficiary:

- Trust
- Entity
- Charity
- Organization

All beneficiary changes made using the paper form require the member's signature be notarized and submitted to the Human Resources office.

State Optional Retirement Program (State ORP) participants can now update their incidental death benefit beneficiaries by logging into Member Access. State ORP participants can, if they prefer, complete a State ORP Active Incidental Death Benefit Beneficiary Designation (Form 1106) to change their beneficiaries and submit it with their notarized signature to the Human Resources office.

Please contact Allison Doherty at adoherty@scfc.gov or call (803) 896-8872, if you have any questions.



Setting Up a New MyBenefits Account

Navigating your benefits

MyBenefits is the fastest, most convenient way for subscribers covered by PEBA-administered insurance programs to manage their benefits. Enroll in MyBenefits today and start managing your insurance information.

Step 1



Go to PEBA's website, www.peba.sc.gov, and select the MyBenefits button on the right side of the page.

Step 2



If you don't know your Benefits Identification Number (BIN), select Get My BIN and follow the instructions to retrieve it.

Step 3



To set up an account, select the Register button. Follow the five-step process to complete your registration.

Log in to MyBenefits 24/7 by entering your BIN, the last four digits of your Social Security number and your password.

- Access your insurance benefits information.
- Update your contact information.
- Review and change your beneficiaries.
- Make changes to your coverage during the annual open enrollment period in October and some special eligibility situations.

McGee Adds a Son

Congratulations to Anderson/Oconee Sector Forestry Technician John McGee and his wife on the birth of their baby boy John Marshall McGee on April 9, 2020. He weighed 7 lbs.,6 oz., coming into the world during the coronavirus pandemic safely.



John holds baby Marshall.



Irick Adds Granddaughter

Congratulations to Coastal Region Senior Administrative Assistant Vicki Irick for becoming a second-time grandmother!

She now has a granddaughter to go with her grandson Robbie. Both reside in Oceanside, Calif. at Camp Pendleton with their parents. Juno Rowan Erxleben was born healthy April 7 amid the coronavirus pandemic. Both mother and daughter are doing great.



Juno enjoys a nap, all wrapped up.



Questions that leave you wondering...

If it's zero outside today and it's supposed to be twice as cold tomorrow, how cold is it going to be?

Why do you press harder on a remote-control when you know the battery is dead?

Why are they called buildings, when they're already finished? Shouldn't they be called builts?

SUCCESS STORIES

SCFC Assists With Cleanup of Tornado Damage

Marlboro County



Lynches River Unit personnel were tasked with clearing Hwy 9 East in Wallace from Hwy 177 to Hickory Grove Road. Lynches River Unit Forester Kenny Robertson led the crew of sawyers, Darlington/Marlboro Sector FMO Shawn Feldner and Chesterfield/Darlington/Marlboro Project Forester Brandon Smith and dozer operator Darlington/Marlboro Sector Forestry Technician AJ Wallace, in the clearing process April 13.

Hampton County



Edisto Unit personnel respond to clear several impassable roads in Hampton County, one of the hardest hit areas of the state. The crews found several people and vehicles trapped amongst the trees.

Not long after a deadly EF-4 tornado ripped through Hampton County, Edisto Unit personnel were called to help clear blocked roads by Hampton County Sheriff TC Smalls. Eight SCFC personnel cleared portions of Highway 278, Rock Springs Church Road, Lento Road, Miles Road and Pocatigo Road using chainsaws and bulldozers.

Edisto Unit Forester Pete Stuckey and Allendale/Hampton/Jasper Sector FMO Terrell Smith couldn't meet up to work together due to blocked roads and had to lead separate teams to reach each other. Trees of every size blocked the roads trapping several people in between the downed trees.

Smith's crew got a surprise when cutting and pushing through debris on Hwy 278: a truck was under the debris. A man, while traveling to work, had a tree fall on the bed of his truck, leaving him in his truck trapped among the fallen debris for over two hours. Smith's crew discovered him while removing the debris from the roadway around his truck. He wasn't injured.

Due to blocked roads, a local nurse had been sitting in her vehicle waiting for the roads to be open so she could get to work at the Hampton Regional Hospital. Knowing she was desperately needed at the hospital and not knowing how long before the road would be cleared, she abandoned her vehicle on the side of Hwy 278. Terrell Smith then helped her through the debris and finally lifted her over a very large oak tree where Stuckey was waiting to transport her to the hospital to help with injured tornado victims.

