

# Tree Country

January/February 2018

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

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



I hope each of you enjoyed the holidays and are off to a great start in 2018! Earlier this month as many of you were changing your calendars to reflect the New Year a significant change was also occurring here at the Forestry Commission. Gene Kodama, our State Forester for the last decade, retired, and I officially began my new role at the helm of the agency.

With change comes opportunity. It is my hope that we can capitalize on this opportunity to build on the successes we realized under Gene's leadership and create new successes that will raise the Commission and the forestry community of our state to even greater heights. My vision for the South Carolina Forestry Commission is to provide the highest level of service to all parts of the forestry community of South Carolina to ensure our forests are managed sustainably to continue producing economic and societal benefits.

In many ways we are making progress towards this vision. Examples include: increased awareness of the health and abundance of SC's forests and their

impact on our economy, increased capacity to recruit and retain forest industry, and increased capacity to protect life and property. In these areas the goal for the future is to stay the course and continue to build on our successes.

But we still have more work to be done, and it can't be achieved by one individual or small group. It will take the entire Forestry Commission team working together and with our partners to realize this vision. To help communicate our path forward I have five priorities that I believe will strengthen the Commission and the services that we provide the people of South Carolina.



(left) Former State Forester Gene Kodama introduces new State Forester Scott Phillips to Senator Shane Massey (R - Edgefield) at the NWTF Sign Ceremony Dec. 13.

(Above) Firewise Coordinator Steve Moore, Scott Phillips and Gene Kodama with one of the new protection signs at NWTF. For more on the sign ceremony see page 5.

**Providing for the safety of employees and public.** As an emergency response organization, we recognize safety is always our top priority. We must ensure that all of our operations, from emergency response to routine tasks, are carried out in a safe and effective manner. Ensuring our firefighters have safe equipment and appropriate training is paramount. My expectation is that all employees will make safety a top priority in their daily work habits. Having provided for safety first, we can better protect and serve the forestry community.

**Providing outstanding customer service to SC's forestry community.** The Commission, at its core, is a customer service organization. To be successful we must provide outstanding customer service to all customers both internal and external. I challenge each of you to think about who the customers are for your position and seek ways to provide higher levels of customer service. If we make service a core value and follow the Golden Rule of "doing

unto others as you would have them do unto you" we will excel.

**Making the Commission a desirable place to work.** To ensure that the forestry community of SC receives the highest level of service from our agency we must start with our employees. It has become increasingly difficult for us to attract and retain high-quality employees. How we recruit, train and retain employees is one of the largest challenges facing our agency. We must work with the legislature to create more competitive compensation packages, career paths and training programs that will make the SCFC a desirable workplace for all of our employees. This will take time but the Board of Commissioners and I recognize that our employees are the Commission's greatest asset and will strive to create an environment where employees feel valued and are motivated to help the agency create success.

**Maintaining South Carolina's forestry-friendly environment.** We are blessed to work in a state where regulations and the public are friendly to our industry. However, we must be diligent to maintain our social license to operate. In this area, the Commission must work with partners to monitor legislative actions, grow markets and communicate with stakeholders about the importance and sustainability of our forests.

**Strengthening communications.** Good work alone will not create success. We must do good work

AND tell the story. A core function of the Commission is to promote the advantages of forestry and the benefits of forest management. We have done a great job in recent years promoting the economic benefits of forestry and establishing the forestry sector as a pillar of SC's economy. However, we must broaden our emphasis as our population becomes more urbanized and less connected to the land. We must strengthen our messaging on the environmental benefits of working forests and the role strong markets, family forest owners, and our employees play in keeping our forests healthy. To do this we must continue to develop relationships with partners who share our vision for strong markets and sustainable forestry and tell the story. I challenge each of you to identify success stories from our organization and work with our Communications staff to tell those stories.

I feel confident that if we pull together and focus on these priorities we can continually improve our service to South Carolina's forestry community and strengthen our position as one of the best state forestry organizations in the country.

Yours in forestry,



The cover photo features the beautiful fall color above Wee Tee State Forest, taken with the SCFC drone.

# Employee News

## New Employees

We would like to welcome two new employees to the agency.

**Ashley King** is the new Forest Technician for Sand Hills State Forest. Ashley started Jan. 2 and lives in Hamlet, N.C. She has an associate degree in Forest Management from Wayne Community College in Goldsboro, N.C. Ashley previously worked with the North Carolina Forest Service at Bladen Lakes State Forest and in Stanly County. In her spare time, she enjoys horseback riding and deer hunting.



Ashley King

**Quinn Googe** is the new Forest Technician for the Berkeley/Upper Charleston Sector. Quinn started working Jan. 12 and lives in St. Stephen with his wife and two daughters. He previously worked with Berkeley County Government and has experience as an electrician, mechanic, machinist, welder, fitter, rigger, and heavy equipment operator. In his spare time, Quinn enjoys hunting and fishing and spending time outdoors.



Quinn Googe

## Personnel News

As of Dec. 17, **Wade Truesdale** has been reassigned as a Forest Technician at Manchester State Forest. He previously was a Trades Specialist at MSF.

The Technology Division had two employees leave in January. GIS Manager **Harry Blount** left Jan. 5 and IT Technician **Xavier Lowe-Richburg** resigned Jan. 26.

