



# OFFICIAL NEWS RELEASE

## MISSISSIPPI FORESTRY COMMISSION

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[www.mfc.ms.gov](http://www.mfc.ms.gov)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Mississippi Forestry Commission Reorganization**

With the release of the Mississippi Forestry Commission's appropriations bill for fiscal year 2018, the Commission had to address a \$2.67 million shortfall for the upcoming fiscal year. This represents a 16% decrease from the current fiscal year. Following the reduction in appropriated funds, budget and strategic plan analyses were completed to determine the impact on the 2018 fiscal year. Unfortunately, a reduction-in-force and statewide reorganization were deemed necessary based on the severe shortfall of funds.

"Preserving the Mississippi Forestry Commission's statutorily mandated responsibility to protect forestland, lives, and homes from wildfire is our top priority. After much deliberation, the difficult decision was made to consolidate and reorganize districts, leaving as many wildland firefighting 'boots on the ground' in place as possible - within the constraints of our current budget restrictions," said Charlie Morgan, State Forester, Mississippi Forestry Commission. "The decision to reorganize our districts was not made lightly. We are deeply saddened to lose these faithful employees and appreciate their years of service to the state of Mississippi."

The reorganization model will take effect July 1, 2017. It will consolidate the current seven districts into four new regions. Approximately 75 positions will be eliminated once the reorganization process has been completed. Employees affected by the reorganization will be given the opportunity to apply for a limited number of positions within the new regions.

The goal of the statewide reorganization is to minimize the impact of this budget reduction on the services the Mississippi Forestry Commission provides to the public. 77% of Mississippi's forestland is privately owned by 350,000 people statewide. Through this challenging time, the Mississippi Forestry Commission is committed to maintaining our mission of serving the people of Mississippi.

Mississippi's spring wildfire season is a busy time for Wildland Firefighters each year. The last two years Mississippi's fall wildfire season has grown in intensity. During the fiscal year 2016 fall wildfire season, the Mississippi Forestry Commission responded to and suppressed 1,228 wildfires that burned 13,983 acres. 31,370 acres burned statewide in fiscal year 2016. Governor Phil Bryant issued burn ban proclamations in 2015 and 2016, due to dangerous fall drought conditions.

Upon completion of the reorganization process, private landowners may have a different contact person or office for services in their area. Please visit the "Local Contacts" drop down menu on our website home page for current information regarding local contact people and office locations.

Dispatch phone numbers to report a wildfire remain the same, visit: [www.mfc.ms.gov/wildfire-report](http://www.mfc.ms.gov/wildfire-report)

The State of Mississippi benefits from forestry, which contributes \$12.79 billion to the state's economy, over \$20 million (on average) to education through School Trust Land timber sale revenue, and employs almost 70,000 people. Mississippi has 19.8 million forested acres statewide.

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*Established in 1926, the Mississippi Forestry Commission (MFC) protects the state's valuable forest resources from wildfire, manages approximately 480,000 acres of forested School Trust Land, and delivers quality forest management services and assistance to both rural and urban landowners. Our mission is to provide active leadership in forest protection, forest management, forest inventory, and effective forest information distribution, necessary for Mississippi's sustainable forest-based economy. The MFC looks forward to the continued privilege of caring for Mississippi's trees, forests, and natural resources.*

Resources:

Mississippi Forestry Commission Website - [www.mfc.ms.gov](http://www.mfc.ms.gov)

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