The road clearing crew included Edisto Unit Forester Pete Stuckey, Allendale/Hampton/Jasper Sector FMO Terrell Smith, Allendale/Hampton/Jasper Sector Forestry Technicians Don Mixon, Stacey DeLoach, Bryan Smith, Neal Murdaugh and Lowell Parnell, and Beaufort/Jasper Sector Forestry Technician David Smith.

Deadly Tornadoes Rip Through State

As South Carolina deals with the coronavirus pandemic, the state was struck by at least 25 confirmed tornadoes on the morning of April 13 that killed nine people, injuring several others.

In one morning, hundreds of people from the Upstate to the Lowcountry, were suddenly homeless. High winds punched holes in houses, flattened factories and tossed around cars. According to the National Weather Service, there were at least 14 counties in South Carolina where tornadoes touched down, including Aiken, Barnwell, Berkeley, Calhoun, Charleston, Colleton, Dorchester, Georgetown, Greenville, Hampton, Oconee, Orangeburg, Pickens and Richland.

A strong line of storms started in Texas Easter Sunday and ran through the Deep South to the Atlantic coast causing widespread damage and destruction, killing 33 along the way. In the early morning hours of April 13, most South Carolinians awoke to the sounds of weather alerts going off warning of dangerous storms and tornadoes. Trees were uprooted, and limbs were broken off and blown away along with homes and businesses by winds the equivalent of a Category 4 hurricane.

Before this event, only two tornadoes at a strength of EF-3 or greater had ever touched down in South Carolina between the hours of midnight and 8 a.m. Eight at that strength struck the state on April 13 before 7:45 a.m.



EF-3 Tornado damage in Livingston.

At one point more than 391,000 customers across the state were without power, and 1,549 homes in 31 counties suffered damage from the severe weather. Of those, 182 homes sustained major damage, while 209 were destroyed. The South Carolina Department of Transportation also reported that 2,500 roads were blocked by debris caused by the strong winds. Thousands of trees cluttered state roads, including Interstate 26 near the Volvo plant in Ridgeville and Interstate 95 near Walterboro. Tractor-trailers were overturned on the interstates, blocking travel. Airplanes at the Lowcountry Regional Airport in Walterboro were scattered, smashed and flipped over.

Coroners confirmed nine deaths from the storm in Colleton (1), Hampton (5), Oconee (1), and Orangeburg (2) counties. This was the second-deadliest tornado outbreak on record for South Carolina since 1950.

Pickens County had a pair of tornadoes. The first was a confirmed EF2 with 120-mph winds started in the Pumpkintown community traveling eight miles to an area northwest of Greenville. The second was an EF0 with 80-mph winds outside Easley. The strongest tornado in the Upstate, an EF-3, touched down three miles southeast of Westminster, traveling 16.6 miles and killing one person. Winds reached 160 mph, and it grew to a maximum width of 900 yards as it moved from the Seneca area into Pickens County. Its path ended about two miles west of Central in Pickens County. Oconee County also had an EF-1 touch down near Salem.

An explosive EF-3 tornado left a 37-mile path of destruction from the Georgia border through the Midlands. As it tore through Barnwell and moved northeast to Orangeburg and Calhoun counties, wind speed peaked at 140 mph near Livingston. At its widest, the tornado was just under a half-mile. The twister touched down at about 5:45 a.m. near Willis Pond Road in Barnwell and weakened near North Road before dissipating as it crossed into Calhoun County. There were two fatalities and several injuries in Orangeburg County



EF-3 Tornado damage in Seneca.

associated with this tornado.

Another EF-3 touched down northwest of Savannah River Site, stretching 33 miles to northeast of Springfield, and yet another EF-3 touched down southeast of Hilda in Barnwell County. An EF-3 tornado briefly touched down near Blackville in Barnwell County, and another EF-3 traveled between Snelling and Elko in Barnwell County. An EF-2 caused destruction for 10 miles just northeast of Rowesville to Cameron in Calhoun County.

Starting at about 6 a.m., high winds and heavy rain crossed the Georgia-



West-bound I-20 was littered with trees.

Tornado Damage (continued)



EF-4 Tornado damage in Hampton County.



Highway 64 in Walterboro was impassable, as were many streets after the tornado.