We had three retirements from the agency in January. Calhoun /Orangeburg Supervisor **Billy Rutland** retired Jan. 8 after 26 years of service with the agency. Chesterfield/Lancaster Warden **Kathy Gullede** retired Jan. 17 with 15 years of service. Pee Dee Dispatcher **Meita Neeley** retired Jan. 18 after 19 years of service. We wish them all the best in their retirement!

Please congratulate Coastal BMP Forester **Michael Broom** and wife Diane on the birth of their first child. Branch Christian Broom was born Dec. 6 weighing 8 lbs. even. Mom and baby are healthy and doing well. Congratulations, Michael!



Branch looks like he will be influenced by his father's hunting hobby.



Diane and Michael Broom with baby Branch before they left the hospital.

## CAUGHT ON CAMERA



Hampton/Jasper Sector Forest Technician Lowell Parnell replaces a lock at the Niederhof shop.



FIA Coordinator Byron Rominger found a warm spot in the sun while he administered the tree measurement test in the Technician training program.



Berkeley/Charleston/Dorchester Project Forester Jacqueline Forsyth took this photo of her truck in North Charleston Jan. 3. The area received five inches of snow. For more on the snow and other photos, see pages 7 and 8.

**NOTE:** Donations to the South Carolina National Guard's Family Readiness Groups in Gene Kodama's honor have reached \$2,670.

# Getting the word out about PRESCRIBED FIRE



Photo courtesy of The Nature Conservancy

During Oregon's Fire Training Exchange (TREX), participants learn and practice a variety of skills—including interviewing with the media, speaking with the public about beneficial fire and monitoring the effects of fire on vegetation, as well as implementing controlled burns.

March is Prescribed Fire Awareness Month in South Carolina, and the Forestry Commission is making an extra push this year to have the designation – and the practice of prescribed burning itself – recognized in the media. Every year the agency has the month-long occasion acknowledged and supported by the governor in the form of a statewide proclamation, and the Communications & Public Information staff issues press releases and makes social media posts that tout the benefits of prescribed burning.

But this year we'd like to do more, and we need the help of our frontline firefighters, particularly county supervisors, to help spread the word. Too often prescribed burning is portrayed negatively in the media because the coverage tends to focus on the resultant smoke and the impacts it has, particularly in more heavily populated areas.

What's usually missing is the positive spin, which, as the only agency whose mission is tied so closely to the safe and responsible use of fire, we are in

a unique position to provide. While we may all know the benefits of this ancient practice, most media members and certainly most people in the general public, do not. This year we want to “get out in front of the story,” as the saying goes, by enlisting our personnel who are conducting controlled burns to spend time with media talking about why the practice is so important. The CPI and Protection staffs will be more actively pursuing these audio-visual opportunities this year and pitching media in all parts of the state to do stories on prescribed burning and the benefits thereof.

This requires the assistance of our county supervisors as well as their staffs. As we are entering the prime time for burning, we are asking supervisors to be responsive and cooperative with requests for interviews and “ride-along” opportunities that will allow media to cover the issue from the agency's

## Forest Health & Communications

- Darryl Jones & Doug Wood

– and responsible land managers' – perspective. Another way supervisors can assist would be to let us know as often as possible, and preferably a few days in advance, when and how much burning they plan to be doing so that CPI staff can coordinate media opportunities with precision and professionalism. Supervisors aren't the only ones who can help, though. We can all be ambassadors for prescribed burning by sharing the benefits with others who are either unaware of or have negative attitudes toward the practice.

Please download, print and share the following fact sheet about prescribed burning with your friends, on social media and with anyone else who may have questions:

[www.trees.sc.gov/pubs/prescribedburningfactsheet.pdf](http://www.trees.sc.gov/pubs/prescribedburningfactsheet.pdf)

Thank you in advance for your help with this year's media push!

# Physical Fitness- Leslie Woodham

The arduous walks have been scheduled and will begin at 10 a.m. on each day at the locations listed below:

Feb. 16 Florence 10 a.m.

Feb. 21 Spartanburg 10 a.m.

Feb. 23 Walterboro 10 a.m.

**Reminder-completed Medical clearance statement (form 2538-4) must be sent to me before an employee can participate in an Arduous level walk.**

**The moderate level walks are being planned for March and dates will be forthcoming.** We are pleased to offer a **bonus** (Procedure 2538) this year for those fireline qualified employees (completed basic fire school, fireline refresher, etc.) who pass the physical fitness tests. The bonus amounts to be paid out are as follows: **Passing moderate level (2 miles with 25 lbs. pack in 30 minutes or less) = \$125.00. Passing arduous level (3 miles with a 45 lbs. pack in 45 minutes or less) = \$250.00.**

If you have any questions, please contact me at (803) 896-8809 or by email at LWoodham@scfc.gov.

## SCFC Assists NWTF with Signs for New Education Center

The South Carolina Forestry Commission was proud to be a part of the ribbon-cutting of the National Wild Turkey Federation's (NWTF) new Education Center project in Edgefield Wednesday, Dec. 13. Part of the project includes dozens of new interpretive signs on which the Forestry Commission and other partners collaborated with NWTF to design and produce. Subject matter for the interpretive signs included everything from active forest management, seed orchards and Firewise principles to greentree reservoirs, the importance of thinning and prescribed burning, and the economic impact of forestry.



