

GEORGIA FORESTRY
COMMISSION



2011 Annual Report



Honorable Nathan Deal, Governor

Robert D. Farris, Director

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Forest Management

KEY ISSUES

- In cooperation with the US Environmental Protection Agency, the Army Corps of Engineers, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the GFC assisted in the development of a Guidelines for the Section 404 Silviculture Exemptions Under The Clean Water Act. The GFC also continues to monitor congressional and court activity concerning the NPDES permitting requirements for pesticide applications and forest road issues. The GFC is taking an active leadership role in other Southeast regional issues involving water resources.
- Population growth and urbanization pose challenges to forest resources. A recent study showed that Georgia gained an average of 106 acres of impervious surface from urban development per day between 1991 and 2005.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

FOREST HEALTH

The Forest Health Management Group provides statewide leadership and guidance to consultants, industry, GFC foresters and other natural resource managers on a wide range of forest health related issues. GFC foresters incorporated insect and/or disease advice on 316 management plans involving 66,790 acres for the year. Statewide, forest health training was provided to foresters, resource managers, loggers, public works departments (state and county), nurserymen, regulatory agencies, landowners and during field days on 95 occasions (3,741 attendees). These sessions involve most of the program areas listed in this report. Additional surveys are conducted by the Forest Health staff to identify non-native pests seen as potential threats to native species. These include: Emerald ash borer, Rhizoctonia seedling blight, Sirex noctilio woodwasp, Non-native bark beetles, Gypsy moth, Annosum root disease, Goldspotted oak borer, Six-toothed spruce bark beetle and the pathogen (*Phytophthora ramorum*) responsible for Sudden oak death on the West Coast.

FOREST DISEASES

Laurel Wilt Disease continues moving across southeast Georgia and is spreading northward from a traditional redbay range to areas dominated by sassafras. At the end of September 2011, the active front and outlying disease centers in Georgia had progressed approximately 100 miles inland from the point of origin at Port Wentworth, Georgia in May of 2002. To date, there are 30 counties and approximately seven million acres of forests infested with Laurel Wilt Disease.

FOREST INSECT PESTS

A new United States record for *Xyleborinus artestriatus* occurred when the insect was found in a trap near a warehouse in Port Wentworth, Georgia. This insect was seen as a potential threat to native species in the region and a delimiting survey was initiated in June 2011. Traps were monitored from June to August of 2011, and 10 of the 12 traps recorded the capture of at least one *X. artestriatus* beetle. A total of 48 new catches were made during 2011.

The Hemlock woolly adelgid (HWA) survey was conducted for an eighth year in Georgia. HWA continues to spread at a rapid pace across northern Georgia and is now found in 12 mountain counties. Trees that have been attacked for five or more years are now dying within this region. Efforts are ongoing to educate professionals and homeowners on techniques to protect specimen and urban hemlocks with systemic insecticide treatments. The GFC supported predator beetle rearing labs with foliage collection and beetle release locations.

INVASIVE PLANTS

Many invasive plants cause problems within Georgia. Our efforts have focused on cogongrass and Chinese privet. In the fiscal year 2012, the GFC will incorporate an invasive species control cost share program to assist landowners in the control of targeted species. Over 100 landowners will be funded and approximately 1,750 acres will be treated.

Cogongrass has now been found in 49 Georgia counties, involving 595 sites. In Georgia, 165.5 acres of cogongrass have been treated, with all known sites being sprayed at least once. During post treatment inspections, approximately 66 percent of all known sites are being shown as negative for cogongrass. Three consecutive years of negative evaluation is required for a cogongrass site to be deemed as eradicated. There are 157 sites in Georgia that have shown one year of negative post inspection, 147 sites that have shown two years of negative post inspection and 87 sites have been declared eradicated. An informational newsletter is published semi-annually on the GFC website and is emailed to landowners and partners across the Southeast to increase public awareness about the issue.

FOREST LEGACY

Since being designated and approved as the state lead agency for the Forest Legacy program in 2002, the GFC has closed on 12 tracts totaling 20,490 acres. Georgia has leveraged three times the non-federal, cost-share funding required by the program. This has been accomplished through donations and state investments. A quality assurance inspection showed that all Forest Legacy appraisals are reviewed to federal standards.