South Carolina border and pummeled Hampton, Colleton, Dorchester and Berkeley counties as well.

Hampton County suffered the most damage. County officials confirmed five fatalities and 60 injuries with an EF-4 tornado, the first ever recorded EF-4 in the Lowcountry. It touched down three miles west of Scotia and dissipated 24 miles later north of Fechtig. Wind speeds peaked at 175 mph.

Colleton County had an EF-1 strike southeast of Islandtown that traveled to seven miles west of Hendersonville. Walterboro had two confirmed tornadoes. An EF-1 formed near Route 63 and traveled eight miles through the Low Country Regional Airport, destroying hangars and nearly two dozen aircraft, including an SCFC plane. Another EF-1 formed along Route 63 west of I-95, overtuned a tractor-trailer blocking traffic, and traveled three miles before dissipating in the Ashepoos River area.

Dorchester County had an EF-1 tornado touch down near Givhans. In Berkeley County an EF-3 formed around 7:30 a.m. southeast of Moncks Corner traveling almost six miles to Old Cordesville. Berkeley also had an EF-0 near Bethera and an EF-1 near Palmerville.

Tornadoes also scraped along the beaches from Colleton to Georgetown counties. An EF2 tornado hit the ground on Edisto Beach, damaging

homes on the oceanfront road, Myrtle Street. An EF-1 touched down on Seabrook Island, and another EF-1 tornado touched down on Kiawah Island.

The National Weather Service confirmed at least three tornadoes touched down in Georgetown County. There was an EF-1 tornado in the Sampit area that traveled almost five miles, an EF-1 in Graves that traveled 11 miles, and an EF-2 tornado that touched down in Litchfield Beach, traveling into Murrells Inlet, eventually becoming a waterspout when it moved offshore.

There were over 3,000 reports of wind damage across the state. A microburst caused damage near Wallace in Marlboro County. Shaw Air Force Base in Sumter and Rock Hill recorded wind gusts over 60 mph.

While under one emergency, Gov. McMaster issued another emergency declaration related to the storm damage to help pay to clear roads, repair power lines and fix damaged homes and buildings.

Monday's storm was the state's biggest tornado outbreak since 1984 with several long-track, violent tornadoes streaking across South Carolina over a six-hour period, said Rich Okulski, meteorologist in charge at National Weather Service office in Columbia. The tornadoes could have been worse if the weather front struck during

the afternoon hours with warmer temperatures, Okulski said.

For some, when sheltering in place is so important, their homes have been taken away from them, forcing them to find other arrangements for quarantining amid the coronavirus. Most homeowners wore latex gloves and masks, the staples of personal coronavirus protection, to trim trees and pick up branches.

EF SCALE

The Enhanced Fujita Scale classifies tornadoes into the following categories:

- EF0...Weak.....65 to 85 mph
- EF1...Weak.....86 to 110 mph
- EF2...Strong.... 111 to 135 mph
- EF3...Strong.... 136 to 165 mph
- EF4...Violent... 166 to 200 mph
- EF5...Violent...>200 mph

SOURCE: National Weather Service



<http://www.dnr.sc.gov/water/climate/sco/Publications/tornadooutbreak.pdf>

Irick's Lucky 13th?

Coastal Sr. Administrative Assistant Vicki Irick had a very interesting day April 13. She awoke to sound of tornado warnings at her home in Orangeburg. The power at her home went out at 3:30 a.m. So Vicki got up, showered, dressed for work and left at 5 a.m. thinking she could get more done with power in Walterboro. So she left one tornado-hit area and headed into another, not knowing. She called Coastal Regional Forester Calvin Bailey to let him know of her plans.

She recalled it was a beautiful morning drive with lightning all around. Vicki arrived at the office around 6 a.m. About 45 minutes later the strong storm/tornado hit the area. Trees around the office were uprooted and broken, but luckily not a one hit the building, and Vicki was safe. The storm also tore the roof off the airplane hangar, damaged an SCFC plane at the Low Country Regional Airport, and knocked the power out. Colleton government offices were closed for the day so Vicki left around 2:30 p.m. There was a lot of debris on the roads and sides of the road on her way home. When she arrived home, she found her horse trailer was on its side, and trees were down in her yard and shop yard.



Trees were uprooted and snapped off at the Coastal Regional office in Walterboro April 13, but luckily the office wasn't damaged.



