



News Release

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OUTSTANDING GA FORESTRY COMMISSION EMPLOYEES **HONORED BY STATE LEGISLATORS**

The Georgia Forestry Commission has named its outstanding groups of employees for 2019, and last week they were recognized at the state capitol.

"We're honored that our 'best of the best' had an opportunity to be congratulated in the Georgia House and Senate and by Governor Brian Kemp," said Georgia Forestry Commission Director Chuck Williams. "It was a very special day for our employees who've gone many extra miles to serve the state, and we thank Representative Lynn Smith and Senator Tyler Harper for coordinating this occasion."

Annually, the Georgia Forestry Commission reviews performance criteria for Forest Management units and Forest Protection areas across the state. Groups whose achievements rank highest are awarded agency honors.

The GFC Forest Management group works to ensure Georgia's 24.6 million acres of forestland remains healthy and intact. They provide private landowners with a wide variety of services that support a productive and sustainable landscape.

Of GFC Forest Management's five Regions, the 2019 Region of the Year is Region 2, which encompasses 36 counties in the northeastern part of Georgia. The winner is determined annually by the impact it has on the state, and even the nation, by considering all factors foresters participate in year around to assist landowners. This includes general advice, cost share, stewardship, water quality, protection work (both fire and forest health) and community outreach efforts. Forest Management Region 2's numerous achievements impacted 113,000 acres, including 131 outreach events, southern pine beetle and emerald ash borer trapping, and numerous training, wildfire prevention and disaster assistance events such as Hurricane Michael recovery support in southwest Georgia.



The GFC's Protection group is responsible for all wildfire protection across the state. Recipients of the 2019 awards were selected based on the evaluation of established criteria that considered equipment readiness, wildfire response, customer services and safety. Awards were given for North and South Zones and Area of the Year.

Chattahoochee/Marion was named the North Zone County Unit of the Year. Among its many noteworthy achievements in protecting close to 223,000 forested acres, personnel were recognized for assisting an average of 24 landowners per employee, achieving an equipment inspection score of 98.75 and helping remodel the GFC Chattahoochee office.

The GFC Baker/Mitchell Unit was chosen as the South Zone County Unit of the Year. Unit employees tackled extraordinary circumstances in the wake of 2018's Hurricane Michael, including restoration programs in conjunction with the National Guard, city and county agencies. They helped clear 250 miles of debris on area public roads and completed 130 restoration applications and 1,232 miles of debris clearing. They also read a whopping 1,141 agriculture water meters, a service provided by GFC for the Georgia Environmental Protection Division.

The GFC 2019 Area of the Year, which encompasses all Units and Zones, is Area 4, which covers 2,169,539 forested acres in Central Georgia. In addition to completing close to 2,000 hours of training, employees assisted 620 landowners with prescribed burning, plowing and harrowing, suppressed 141 wildfires on 463,000 acres, and assisted with Hurricane Michael relief and GFC seed collection and cone shed activities.

For more information about services of the Georgia Forestry Commission, visit GaTrees.org.

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