FOREST STEWARDSHIP

The Forest Stewardship Program completed its 19th year of program delivery. This past year, the program continued to undergo significant changes. With the completion of the Statewide Assessment and subsequent Strategies, consultant plan contracting is limited to funds appropriated for designated priority areas, such as the Central Georgia Strategic Outreach area. Currently, the cumulative enrollment is 2,854 landowners covering 819,007 acres in Georgia.

The cornerstone of the Forest Stewardship Program is the Forest Stewardship Plan developed for each landowner in the program. These plans evaluate the landowner's timber, wildlife, soil, water, scenic and recreational resources and make specific recommendations on how these resources can be best managed. In an effort to streamline the plan development process, GFC created several written documents, called hub articles, which provide consistent and detailed information on several forest types. In addition to hub articles, GFC also created a set of fact sheets to aid plan writers and landowners in managing land.

To broaden outreach efforts, the Georgia program has continued to develop partnerships with conservation organizations including the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF) and the Quality

Deer Management Association (QDMA). These relationships have proven to be tremendously successful. Through its Certified Steward designation, FSP also recognizes landowners who demonstrated commitment to forest stewardship by doing an outstanding job of management on their property.

LANDOWNER ASSISTANCE

In FY11, the GFC provided technical rural forest management assistance to 2,416 landowners managing 242,084 acres.

Cost/Share Incentive Programs:

GFC foresters provided technical assistance in developing 697 tree planting plans covering 24,881 acres under the Conservation Reserve Program. In addition, GFC foresters developed 212 initial prescription plans covering 19,336 acres under the SPB PRS program.

URBAN AND COMMUNITY FORESTRY

The Georgia Forestry Commission, through a partnership with the USDA Forest Service, provides assistance to communities with planting, protection and maintenance of community trees and forests. In FY-2011, Georgia had 139 Tree City USA communities.

A total of \$113,940 was awarded to 13 communities as pass-through grants to support the formation of six management plans/tree inventories, create a guidebook for valuation of conservation easements, develop an iPhone app, and employ two certified arborists. Additionally, 158 trees were planted at four elementary schools using the GFC's "Making the Shade" grant.

To celebrate Arbor Day, SCFP sponsored Tim Womick's "Trail of Trees" educational programs. Nine schools, a boys' and girls' club and a community organization hosted 12 programs in which over 2,600 students and adults were informed about the benefits of trees.

The SCFP also continued to provide technical advice through the Ask the Arborist (ATA) project. The web-based feature facilitates effective communication with landowners across the state and provides citizens with timely, unbiased information from a GFC-certified arborist. The project had more than 100 contacts in its second year.

GFC received funding to help create and expand the American Grove, www.AmericanGrove.org, a social networking website that reaches consumers with tree benefits messages and encourages users to take action and plant trees.

The Okefenokee Swamp and surrounding coastal plain region is a biologically diverse area that includes working forests and farms, pristine estuaries and coastal communities. Rapid growth, development and conversion of these natural areas to other uses threaten this unique region. With redesign funding and, in partnership with the Coastal Regional Commission, a Green Infrastructure (GI) management system guidebook was developed. The guidebook is in draft format.

The GFC hosted Urban Forest Strike Team training for the Southern Region. Twenty-five certified arborists from Georgia (10 GFC staff, seven urban forestry consultants and eight city arborists) and 51 professionals from other states were trained as UFST Team Members and team leaders. GFC is able to respond to natural disasters that impact community trees within Georgia and has signed a MOU with GEMA to provide post-storm damage assessments and debris volume estimations for trees that impact public property.

FOREST INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS

During FY11, Georgia's FIA Foresters collected data on a total of 1,061 plots. Of these, 58 plots were newly-installed national forest plots with downed woody debris added (in the steepest terrain in GA).

Downed woody debris collection was also added to 30 plots surrounding the national forests to help increase fire prediction model accuracy. A percentage of the completed plots are checked for accuracy and the average accuracy for Georgias FIA foresters was 97.6 percent for the fiscal year.

GFC was very close to meeting plot completion goals, but remained about one month behind schedule due to vacancies. GFC has six crews of two full-time FIA Foresters.

MINORITY OUTREACH

The GFCs Minority Outreach Program provides outreach and assistance to minority and underserved landowners. The goal is to enhance awareness of GFC programs and services.