A Forestry Commission T-41 plane was damaged by the Walterboro tornado.



The roof was ripped off the airplane hangar, and debris was stuck in the trees.

Tornado Storm Damage Survey Performed

A tornado storm damage survey was performed by SCFC personnel April 22 and 24 around the state.

Seven teams of two personnel surveyed plots along tornado paths to assess the damage to the forest resource, while maintaining social distance. The team members were: Holly Welch and Trey Cox, Jaime Jones and Michael McGill, Wesley Bouknight and Steven Broom, Logan Bell and Eric West, Tonya Smith and GraceAnna Cooper, Adam Forbes and Drew Pressley, and Vaughan Spearman and Andrew Williams.

Once teams were at each plot, they assessed the stand variables and recorded the damage they observed on the 10 closest trees. Then they walked 132 feet (two chains) and recorded observed damage on 10 more trees. Finally, on their way back to their trucks, they recorded the damage they observed on 10 more trees. They classified the damage to the stand based on the percentage of trees that fell within several damage classifications.



Pee Dee Stewardship Forester Tonya Smith assesses a stand's damage in Berkeley County April 22.



Hampton County storm damage (above and below) observed by Coastal FIA Foresters Adam Forbes and Drew Pressley.



Tornado damage in Berkeley County (above and below) observed by Georgetown/Williamsburg Project Forester GraceAnna Cooper and Tonya Smith.



Programs

Emergency Assistance for Landowners with Storm-Damaged Timber

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) is accepting applications for assistance through the Emergency Forest Restoration Program (EFRP) now for forest landowners who suffered timber damage during recent wind events. Although funding is not yet approved, landowners need to begin the process by contacting their county FSA office.

To be eligible for assistance, landowners must sign up with FSA **before starting timber salvage** and obtain advice from a registered forester who will confirm the damage and need for reforestation. Landowners are strongly encouraged to obtain registered forester advice before beginning salvage of damaged timber or planning reforestation activities to increase the likelihood of receiving funding assistance and having a successful salvage and replanting process. Documentation such as pictures of damage and written recommendations from a registered

forester are highly recommended as well.

Landowners are encouraged to sign up with FSA as soon as feasible, as there will be a limited period of eligibility and funding. FSA's EFRP web page has more information about the program and eligibility: <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/disaster-assistance-program/emergency-forest-restoration/index>.

Some landowners may qualify for additional programs such as the Emergency Conservation Program which can provide additional help with recovery from storm damage (<https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/conservation-programs/emergency-conservation/index>)

To expedite the signup process, landowners not already enrolled with FSA should bring a property deed, plat map, and forest management plan to their local FSA office if possible.

FSA local offices can be located by selecting your county on the map at <http://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app?state=sc&agency=fsa> or by calling the state FSA office at (803) 806-3820.

Steps for Landowners:

Contact the local SC Forestry Commission office or a registered forester (which could be your consulting forester if you have one) to assess damage and determine forest management options.

Before beginning salvage or reforestation, contact the FSA to determine eligibility for the EFRP. Important – if you have damaged forest land enrolled in the CRP program or if you wish to participate in EFRP, you must contact FSA before conducting any timber salvage harvesting!

Use qualified forestry professionals to carry out any needed forestry work on your property.

Management

- Russell Hubright

Coastal Forest Resiliency Plan in Works

The South Carolina Forestry Commission, in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service, the Green Infrastructure Center, local governments and stakeholder groups are working together to develop a Coastal Forest Resiliency Plan. The plan will assess the benefits, risks and threats to coastal forests and develop strategies to manage them sustainably into the future.

In March, before the virus shutdown, we hosted a stakeholders meeting and a public open house in Georgetown to share the project and receive local knowledge on coastal forests and help generate ideas on the best ways to keep those forests healthy and thriving for generations.



The shareholder group of the Coastal Forest Resiliency Plan discusses concerns.



The public open house with Alan Loveless from the City of Georgetown looking at the maps of the study area.

Urban

- Lois Edwards

Programs

Programs

Osborne Swamp Fire Crosses Into SC

NC Forest Service, SC Forestry Commission crews and local fire departments battled a wildfire on the state line April 4 for roughly 17 hours. Officials with the NC Forest Service station in Rockingham say the Osborne Swamp Fire was extinguished sometime between 10 and 11 p.m. It's estimated the fire burned between 150-200 acres.

