



News Release

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BURKE COUNTY TIMBER CASE ARREST

A man arrested on felony charges related to a timber harvest has been released on bond after being taken into custody by the Burke County Sherriff's Office. Michael Eugene Smith, owner of Mike Smith Forestry and Realty of Waynesboro, Georgia, is accused of failing to pay two Burke County landowners for approximately 48 acres of harvested timber. It is the second time since July of this year that Smith has been charged with violating state timber harvest laws.

"On September 18, a felony arrest warrant was taken for Michael Smith by law enforcement investigators with the Georgia Forestry Commission for failure to pay for agriculture products within 20 days of harvest," said Billy Leitch, Assistant Chief of Law Enforcement with the Georgia Forestry Commission. Leitch said Smith entered into a written contract with the landowners to have their timber thinned in July of 2015. After learning their timber had been harvested but they had not received payment, the landowners filed a timber complaint with the agency.

"During the investigation it was discovered that Mike Smith Forestry and Realty did an assignment with a local harvester to complete the thinning operation and received payment for the harvested timber" said Leitch.

Smith was booked into the Burke County Jail on September 21, 2015, accused of violating Georgia statute O.C.G.A. 16-9-58, which carries a penalty of up to five years in prison. Smith was released on bond September 21 and a trial date has not been set. This is the second time Mike Smith has been charged with violating Georgia's timber harvest regulations since July of this year. The Georgia Forestry Commission is grateful for continued assistance from the Burke County Sheriff's Office and the District Attorney's Office.

"The Georgia Forestry Commission, the state, and Georgia forest landowners are very serious about ensuring that all timber harvests comply with the law," said Brian Clavier, Chief of Law Enforcement for the Georgia Forestry Commission. "We will vigorously pursue anyone who violates these laws."

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