In FY 2011 the GFC Minority Outreach Program was very active through sponsorship and participation in the Team Agriculture Georgia (TAG) workshops for small and beginning farmers/landowners at Berry College and Tifton; continuation of the partnership with the Georgia Forestry Association which entailed inviting minority landowners to its regional landowner meetings in Albany, Dublin, Valdosta and Carrollton; sponsorship and participation in several landowner field days and workshops including the National

Wild Turkey Federation Partnership Landowner Field Day at TooHollie Farm in Screven Co., the annual Brantley County Forestry Field Day, the Warrenton Biomass Facility Update & Trends in Timber Land Sales Workshop, and the Central Savannah River Area Tour of Farms, which included field days at Tillmanstone Farm, Dendera Farms (2010 Tree Farm of the Year), Moore Cattle Co. & Moore Acres, and Steeds Dairy & Agritourism.

The Minority Outreach Program also sponsored and participated in the 2010 Georgia Agritourism Conference and the Federation of Southern Cooperatives Annual Conference in Albany, and completed phase one of the minority landowner GIS database.

WATER QUALITY

Funded through the EPA Section 319 grant program, the GFC Water Quality Program is staffed with one state coordinator, four regional specialists, and 10 district/area water quality foresters.

During FY11, GFC water quality foresters provided 82 BMP talks to 2,736 people. In addition, GFC water quality foresters put on 10 field day BMP demonstrations with 549 in attendance. These water quality foresters investigated 83 complaints requiring 226 site visits to mediate complaints. Approximately 111 pre-harvest site visits were made.

GFC water quality foresters began the eighth Statewide Silvicultural BMP Survey during FY11, targeting approximately 190 randomly selected sites. This survey should be completed and published before the end of FY12.

In the early part of FY11, the four regional WQ specialists completed an internal BMP inspection of 296 firebreaks totaling 272 miles of firebreak. Overall BMP implementation was 86 percent with 95 percent of the miles in compliance with BMPs.

The GFC conducted 304 BMP assurance exams of ongoing operations and targeted watersheds of TMDL impaired streams. Comparing the results of the initial exams to final exams, results indicate a 17.1 percent increase in scores. The number of water quality risks observed was reduced from 86 to 0 as a result of GFC intervention. The GFC has been involved in the Governors Comprehensive Water Plan Study Committee and State Forester Robert Farris is a member of the State Water Council. The plan addresses water quantity and quality issues. The regional and district water quality foresters attended 44 meetings associated with Georgia's statewide water planning effort and provided input to the Regional Water Councils as needed.



Forest Protection

WILDFIRE ACTIVITY

Georgia lost more than 151,329 acres to wildfire in FY11, bringing the five-year average of acres burned annually to 54,487. Fiscal Year 2011 had an increased number of fires and acres. Our fire numbers for 2011 were approximately 42% higher than the five-year average and the acreage total was 178% more than the five-year average. Overall, debris burning was the number one cause of wildfire and accounted for 50,921 acres, with incendiary fire following as the second leading cause with 29,337 acres. Satilla District in southeast Georgia by far had the highest acreage burned with approximately 103,904 acres lost to 1,575 fires. Ogeechee District ranked second highest with approximately 19,546 acres lost to 2,451 fires. Flint District had the third highest acreage burned, with approximately 12,786 acres lost to 2,375 fires.

COUNTY AND DISTRICT OFFICE OPERATIONS

During 2011, forest rangers serviced 3,365 requests for firebreak harrowing for a total of 19,774 miles. There were 3,379 landowner requests for firebreak plowing for a total of 12,296 miles.

Online permits allow homeowners to receive permits via the internet for burning small piles of hand piled natural vegetation. The Georgia Forestry Commission highly promotes the use of the internet to obtain permits; however, those without internet access may receive a permit for hand-piled vegetation by calling 1-877-652-2876. During FY11, 730,758 burn permits were issued in Georgia. Of that total, 116,790 permits were issued online and 487,088 permits were issued by the automated permit service. In 2011, 1,701,933 acres were prescribed burned in Georgia.

WILDFIRE PREVENTION

Although a year with lower than average fire numbers was a welcome change from previous years, fire prevention is still a top priority. Wildfire prevention is a key component of Georgia's Fire Program. The Wildfire Prevention effort in Georgia is coordinated through six district offices, 131 county offices, and Macon

headquarters. GFC's state budget is complimented significantly with funds available from the National Fire Plan Grant Program.