Former State Forester Gene Kodama, far right, and State Forester Scott Phillips, third from left, join NWTF representatives at the dedication ceremony. Gene presented NWTF representatives with a 90th Anniversary coin and a SCFC Partner pin at the event.



Kodama with Barry Graden of Sustainable Forestry Initiative in front of one of the signs.



Kodama and Barry Graden had the honor of cutting the ribbon at the ceremony as NWTF CEO Becky Humphries and Director of Hunting Heritage Programs Mandy Harling assist.

# Niederhof Hosts Successful Palmetto State Youth Hunt

Niederhof Forestry Center hosted the Palmetto State Youth Hunt deer hunt Dec. 8-9. Nine children, ages 11-17, participated in the hunt Friday afternoon and Saturday morning. The hunt was sponsored by the Quality Deer Management Association (QDMA), the Forestry Commission, and the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Take One, Make One (TOMO) program. Even with cool temperatures in the 30s and 40s and a drizzling rain, the youth enjoyed the hunt and harvested eight deer and a coyote. During the hunt 57 deer were seen on the property.

Before the hunt there was an orientation on the property, the hunting program and hunt guidelines. The children sighted their guns on the range and drew for stands. They were paired with a mentor and received a safety briefing before the cold, damp afternoon hunt began. Colleton and Hampton County 4-H agent Dawn Stuckey introduced the youth to the 4-H program and gave them some 4-H items and information.

All but one of the children saw deer during the hunt. Harrison Garrett from Goose Creek harvested his first buck, an 8-point weighing 140 pounds, on Friday afternoon. Deon Bellamy, 13, from Longs killed his first buck, a 10-point, on Saturday morning. Deon also harvested two does on Friday afternoon. Tyler Hancock harvested two does. Ryan Yeoman harvested a doe and a coyote, and George Drake harvested his first deer.

The hunt was a cooperative effort between QDMA, SCDNR, and the Forestry Commission.

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



Hunt participants assemble for a group photo after the Saturday morning hunt.



Deon Bellamy from Longs was excited to harvest his first buck, a nice 10-point.



George Drake gets the traditional mark of blood from mentor Alan Abernathy and QDMA hunt coordinator Wes Chappell after harvesting his first buck.



Harrison Garrett harvested his first buck, an 8-point.



Will Asbell entertains Gene Kodama with photos of some of his deer.



George Drake and Deon Bellamy are thankful for the "hot hands" hand warmers in the cold temperatures.



Will Asbell gets some assistance on the range from TOMO Coordinator Mark Ferrell and SCFC Investigator Kip Terry.

# Rare Snow Event Hits SC Lowcountry and Pee Dee

A rare and serious snow and ice storm gridlocked some parts of South Carolina Jan. 3. Areas east of Columbia endured a day of ice and several inches of snowfall, which continued to cause problems on the roads Jan. 4-5 because of the extremely cold temperatures.

The weather system traveled up the U.S. east coast, bringing measurable snow from Tallahassee, Fla. to Maine.

Icy roads caused problems for some Lowcountry drivers in the morning before the snow even hit, with multiple wrecks reported. The National Weather Service said 7.3 inches of snow fell in Summerville. Charleston International Airport picked up 5.3 inches of snow, making it the third-heaviest one-day snowfall on record there.

Some communities east of Columbia, including Orangeburg and Sumter, saw accumulations up to 7 inches. The most snow in South Carolina was reported in Williamsburg County near Andrews with 8 inches of snow.

Snow and ice shut down not only schools and businesses, but numerous bridges and roads. Interstate 95 was a dangerous route throughout the state. Interstate 20 from Camden to Florence and I-26 from Orangeburg to Charleston were in gridlock at times, stranding motorists and keeping tow trucks busy.

Icy highways remained Jan. 4 and 5. South Carolina Gov. Henry McMaster authorized 20 National Guard members to use their equipment to help rescue stranded motorists on Interstate 95 and to the east and push vehicles out of the way so the roads could be reopened. Major roads less traveled were even worse.

The Forestry Commission was not asked to assist with any incidents during the storm, but the Dispatch Centers had to adjust dispatch operations based on staffing and the Coastal and Pee Dee Region's ability to get dispatchers to the centers.



Jasper/Beaufort Sector Forest Technician Scotty Harrington received two-and-a-half inches of snow.



Scotty Harrington decorated a firefighter snowman in Jasper County.



Edisto Unit Forester Pete Stuckey snapped this rare photo of snow on his truck in Hampton County.



Roads were covered with snow and ice quickly in the West Ashley area of Charleston Jan. 3, causing problems on the roadways.



Snow covered the Battery in Charleston .



Traffic was moving slowly in Sumter in the afternoon, and snow began sticking quickly.



The Angel Oak in Charleston was blanketed in snow.

More photos on the next page!



Berkeley/Upper Charleston Supervisor Gray Vallentine charged a snowman with causing dangerous conditions.



Fire danger was low at the Bonneau office Jan. 4.



The scenic Rainbow Row in Charleston was blanketed in snow.



Retired State Forester Gene Kodama reported that his 5 billionth tree seedling is doing great!