The Hamlet Fire Department was dispatched around 5:45 a.m. Saturday, April 4 and NCFS soon after. Crews with the North Carolina Forest Service put a line around the fire to contain it, but a drop in humidity caused it to jump the line mid-afternoon, according to Jack Franklin, county ranger with the NC Forest Service.

The fire had burned about 70 acres, then crossed the state line into South Carolina around 4 p.m., resulting in crews from the Wallace Fire Department and the South Carolina Forestry Commission to be dispatched. Darlington/Marlboro Sector Fire Management Officer Shawn Feldner was the crew boss on the right flank. Darlington/Marlboro Sector Forestry Technician Paul Branch also assisted on the fire with 15-20-foot flame lengths. Feldner was concerned about the fire escaping lines to a nearby 10,000-acre pine stand.

The area is a swamp that is notorious for fires, which made it hard to get trucks and bulldozers in to help contain the fire.

Two single engine air tankers, six tractor plows, an air ops plane, spotter plane and numerous fire trucks from both states battled the blaze. Around 9 p.m. a burnout was executed.

Mop up procedures began on Sunday, April 5.

On April 3 a burn ban was put in effect for the entire western region of the North Carolina.

NOTE: South Carolina's burning ban started April 7, after this fire. The ban was subsequently lifted Tuesday, April 21.

Lynches River Unit

- Shawn Feldner



An aerial view of the Osborne Swamp Fire burning in low humidities.



The Osborne Swamp Fire burns into the night.

Caught ON Camera



Better be aware of what's in your vehicle. Beaufort/Jasper Sector Forestry Technician Scotty Harrington found this rat snake in the door of his unit April 8. The small, triangular window was the only thing partially open for him to squeeze through, unless he came up through the engine. Be careful.



Special Projects Coordinator Lloyd Mitchell finds the Smokey buffs very helpful during the covid pandemic.



Kershaw/Lancaster/Lee Project Forester Gwyn Cloninger sent in these photos of cardinal eggs that hatched in her back yard in Lancaster.

Programs

Programs

Education Staff Reach Out With Videos

For the past month, the majority of SCFC personnel have been telecommuting from their homes and dealing with the complexities of virtual work. For those of us that are not “tech savvy” it has been perplexing and even frustrating at times. This learning curve has pushed us outside of our comfort zones – forcing us to try new things and develop new skills in order to adapt to our new working environments. The silver lining is that most of us will come out of this a little more technologically proficient.

Environmental Education Coordinator Matt Schnabel and Assistant Environmental Education Coordinator Beth Foley, tried their hand at learning a new skill - filming and editing educational videos. Matt and Beth are not particularly tech-inclined and have relied heavily on the talented communications team for assistance with these projects in the past. So when requests came in from partnering organizations, they decided to give it their best shot.

Matt partnered with other Project Learning Tree Facilitators across the US to film a variety of PLT activity videos in an effort started by Maine PLT. Matt recorded activity #67 “How Big Is Your Tree?” in which he explains several methods for measuring trees. The PLT activity videos were shared through social media for families that are home-schooling their kids. They also can be found on the “PLT Videos” YouTube channel.

The Green Steps Schools (GSS) program encouraged mentors to create videos on projects that students can complete at their schools to make them more environmentally sustainable. Beth Foley created a video on habitat gardens in which she explained how to create “Certified Wildlife Habitat.” The Green Steps project videos are posted on the GSS website <https://eeasc.org/Green-Step-Schools/> for teachers to view and hopefully be inspired to pursue.



YOUTUBE.COM

#67 How Big Is Your Tree? PLT Activity

Project Learning Tree South Carolina's Matt Schnabel demonstrates t...

Environmental Education Coordinator Matt Schnabel explains several ways to measure trees.



YOUTUBE.COM

GSS - Habitat Gardens

Wildlife habitat gardens are fun, easy, and make a big difference f...

Assistant Environmental Education Coordinator Beth Foley contributed to the Green Steps Schools program to explain how to create wildlife habitat.

Education

- Beth Foley

TREE JOKES

What's a tree's favorite drink?

Root beer!

What did the tree do when the bank closed?

It opened its own branch!

Why do Christmas trees have trouble sewing?

They can't stop dropping their needles!