GFC's main prevention philosophy is to target specific high fire areas and fire causes, thus affording the maximum results. One of the foundations of this approach has been the 50 County Grant Program, in which the counties with the highest fire numbers develop plans to address their fire problems. These counties have consistently proven that concentrated fire prevention aimed at particular problems can have profound results.

GFC also provides fire prevention efforts that are presented at large events across the state, including the Georgia Mountain Fair, Moultrie Sunbelt Expo, the Buck-a-Rama/Fish-a-Rama and Turkey-Rama, and the Georgia National Fair at Perry. Prevention messages are also developed for fire prevention signs, displays, brochures, and news advertisements. We present programs during the times of year when wildfires increase and target audiences are readily reached.

One of our most visible programs has been using the UGA Bulldog Radio Network to broadcast fire prevention messages during UGA football games. Response to the campaign has been positive the past three years.

During periods of high fire activity, and with the assistance of the communications department, we have used targeted media campaigns including print, radio, and web-based efforts such as GaTrees.org, Facebook, and Twitter.

Two Interagency Fire Prevention Teams were organized and deployed within the state in 2011. Due to high wildfire concerns in areas of northwest Georgia impacted by tornadoes and increased fuel loads created by the large amount of downed vegetation. One team worked in those areas to provide wildfire prevention and education to homeowners, landowners, and municipalities engaged in debris clean-up. In addition, team members targeted damaged areas in an effort to reduce the threat of wildfires. A second fire prevention team was deployed into the southeast coastal regions of the state where progressive drought and

high fire danger was a major concern. The efforts of this team were highly successful and the team was awarded the Robert E. Browning, Jr. Fire Prevention Award which is given by the US Forest Service in recognition of outstanding fire prevention efforts.

COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLANS (CWPP'S)

The Forest Protection department received redirection grant money from the USDA Forest Service over a three year period beginning in 2009 to promote Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP's). The Georgia Forestry Commission is in the second year of this grant program. We hired four specialists to manage a program geared towards developing countywide CWPP's in communities with the highest risk for wildfire, as identified by the Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment. Each CWPP contains an action plan to help mitigate each of the communities' wildfire risks. Key stakeholders in the counties will work together on a collaborative effort to reach the goals specified in the plan. These plans will also fulfill the state emergency management hazard mitigation requirements for the state's Hazard Mitigation Plan required by FEMA. This three-year grant will be used to develop plans for 143 Georgia counties. We have initiated 121 county plans; 79 have been completed.

FIREWISE AND FIREWISE COMMUNITIES/USA

The Firewise and Firewise Communities/USA Programs were active in Georgia during FY11. Last year, two Firewise Communities/USA were recognized and this year we have 15. These communities encompass more than 4,400 structures and 10,600 residents who are taking responsibility for their own fire prevention and protection from wildfire. Six other communities are preparing plans of action to submit for national recognition this year. An additional 12 communities have been contacted and are making decisions about pursuing Firewise Communities/USA designation.

TYPE II INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM

The GFC Type II team, established in 2004, has been deployed to many incidents and has grown with each assignment. The year started out slowly, but by September, an extended drought circumstances had caused elevated fire numbers in Georgia. The team was needed early in February and March for fires that required management by short Type 3 organizations. These organizations were made up of several team members. In April we had tornadic activity that ravaged several areas of central and north Georgia. Again, team members were asked to form Type 3 organizations to manage these all risk incidents. During this time wildfire activity was also picking up in Texas which requested our

IMT; however, the request was turned down due to active team member deployments within Georgia. In May the Georgia Type 2 Team took charge of the new ignition, the Honey Prairie fire in the US Fish and Wildlife jurisdiction of the Okefenokee Swamp. Georgia team members also supported a second Type 2 team to manage the Sweat Farm Again and Racepond Fires.

GFC team members and other qualified employees provided aid to Texas and other western states this past year by assisting with wildfires; however the majority of the activity was in Georgia.