Niederhof Forestry Center Manager Chris King sent in this photo of the office after they received four inches of snow. His dog Fred didn't know what to make of it!



Allendale/Hampton/Jasper Project Forester Tyler Greiner took this photo of his backyard in Seabrook.



Gray Vallentine sent in this photo of his yard covered in snow.



Berkeley/Charleston Forest Technician Justin Hasert snapped this photo of his unit in Summerville Jan. 3.



Gray Vallentine sent in this photo of an oak covered in snow in Moncks Corner.

## Persimmon Seed Winter Weather Forecast Accurate

If you recall an article in the bulletin a few months ago about persimmon seeds predicting the weather forecast, it was right! According to folklore, the shape of the kernel inside of the seed can predict the overall pattern for winter weather:

- A fork-shaped kernel indicates a mild winter
- A knife-shaped kernel indicates a cold winter
- A spoon-shaped kernel indicates that you will need a shovel to dig out from the snow

Protection Chief Darryl Jones' predictions from his persimmons said it was going to be a cold winter with snow because 13 of the seeds he cut were spoon-shaped and five were knife-shaped.

After several parts of the state received several inches of rare snow Jan. 3 and Jan. 17, this folksy forecast might be more accurate than those of many TV weather forecasters.

# Caught ON Camera



Pee Dee Administrative Assistant Susan Gensel caught Santa on the beach in Cherry Grove Dec. 17. She asked him why he was there before Christmas, to which he replied, "A little girl asked for sea shells for Christmas." So he had to come pick some up.



It got a little smoky at the Harbison State Forest Education Center during a prescribed burn Dec. 12. Assistant Education Coordinator Beth Foley took this photo from inside the building during the burn.



IT Technician Xavier Lowe-Richburg snapped this photo Jan. 26 when employees took him out to lunch for his last day with the agency. Xavier is headed to Phoenix, Arizona to work as a Technician in one of Intel's high-tech fabrication facilities. He will be responsible for operating, maintaining, and repairing specialized processing equipment in a clean room environment. We wish him the best!



The ladies from the HQ office had some Christmas fun exchanging gifts. Pictured are (front row) Harbison Administrative Assistant Lisa Hart, Assistant Environmental Education Coordinator Beth Foley, Accounting Technician Soni Rai, Director of Administration Stephanie Meetze, Accounting Supervisor Jane Leneave, (back row) Construction & Property Administrative Assistant Lenora Stukes, Benefits Administrator Kris Anderson, Protection Administrative Assistant Susan Brogdon, Accounting Manager Cathy Nordeen, Forest Management Administrative Assistant Debbie Kiser, HR Manager Erica Brazile, and Procurement Manager Victoria O'Cain.

# Programs

## Programs

### International Paper Awards Education Programs with Grant

The International Paper Foundation awarded the Wood Magic Forest Fair and the SC Sustainable Forestry Teachers' Tour programs \$5,000 grants each Jan. 9. Matt Schnabel, SCFC Environmental Education Coordinator, represented the Wood Magic Forest Fair program while Davis McGowan, forester with Canfor Southern Pine, represented the Teachers' Tour as chair of its steering committee.

The IP Foundation has provided millions of dollars to nonprofit organizations to help meet critical needs in the communities where their employees live and work. Grant money will be used to support conservation education and professional development in both of the SC Forestry Foundation programs. Thank you to International Paper for your continued support!



Grant recipients from the Georgetown Area with IP representatives. Schnabel and McGowan are to the right of the sign on the back row.

#### Education

- Matt Schnabel

### Black River Unit Makes Office Repairs and Updates

With the cold spell in early January, the Kingstree Shop bathroom suffered some burst pipes. As we discovered the leak locations, we also used this time to update the type of plumbing, fix past problems in the walls, and update the walls to a nice white tile board, making it a much cleaner and brighter room. I'd like to thank Georgetown Sector Supervisor James Hall, Georgetown Sector Forest Technicians Jonathan York, Wayne Smith, J.P. Truesdale and Caroline Altman as well as Williamsburg Sector Forest Technicians Wayne Springs, Justin Johnson, and Branson Tisdale. A special thanks goes to Williamsburg Sector Supervisor Terry Cook for being in charge of the project, as it was VERY time-consuming.

#### Black River

- Ron Holt

### Incident Deployment Summary for 2017

The final Incident Deployment Summary for 2017 has been released. This summary includes wildfire and hurricane assistance to 10 states and the U.S. Territory of Puerto Rico.

Our agency, along with personnel from the fire service, contributed more than 17,000 man-hours of assistance. This is a tremendous accomplishment! To put that in perspective, we had 5,232 man-hours of assistance in 2015; and 3,396 man-hours of assistance in 2016. That is a significant increase (more than five times that of 2016).

This is all made possible by the hard work of many dedicated employees throughout the agency, as well as those personnel from the fire service. The 17,290 hours of assistance adds up to over 700 days, or nearly two years. As 2018 is well underway, our agency once again remains ready for deployment.