COPING WITH COVID 19

In these difficult times, with employees teleworking and social distancing, we find that the agency has some creative employees who make the best of the situation:



Anderson/Greenville/Oconee/Pickens Project Forester Trey Cox has a nice office set up in the perfect place...a tree house! Trey built it for his son Jude years ago, and he added a desk in late March so his son could do his virtual schooling up there. Trey has found himself taking advantage of the workspace too!



The Servpro crew prepare to enter the Coastal Regional Office for cleaning and fogging of potential Covid-19 exposure. They did the Dispatch Center later in the day.



Coastal Dispatcher Bernie Bazzle has been creative with her social-distancing time. She has made cloth masks (above) for relatives and others. She also dyed Easter eggs (below left) using silk neck ties. Bernie even tried lifting spirits with her happy hamburger (below right).



Only You



**Can Prevent
Coronavirus**

Kershaw/Lancaster/Lee Project Forester Gwyn Cloninger put a mask on Smokey to set a good example for others to follow.

Iceland Forest Rangers Encouraging Citizens to Hug Trees During Quarantine

Hug trees, not friends — that’s the message Iceland forest rangers are sending to the public amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Park rangers at Iceland’s Hallormsstaður National Forest are reportedly instructing people to seek solace in nature’s embrace, instead of with friends and family.

Rangers have begun clearing roads and pathways leading to prime trunks for people to snuggle up to during forced social distancing and self-quarantine.

“You get such a good feeling of relaxation [from hugging] and you are ready for a new day and new challenges,” says Thor Thorfinnsson, overall forest manager for East Iceland, to BBC.

Thorfinnsson told the outlet to aim for five minutes of tree hugs to get the most calming benefits.

But the forestry services aren’t just suggesting citizens find trees to hold. The departments are also encouraging people to get outside in general, and engage in outdoor activities as a safe way to relax and de-stress.

Tree-huggers should be cautious, though. In one study, coronavirus was found to live on treated wood for a day.

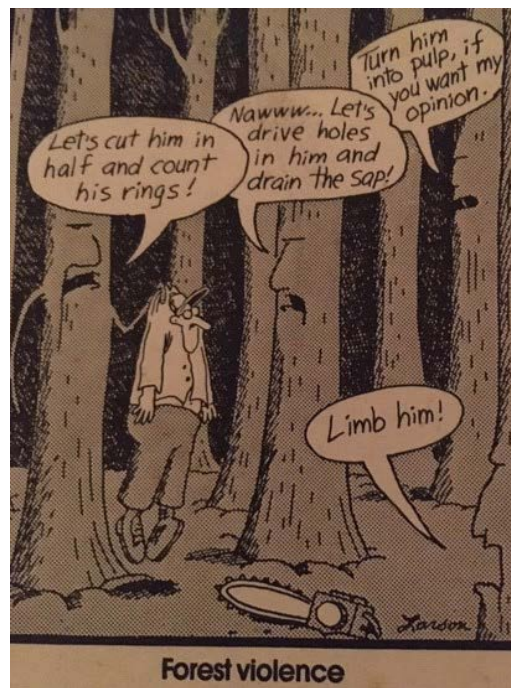
<https://www.foxnews.com/great-outdoors/iceland-forest-rangers-hug-trees-quarantine>



The forestry services are not just suggesting citizens find a tree to hold; they are also encouraging people to get outside in general and engage in outdoor activities as a safe way to relax and de-stress.

FAR Side Humor

Here is some Far Side humor to brighten your day.



South Carolina Firsts

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

First regularly scheduled rail passenger service – December 25, 1830

The South Carolina Canal and Rail Road Company’s Best Friend of Charleston made its first passenger run on Christmas Day. This new steam locomotive “flew” 141 brave souls along six miles of wood and metal rails at speeds of 15-25 miles an hour!