There are approximately 70 active members on the team. The team is growing, with future plans to integrate other agencies for building a multi-agency All-Hazards Team for Georgia. Each year the team builds on its experiences and is establishing an excellent reputation for the Georgia Forestry Commission and the state of Georgia.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

The Georgia Forestry Commission Law Enforcement program continued to make progress investigating arson fires and identifying those responsible. Through training, experience, equipment acquisitions, and the hard work of our investigators, the program is moving toward becoming the best forestry investigation program in the country.

The Law Enforcement program was awarded a FEMA Firefighter's Assistance Grant in April of 2010. The grant was executed during fiscal year 2011 and closed out in April 2012. Several important accomplishments were completed or initiated by the grant.

An external vendor was used to develop a custom database program to manage investigation case files. The computer program allows investigators to write reports in the field, which then synchronize with the server once connected to the internet. All case information is stored in one secure location and has several other key features such as allowing GFC to meet mandated uniform crime reporting requirements and search/link cases.

A training course covering basic fire investigation was developed and delivered throughout the state for chief rangers. The course was a two day expanded NWCG course covering origin and cause preservation and determination. GFC Law Enforcement investigators also traveled to Pennsylvania, funded by the grant, to attend FI-310 Wildland Fire Investigation Case Development, an advanced course covering major case and serial arson investigation. The course is a requirement for qualification as an INTM, currently the highest NWCG fire investigation qualification.

The FEMA grant provided funds for the purchase of several pieces of surveillance equipment that have already proven extremely valuable and saved countless hours of manpower. Funds were also used to conduct a statewide media campaign, including an update of the GFC website, communicating arson and fire prevention messages.

From July 1, 2010 through June 30, 2011, GFC investigators examined 234 fires, 111 of which were determined to be arson. Those investigations resulted in 29 criminal charges being filed against suspects. Investigators were only able to investigate a small portion (less than 10%) of the 1,245 incendiary fires GFC reported during Fiscal Year 2011.

GFC investigators also investigated 12 wildland fires in which Georgia citizens lost their lives. This was an extreme number that completely eclipsed the previous five years combined. Investigations revealed all of the fires were related to debris/prescribed burns. Based on the information learned during the investigations, a media campaign was launched in an effort to prevent future incidents of this nature.

Plans are to continue updating equipment and increased advanced training with an emphasis on arson and general criminal investigations. With the assistance of the Central Response Center, GCIC/NCIC access will be online very soon. Investigators have been concentrating on serial arson cases and the recent advanced training will provide valuable tools for that task.

PRESCRIBED FIRE

Prescribed fire continues to be the best, most cost efficient forest management tool for wildlife management, protection of the forest from wildfires, restoration of fire dependent forest ecosystems, forest regeneration, and control of certain unwanted plant species. This year, 1.2 million acres were treated with prescribed fire in Georgia. The Georgia Forestry Commission gave on-the-ground assistance with 142,000 of these acres, while also providing technical advice, weather forecasts, assistance in writing plans, and prescribed fire workshops for landowners across the state.

Often misunderstood by the general public, this age-old forest management practice requires support and promotion in Georgia's increasingly urbanized environment. One way Forest Protection supports this practice is through the Georgia Prescribed Fire Manager Certification program. The program guarantees a basic level of knowledge and experience for those who practice prescribed burning. Last year, the class was extended from a one day course to a two day course, allowing more time for hands-on exercises in smoke management and writing the burn prescription, as well as a more in-depth look at the other

aspects of prescribed fire. In FY11 there were three certification sessions conducted, with 111 Georgia land managers becoming certified burners. Since inception of the certification program in 1993, 3,320 practitioners have taken the course. Demand for the course continues to be high for landowners and land managers who use prescribed fire as a management tool.

The Visit my Forest and Good Fires campaign continue to be successful. The websites have had several thousand hits over the past year with the public learning more about prescribed fire.

THE GEORGIA PRESCRIBED FIRE COUNCIL

The Georgia Prescribed Fire Council, formed in 2001, has been very active in promoting prescribed fire, not only in Georgia, but across the nation and beyond. The Georgia Council led the way in forming a National Coalition of Prescribed Fire Councils. Currently 30 states and British Columbia have established councils. Four additional states are developing councils and the work is not over yet.