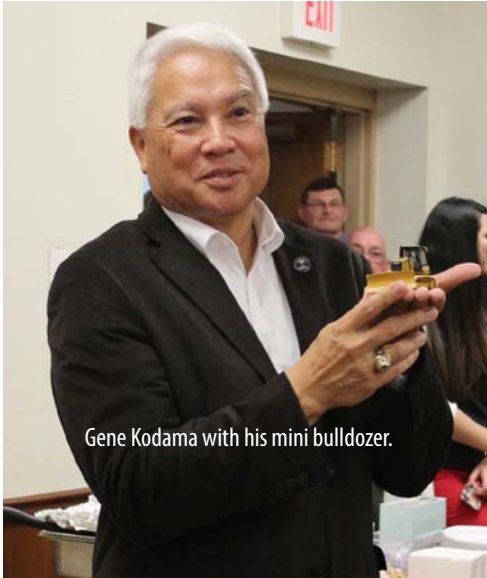
If you would like a copy of the summary, please contact Brad Bramlett at [bbramlett@scfc.gov](mailto:bbramlett@scfc.gov) or call (803) 896- 8810.

#### Fire

- Brad Bramlett

# HQ Christmas Lunch

The Forestry Commission HQ had a Christmas luncheon Dec. 14 in the large conference room with around 70 current employees and retirees attending the potluck lunch. State Forester Gene Kodama was presented a replica of a CAT D-5 bulldozer by Deputy State Forester Tom Patton who thanked him for his service to the agency and the state and in appreciation for all of his time and efforts.



Gene Kodama with his mini bulldozer.



Larry Moody, Tonya Steadman, and Joel Felder



Some of the many attendees enjoying lunch.



Bill Wiley, Tom Patton, Brad Bramlett, and Cathy Nordeen



Steve Moore and his wife Linda, Bill Wiley, Herb Nicholson, Debbie Dickinson, John Dickinson, and Charles Ramsey



Tom Patton congratulates Gene on his retirement and presents him with a mini dozer.

# NOTE New Mileage Rate in Effect Jan. 1

IMPORTANT!

The 2017-2018 General Appropriations Act in Proviso 117.20.J provides for mileage reimbursements at the standard business mileage rate established by the Internal Revenue Service. Beginning Jan. 1, 2018, the Internal Revenue Service rate will be 54.5 cents per mile (IRS Revenue IR -2017-204). **Reimbursement for trips taken on or after Jan. 1, 2018, will be at the rate of 54.5 cents per mile.** This represents a one cent increase from the 2017 rate.

As a reminder, the same proviso in the General Appropriations Act also directs a reimbursement rate of 4 cents per mile less than the standard business mileage rate when an employee chooses to use his or her personal vehicle when a motor pool vehicle is reasonably available. This rate will change to 50.5 cents per mile for reimbursement for trips taken on or after Jan. 1, 2018.

## COOL CRITTERS

### Eastern Screech Owl

While measuring progeny tests at Niederhof Forestry Center Dec. 9, Forest Resource Analyst Scott Danskin, Resource Development Director Tim Adams, and Seed Orchard Manager Chris King came across an Eastern Screech Owl in one of the trees. The owl didn't want to be disturbed from his nap.

Eastern Screech owls are not much bigger than a pint glass and are common in forested areas east of the Rockies. The owls can be either mostly gray or mostly reddish-brown. They are patterned with complex bands and spots that give the bird excellent camouflage against tree bark. Their eyes are yellow.

Eastern Screech-Owls are active at night and are far more often heard than seen—most bird watchers know this species only from its trilling or whinnying song.



The Eastern Screech Owl tries to ignore the work going on around him.



Danskin measures a tree with the owl in it, being careful not to scare him off.

## Golden Rules (Part 6 of 9)

These are the Golden Rules developed by Dale Carnegie will change anyone's mind positively, even by attempting them. When such change happens, it will change the life for them and hence the lives of everyone the come in touch with them. <http://www.dalecarnegie.com/>

### Principles from How to Stop Worrying and Start Living

#### Break the Worry Habit Before It Breaks You

1. Keep Busy.
2. Don't fuss about trifles.
3. Use the law of averages to outlaw your worries.
4. Cooperate with the inevitable.
5. Decide just how much anxiety a thing may be worth, and refuse to give it more.
6. Don't worry about the past.

# Forest Therapy Walks Being Offered in Hitchcock Woods in Aiken

Aiken/Barnwell Supervisor Andy Johnson shared this story of therapeutic walks being conducted in Aiken's Hitchcock Woods. You can find the entire article from the Aiken Standard at: [https://www.aikenstandard.com/lifestyle/forest-therapy-walks-being-offered-in-hitchcock-woods/article\\_257b707a-e5be-11e7-b791-1f883797c74c.html](https://www.aikenstandard.com/lifestyle/forest-therapy-walks-being-offered-in-hitchcock-woods/article_257b707a-e5be-11e7-b791-1f883797c74c.html)

Pat Homer, a certified forest therapy guide, is currently offering forest therapy walks and retreats in the Aiken area through her company, Southeastern Forest Therapy, most recently in Hopelands Gardens and the historic urban forest of Hitchcock Woods.

Forest therapy also known as “Shinrin-Yoku” or “forest bathing,” involves “slow deep-sensory walks with ‘invitations’ that are easy, simple nature engagement activities to deepen the nature connection,” according to Homer, who believes they are a great way to boost personal health in the new year.

While many believe nature can have positive health effects, The Association of Nature and Forest Therapy writes early research is being conducted to support the concept. Its website boasts that the practice, which originates in Japan, can mitigate the “root cause of a multitude of ailments.”