Fire Weather Outlook

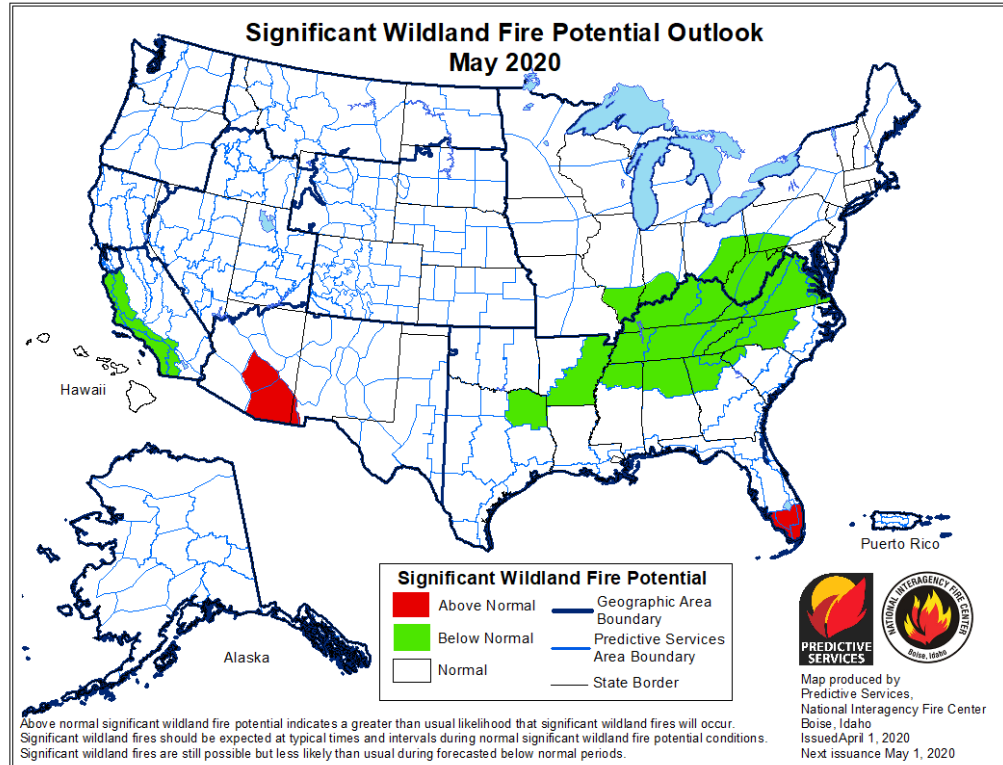
Southern Area:

Normal to Below Normal significant large fire potential is expected across the region during the outlook period except across South Florida in May where Above Normal significant large fire potential is expected.

The expectation is an ENSO neutral condition will likely persist through summer. This situation, along with a typical transition to more easterly tropical wind flow into the southeastern states, as well as more and still variable atmospheric factors (like the tropical Madden-Julian Oscillation) should produce conditions which should keep periodic rain events in the forecast for the next few months. Drier than average

conditions are likely to continue into the early part of the outlook period but should transition to a wetter pattern as more humid tropical easterlies and summertime daily afternoon thunderstorm activity returns to the state. For West Texas and the desert of the Trans Pecos, it appears a continuing drier and warmer than average pattern is likely to continue through the early summer months.

Fire activity during April has been minimal with the only significant and recurring activity occurring out in far West Texas and Florida (mainly on the peninsula.) With the spring fire season wrapping up due to greenup, the drier than average locations will go into a monitoring status. These areas are highlighted on the accompanying maps accordingly. Otherwise, over all Below Normal to Normal significant large fire potential is expected across the region the next four months.



Current Fire Numbers for South Carolina

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

Time Period	APRIL		JULY - APRIL		FISCAL YEAR	
	FIRES	ACRES	FIRES	ACRES	FIRES	ACRES
5-Year Average	164	996	1,209	9,637	1,418	10,600
10-Year Average	210	1,371	1,545	10,792	1,764	12,044
Current FY ¹	169	837	968	5,874	968	5,874

¹To date for current fiscal year



LIVE OAK

*The way of an oak is wondrous
Since first a flaming sword
Kept it fair in Eden
Before the face of the Lord.*

*There is no tree that blossoms
But prays that it may be
As fair, as strong a sapling,
As the Garden of Eden tree.*

*The birth tree prays in beauty,
The willow in humble tears,
The fruit trees pray in service,
The pine in growth of years.*

*The cedar prays in fragrance,
The elm in grace and height,
The maple prays in shelter
For beasts and birds' delight.*

*But a live oak weathers winter—
Storm and struggle and strife—
The way of an oak is foursquare,
The way of the tree of life.*

--By Fanny de Grott Hastings

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

Quote of the Month

*"Trees are the earth's
endless effort to
speak to the listening
heaven."*

Rabindranath Tagore

Photo of the Month



A colorful sunrise in Sumter County.

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