The Georgia Prescribed Fire Council has the full support of the Georgia Forestry Commission and for the seventh consecutive year, has facilitated the Governor's signing of a proclamation declaring the first full week in February "Prescribed Fire Awareness Week in Georgia." The council holds its annual meeting each fall. This year, the meeting was held in Tifton, GA, with more than 100 people in attendance. Subjects on the agenda at this year's meeting included addressing the media, managing smoke, code of ethics for burners, and much more.

The Georgia Prescribed Fire Council is critical to the safe use of fire in Georgia. It helps educate the public, promote the safe use of fire, share information on new and better technology used by burn practitioners, and actively works to implement the Strategic Plan for Prescribed Fire in Georgia. For more information on the Council, and dates for its annual meeting visit www.garxfire.com

FIRE WEATHER FORECASTING

Wildfire behavior is determined by forest fuels, surrounding topography, and weather conditions such as wind and relative humidity. Daily readiness for fire suppression is usually expressed in terms of fire weather and fire danger. Georgia uses a sophisticated national fire danger rating system in which weather data is measured and interpolated into levels of readiness understood by forest rangers and fire cooperators. The fire danger ratings with fire weather forecasting are produced daily by the Forest Protection meteorologist and are posted on GaTrees.org.

Valuable tools and information for forest managers intending to conduct prescribed burning are available on the fire weather website. These tools include weather maps, rainfall maps, drought maps, lightning maps, point-forecast system, a prescribed fire climatology system, prescribed weather notification system, and Web-based V-smoke application.

District weather forecasts have been re-aligned to match up with the new district boundaries.

The weather office continued to perform annual maintenance on our 19 weather stations to meet NFDRS standards. GOES transmitters at our 19 stations have been upgraded to G-5 type as the old transmitters become obsolete. Further, the modems at our weather stations have been upgraded from TM-4000 type to TM-Ultra type. TM-Ultra modem can bring back data ten times faster than TM-U4000.

Beginning January 1, 2011, class-day determination points have been changed from fuel model based to station based. Previously, all stations using the same fuel models had the same class-day determination points. Now, each station has its own class-day determination point based on their own readings from 2005-2009.

RURAL FIRE DEFENSE (RFD) PROGRAM

The RFD is proud to offer continued assistance in this state-wide endeavor. More than 1,816 types of equipment are located in 130 Georgia counties, involving over 990 fire station locations.

Volunteer fire assistance funds managed by RFD were dispersed as 50/50 Grants to 17 government entities for the purchase of structural fire gear, hoses, nozzles, and other items needed to make fire trucks operational. VFA funds were supplied as grants to the Georgia Fire Academy to provide Basic Volunteer Firefighter, Structural Fire Control, Practical Fire-ground Hydraulics, and Basic Vehicle and Machinery Extrication training for 300 firefighters for a total of 225,600 contact hours.

Four meetings were held with the Rural Fire Defense Advisory Council, a group comprised of Georgia fire officials, cooperators, and insurance representatives. GFC has provided facilitation and logistical support for the council's activities for 19 years.

The Rural Fire Defense program also consists of two fabrication shops. The shops' goals are to ensure that the state of Georgia has the best equipment available for the suppression of wildfires.

Rural Fire Defense (RFD) Shop

The Rural Fire Defense provided 18 GFC builds, eight RFD builds, and ten additional quotes for RFD builds that had a combined total value of \$1,061,258.

RFD Shop built one Type 6, two front mount Class A pumpers, and one Super Fire Knocker. In addition, the shop built 14 Type 7 Chief Ranger and four Type 6 Wildland Fire Engines with a total value of \$895,129m produced for internal use by GFC county units. Another six work orders for repairs of pumping equipment for internal GFC customers were processed.

Fabrication Shop

During the 2011 fiscal year, the Georgia Forestry Commission Fabrication Shop supported the state by providing quality customized fire suppression equipment. Plans have begun for construction of an addition to the existing fabrication shop.

Fifty-one projects were completed for new fire suppression equipment. Two new road tractors were put into service with equipment installed. The Fabrication Shop built nine transport beds for new trucks and provided GFC's Rural Fire Defense Department with six large tanks for their RFD Program. The shop this year repaired 17 "V Blades", four new plows, and five new harrows. A total of 16 painting projects were completed, as were 98 other projects.



Communications

Communications staff for fiscal year 2011 consisted of a director, an administrative assistant, a conservation education coordinator and a contracted writer.