“Forest therapy can help to lower stress hormones, and thereby the incidence of stress-related disorders, such as high blood pressure and anxiety,” Homer said in a statement. Anecdotal evidence suggests that participants feel calmer, more relaxed, and more focused after a forest therapy walk, she added.

After leisurely taking a stroll that led the group past the gate in the woods, they stopped and placed the mats on the ground. The participants gathered in a circle and were told to close their eyes, open their arms, feel the cold, then pivot to different positions and listen to the sounds around them. Some were distant including what appeared to be the sirens of an emergency vehicle. Others were the chirping of birds, or the whirling of crisp air beneath them on the grass.

The walks are not undertaken with the primary goal of physical exercise. The walks are typically a mile or less and range in duration from two to four hours, and aren't something “to be rushed through.”

She's now offering guided forest therapy walks of various lengths and day- or weekend-long retreats. Private walks and retreats can be arranged for clubs and groups, and corporate retreats and wellness programs are also options.



Forest therapy participants join in exercise during a walk in Hitchcock Woods in December.



## Did You Know?

In English pubs, ale is ordered by pints and quarts. So in old England, when customers got unruly, the bartender would yell at them ‘Mind your pints and quarts, and settle down.’ This is where we get the phrase ‘**mind your Ps and Qs.**’

Another phrase we get from old English pubs is “**Wet your whistle.**” Pub frequenters had a whistle baked into the rim, or handle, of their ceramic cups. When they needed a refill, they used the whistle to get some service.

# Employee Service Awards



## SERVICE AWARDS FOR JANUARY

<u>Employee's Name</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>State Service</u>
Steve Ward	Forest Technician /LE	Manchester State Forest	20 years
James Price	Pilot	Pee Dee Region	10 years
Jordan Jackson	Forest Technician	Santee Unit	10 years

## SERVICE AWARDS FOR FEBRUARY

<u>Employee's Name</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>State Service</u>
Sandra Atkinson	Dispatcher	Pee Dee Region	10 years



Service award certificates for the Black River Unit were presented Dec. 6 by Williamsburg Sector Supervisor Terry Cook (far left) to Williamsburg Sector Forest Technician Justin Johnson (10 years) and Williamsburg Sector Warden Jay Woodard (20 years). Georgetown Sector Supervisor James Hall (far right) presented a certificate to Forest Technician Bobby Watts (10 years). Georgetown Sector Forest Technician J.P Truesdale was not present but was later given his 10-year award.

## I've Learned...

The following comes from the book, *You Are the Best* by the late Andy Rooney. If you will take the time to read these, you'll come away with an enlightened perspective.

I've learned.... That when you plan to get even with someone, you are only letting that person continue to hurt you.

I've learned.... That love, not time, heals all wounds.

I've learned.... That the easiest way for me to grow as a person is to surround myself with people smarter than I am.

I've learned.... That everyone you meet deserves to be greeted with a smile.

I've learned.... That no one is perfect until you fall in love with them.

I've learned.... That life is tough, but I'm tougher.



In an email to Environmental Coordinator Herb Nicholson dated Jan. 12 from Joey Ferguson regarding the 2017 Year in Review Report for BMPs:

*Herb,*

*Just a note of appreciation to you and your team. This report, as well as those in the past, indicates strongly that state-level BMPs continue to work to protect water quality throughout South Carolina.*

*Regards,*

*Joey Ferguson*

*Manager, South Carolina Region*

*Resource Management Service, LLC*



# CURRENT JOB OPENINGS

**Job Title:** **Forester I - Forest Inventory and Analysis**

**Agency Hiring Range:** Min: \$33,853.00

**Job Type:** FTE - Full-Time

**Normal Work Schedule:** Monday - Friday (8:30 - 5:00)

**Closing Date/Time:** Continuous

**Max:** \$36,222.00

**Location:** Florence County, South Carolina

**JOB RESPONSIBILITIES:** Records forest inventory and health monitoring data on forest inventory plots with a degree of accuracy as required by the U.S. Forest Service. Works on a two-person forestry-crew locating forest inventory plots and recording inventory and health monitoring data. Assists in determining ownership and obtaining permission from the owner to enter property where plots are located.

**MINIMUM AND ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS:** A bachelor's degree in forestry from a college or university accredited by the Society of American Foresters (SAF). Must successfully pass the U.S. Forest Service Forest, Forest Inventory and Analysis certification field exam within the first year of employment. Applicants are required to attach a college/university transcript.

**Job Title:** **RE-ADVERTISEMENT Forestry Technician I**

**Agency Hiring Range:** Min: \$22,182.00

**Job Type:** FTE - Full-Time

**Normal Work Schedule:** This position works a 28-day/8-hour rotating schedule.

**Closing Date/Time:** Continuous

**Max:** \$23,291.00

**Location:** Colleton County, South Carolina

**JOB RESPONSIBILITIES:** THIS IS A RE-ADVERTISEMENT. PREVIOUS APPLICANTS NEED NOT RE-APPLY. YOUR APPLICATION WILL BE CONSIDERED FOR THIS POSTING.