Internal communications within the agency continues to improve. Surveys show that employees gain valuable information from the weekly newsletter, GFC Headline News, and feel generally more informed about agency activities. The Ask the Director intranet site continues to get regular questions, feedback and suggestions from employees.

During the year, 36 press releases were produced and hundreds of news articles appeared in print. In addition, various magazine articles appeared in publications as diverse as Georgia Forestry Today, Out of the Woods, and Georgia Trend, among others. Many radio and television appearances were made, with topics ranging from fire prevention and fire activity to Arbor Day.

GFC strengthened its presence on Facebook and twitter in fiscal year 2011. All agency press releases were shared on the sites, as were photos of GFC events and professionals. GFC and the Georgia Department of Natural Resources State Parks and Historic Sites partnered in the fall of 2011 to host a Fall Foliage Photography contest on the GFC Facebook page. The contest generated a tremendous extended reach and helped develop new partnerships.



Forest Products Utilization, Marketing & Development

The Forest Utilization Department provided technical and marketing assistance to the forest products community, leadership to expand the value of Georgia's forests by pursuing forestry and bioenergy economic development projects, and assistance to forest landowners through the carbon sequestration registry program. These services ensure that Georgia's forest industry remains a leading competitor in the global marketplace while contributing to the state's economic strength. Without healthy markets, owners of Georgia's 24 million acres of commercial forest have few economic incentives to manage their forests. Wise utilization of the state's forest resource base as an economic engine is a high priority. Rural economic development activities relate to quality of life issues as well as creating and sustaining jobs. Environmental concerns of climate change and carbon emissions are addressed through encouragement to participate in forest carbon sequestration projects. These combined efforts are vital to the state's overall effort to maintain a strong economy, healthy forests, and a sustainable environment.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE & FOREST PRODUCT MARKET DEVELOPMENT

The GFC Forest Utilization Department staff responded to 183 individual requests for technical and marketing assistance. Twenty-seven assists were related to exports of wood products. Formal presentations were provided to 33 groups during meetings, workshops, or conferences with a total audience of 1,250 people. Presentation topics included: the impacts of the forest industry, forest inventory and sustainability, forest biomass energy, potential financial returns from reforestation, and other general timber utilization topics. A total of 4,363 literature items were distributed.

The staff developed a variety of marketing tools for use by those in the forestry community. These included three fact sheets covering estimated financial returns from reforestation investments for wood products and biomass and three fact sheets describing various wood-using industry attributes. The Department produced three electronic newsletters and distributed them to customers within the forestry community. The marketing staff established and worked

exhibits at the Tappi Biopro tradeshow in Atlanta, the Southeast Bioenergy Conference, the GFA Bioenergy Conference, the Georgia – Florida Renewable Energy Expo, Ag Day at the Georgia Capitol, and the International Woodworkers Fair in Atlanta.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF FORESTRY RELATED PROJECTS

The GFC continues to assist prospective companies by locating sites and analyzing forest resources for local and state economic development agencies. During the year, staff provided assistance to a total of 84 potential projects, including 76 bioenergy companies and eight traditional forest product companies. Analyses of forest resource availability were performed and reports provided to 36 prospective companies. One new wood pellet mill (Georgia Biomass) began operations during the year and one biomass-to-electricity facility (Rollcast Energy) started construction of a new facility during the year.

NEW FOREST PRODUCTS AND VALUES

The GFC provided support biomass energy education support for many entities with particular emphasis on the production of resource reports to industries, which provide information about Georgia's forest biomass inventory and sustainability. The GFC partnered with several other organizations to support the Pine 2 Energy Coalition. The GFC staff assisted with developing bioenergy information tools that encourage the sustainable utilization of Georgia's forest resources for energy purposes and to increase the value of forest management for Georgia landowners. In addition, the marketing staff participated in the Georgia Energy Center of Innovation's One Stop Shops, which provide a first step for potential bioenergy projects beginning in Georgia.

The GFC provided 67 service assists related to carbon sequestration in forests to landowners and foresters who represented 45,178 acres of timberland. The department completed a carbon offset reforestation project on Dixon Memorial State Forest in cooperation with Oglethorpe Power Corporation. This project was recorded on the Georgia Carbon Sequestration Registry and provided a potential template for new carbon offset projects.