Responds to forest fire calls as required by the readiness plan. Performs forest fire duties with bulldozer tractor, hand tools and water handling equipment. Investigates fires to determine cause and gathers pertinent information to complete fire reports. Performs operator preventive maintenance on all assigned equipment and maintains equipment in a state of readiness; provides forestry services, such as firebreak plowing to landowners; assists with reforestation programs and other forestry operations.

**MINIMUM AND ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS:** A high school diploma and experience in forest fire protection duties, forestry management, operation of heavy mechanized equipment, or relevant work experience. Position requires a commercial driver's license (CDL). Candidate must pass the written CDL exam prior to employment. Must pass the agency's physical fitness test that requires a two (2) mile walk carrying a 25 lb. pack in 30 minutes. Firefighter registration with the State Fire Marshal's Office, criminal records check and drug test are required.

**PREFERRED QUALIFICATIONS:** Associate Degree in forestry, natural resources or other related discipline.

**ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:** This position covers a multi-county work zone (Colleton County/Surrounding Area).

# Human Resources

## Spend Your Medical Spending Account Funds by March 15

The 2017 Medical Spending Account (MSA) plan year may be over, but you still have a grace period to spend any remaining funds. Employees can use their 2017 MSA funds for eligible expenses incurred through March 15. You have until March 31, 2018, to file for reimbursement. Any funds left in the account after the above listed dates will be forfeited. To learn more or to answer questions please visit [www.peba.sc.gov/moneyplus.html](http://www.peba.sc.gov/moneyplus.html) and look for the MoneyPlus Tax-favored account guide.

## Don't Go 'Bacon' My Heart

Much of heart health is tied to an individual's diet. The American Heart Association recommends limiting saturated fats, sodium, red meat and bacon. When you do treat yourself, limit saturated fats to less than 7 percent of your diet. Nutrient-rich foods may help control weight, cholesterol and blood pressure. These foods include fruits and vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy products, skinless poultry, fish, nuts and legumes. Read Nutrition Facts labels carefully; the label provides the amount of nutrients in a food or beverage.



In addition to heart healthy tips, State Health Plan primary members have access to no-cost preventive screenings. A screening can help identify potential heart-related problems, such as high blood pressure or high cholesterol. Screenings are available at various provider locations, including Doctors Care locations. Employees can find a list of screening providers at [www.PEBAPerks.com](http://www.PEBAPerks.com) under Preventive screening. The Columbia headquarters and other regional areas offer worksite screenings during the year. Contact the Human Resources Office or your office administrator for more details.

### Human Resources

- Lynn Rivers

Employees who have high blood pressure, heart disease or heart failure, may qualify for the State Health Plan's No-Pay Copay program. The No-Pay Copay provides generic medications for employees who need to treat their conditions, at no cost. For more tips on how to keep heart healthy, locate upcoming preventive screenings and more about the No-Pay Copay program, visit [www.StateSC.SouthCarolinaBlues.com](http://www.StateSC.SouthCarolinaBlues.com). Employees can also get on-the-go health information sent from South Carolina Blues to their mobile phone by dialing (844) 284-5417 or texting "Perks" to 735-29.

## Just a Reminder for State ORP Participants

The open enrollment period for all State Optional Retirement Program (ORP) participants is from Jan. 1 through March 1 of each year. Employees currently enrolled in ORP should have received correspondence mailed to their home address providing open enrollment information. During the open enrollment period State ORP participants may change vendors or, if eligible, may irrevocably elect to join the South Carolina Retirement System (SCRS). If you have questions or would like contact information for any of the four vendors, please contact Kris Anderson at (803) 896-8872 or by e-mail at [kanderson@scfc.gov](mailto:kanderson@scfc.gov). The effective date for open enrollment changes is April 1, 2018.

## Out on a Limb

Can you find the 26 tree name hiding in the sentences below. Each one reads from left to right, across one or more words. Circle each tree. Some are not native to South Carolina.

1. Holly scared woodpeckers as she raced around Nashville Monday morning.
2. The cloak and cap pleased my pal Mel mildly.
3. The silo customarily is calm on days when the corn is thick or yellow.
4. The map leads you to the real archway, which has pentagonal designs.
5. At school I've given them lockers, the students will owe me for the spruced-up hallways.
6. Tracy pressed onward, hoping his bad scrape can heal.
7. He wears his cap in every movie theatre and orders a cherry pop, large popcorn, and chewing gum.

(Answers on page 18)

# Fire Weather Outlook

## Southern Area:

Normal significant wildland fire potential is expected for the Southern Area in January. From February through April significant fire potential is expected to increase to above normal across portions of Texas and Oklahoma while remaining Normal elsewhere.