Reforestation

The 2010-11 year was an excellent year for the Reforestation Department. Seedling sales were better than expected, helping the department generate enough income to meet expenses and provide added funds for fighting the big fires in south Georgia.

In general, tree planting in Georgia remained slow. Low stumpage prices and a gloomy economy meant fewer open acres to plant and less money for forestry investment, but demand for longleaf pine seedlings remained strong. Many nurseries faced shortages of longleaf planting stock, but with cost-sharing programs to defray landowner costs and ARRA funds to reduce nursery expenses, the Flint River Nursery was able to sell nearly three times its usual longleaf crop and generate substantial income.

The Department's two seed orchards contributed mightily to Reforestation's success. More than 700 bushels of slash cones were harvested from the Flint River Orchard and nearly as many bushels of loblolly were harvested at Arrowhead. These substantial harvests yielded surpluses that were offered for sale to private nurseries across the state. Several nurseries took advantage of the opportunity and were able to pass the GFC's genetic improvements to their customers.

The breeding and testing program continues to flourish. Though a lack of funds has left the department without a tree improvement technician, nursery and staff personnel have managed to pick up the slack. Average growth gains for pine species have eclipsed 29 percent and should continue to rise. A crown replacement effort has begun at Arrowhead Seed Orchard, which is expected to squeeze even more gain from the existing orchard. New crowns are still small, but progress continues and the potential is vast.



Administration

| INCOME AND EXPENDITURES | | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| | FY2009 | FY2010 | FY2011 |
| FUNDING SOURCE | | | |
| FEDERAL FUNDS | 13,576,799 | 6,429,811 | 9,590,138 |
| FEDERAL STIMULUS | | 2,943,449 | 5,908,672 |
| OTHER FUNDS | 6,898,309 | 5,579,953 | 9,748,131 |
| STATE GENERAL FUNDS | 32,730,123 | 29,230,328 | 27,936,105 |
| GOVERNOR'S Emergency Funds | | | |
| FEMA-FIRE MANAGEMENT GRANT | 348,441 | | 1,925,027 |
| PRIOR YEAR INVENTORY | | | |
| TOTAL FUNDS | 53,553,672 | 44,183,542 | 55,108,073 |
| EXPENDITURES BY OBJECT CLASS | | | |
| TOTAL PERSONAL SERVICES | 31,238,638 | 30,629,941 | 30,401,100 |
| TOTAL REGULAR OPERATING EXPENSES | 8,509,629 | 6,747,389 | 7,289,954 |
| TRAVEL | 201,819 | 337,338 | 0 |
| MOTOR VEHICLE EQUIPMENT PURCHASES | 397,768 | 415,925 | 159,031 |
| EQUIPMENT PURCHASES | 1,498,820 | 204,538 | 225,662 |
| COMPUTER CHARGES | 989,910 | 908,517 | 1,460,461 |
| REAL ESTATE RENTALS | 33,503 | 28,525 | 22,944 |
| TELECOMMUNICATIONS | 1,022,106 | 699,199 | 740,539 |
| CAPITAL OUTLAY | | 26,936 | 238 |
| PER DIEM & FEES | 277,672 | 258,269 | 0 |
| CONTRACTS | 9,234,982 | 3,859,281 | 14,747,397 |
| WARE COUNTY TAX - RD. MAINT. | 60,000 | 60,000 | 60,000 |
| WARE COUNTY TAX - S. FOREST | 20,000 | | |
| | | | |
| TOTAL EXPENDITURES | 53,484,847 | 44,175,858 | 55,107,326 |
| EXPENDITURES BY PROGRAM | | | |
| REFORESTATION | 1,267,632 | 1,213,985 | 1,205,477 |
| PROTECTION | 33,321,415 | 30,190,948 | 37,477,484 |
| MANAGEMENT | 14,767,213 | 8,986,350 | 12,998,707 |
| GENERAL ADMINISTRATION AND SUPPORT | 4,128,587 | 3,784,575 | 3,425,658 |
| BONDS | | | |
| EQUIPMENT BONDS | 2,500,000 | 2,955,244 | 6,207,727 |
| CAPITAL OUTLAY BONDS | 1,000,000 | 653,644 | 1,176,526 |
| NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES | 682 | 672 | 648 |

GEORGIA FORESTRY
COMMISSION



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