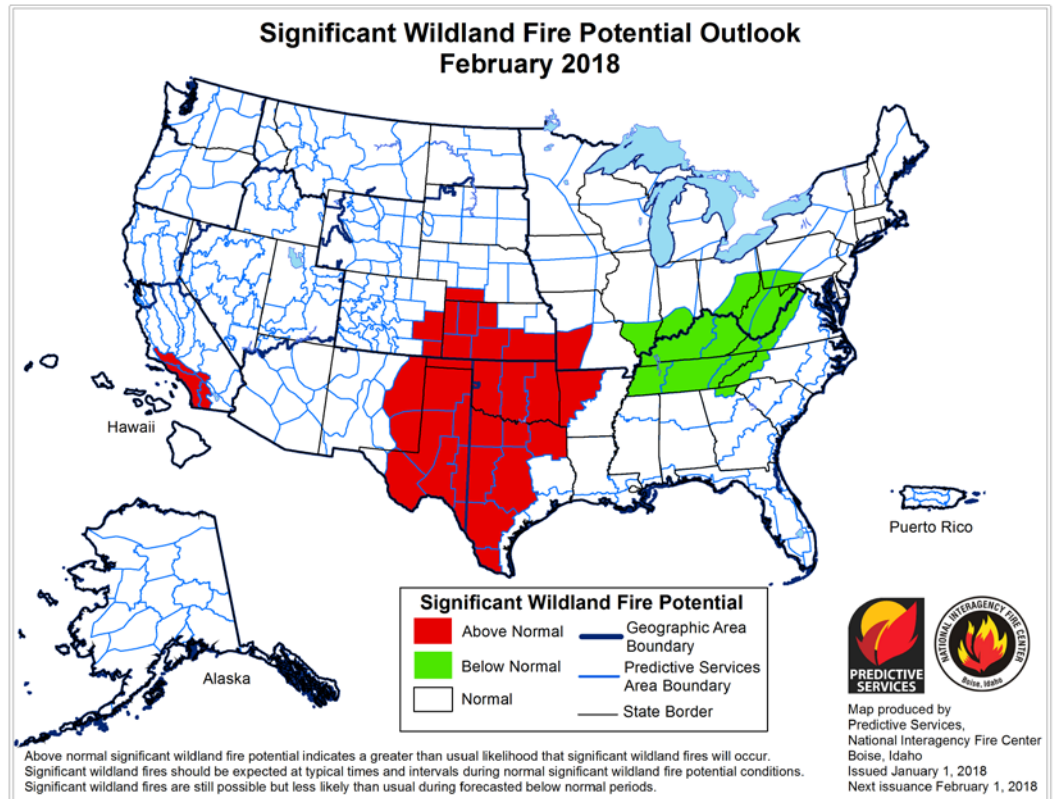
A warmer and drier than average pattern in the southern Plains produced an expansion and intensification of drought conditions in December. Some short-term relief may be in sight. Deeper penetrating cold winter weather and wintry precipitation is expected in January which may suppress the fire potential somewhat. Southern tier states near the Gulf Coast should continue to see overall warmer and drier than average conditions though some periodic intrusions of cold air may occur with the stronger Arctic surges.

Winter conditions and better chances for rain and snow across the Ohio and Tennessee River Valleys should keep fire potential average to below average for the winter months in these areas. Low humidity, gusty wind cold frontal events will continue to produce episodes of elevated to high fire risks across portions of Oklahoma, Texas, and Western Arkansas.

For Texas, Oklahoma, and Arkansas, the drought is expected to deepen. Fuels will be very receptive. Fire risks should trend to above average levels from February onward. Above average grass loadings will magnify risks for large and higher rates of spread fire potential. Depending on weather pattern evolution, there is some potential for average to above average precipitation to occur across southeastern Arkansas and northern Mississippi which would further limit risks more than indicated.

Provided the La Nina episode remains the dominate feature in the tropical Pacific, rain and storm activity should be characteristically increasing east of the Mississippi River Valley and should continue to produce higher fuel moistures and a lower the risk of fire in the fire environment. Further west, above average potential is likely from the combinations of drought, warmer than average temperatures, and below average precipitation. An expected drying pattern for Florida will need to be watched in April for developing/increasing fire potential.

High dead fuel loadings left behind by hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria will continue to pose unique fire danger concerns for coastal Texas, Florida, and Puerto Rico and will need to be considered should drier conditions emerge.



## Current Fire Numbers for South Carolina

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

Time Period	JANUARY		JULY-JAN		FISCAL YEAR	
	FIRES	ACRES	FIRES	ACRES	FIRES	ACRES
5-Year Average	155	783	666	4,945	1,620	11,492
10-Year Average	171	804	861	4,800	2,070	15,791
Current FY <sup>1</sup>	218	844	589	2,141	589	2,141

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



# Poems & More...

OF TREES AND WOODLANDS

### **Our Forests**

A safe retreat from summer's heat  
Fresh green on winter's snow  
Our forests stand in stalwart band  
To greet the folks who know.

To weary souls they're restful goals;  
On nerves distraught with care.  
They spread a balm of soothing calm  
No doctor can prepare.

Quite free to all who heed the call,  
Supreme in scenic lure,  
Their verdant arms outflung with charms  
Inviting, safe, secure.

Charles Allen

## **Answers to Out on a Limb**

1. Holly, redwood, cedar, ash, lemon
2. oak, apple, palm, elm
3. locust, almond, hickory
4. maple, larch, aspen
5. olive, hemlock, willow, spruce
6. cypress, pecan
7. pine, cherry, poplar, popcorn, gum

## Photo of the Month



Assistant Education Coordinator Beth Foley sent in this photo of a sunset at the Nature Conservancy's Driftwood Plantation near Awendaw.

## **RETIREE NEWS**

Retiree Dukes Byrd passed away Jan. 25. Dukes was the Ranger for Darlington County for over 32 years

## Quote of the Month

*"A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty."*

Winston Churchill

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