

Protection - Management - Information



MISSISSIPPI

FORESTRY COMMISSION



2023 ANNUAL REPORT



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The Mississippi Forestry Commission provides equal employment opportunity and services to all individuals regardless of disability, race, age, religion, color, gender, creed, national origin or political affiliation.

The Mississippi Forestry Commission is an equal opportunity provider.

MESSAGE FROM THE STATE FORESTER



Mississippi's forests make substantial and positive contributions to the quality of life for every Mississippian. Our forests provide nearly 70,000 jobs, offer an abundance of forest products, enhance water quality, create green spaces for our communities, nurture diverse wildlife habitats, offer recreational experiences, and drive economic prosperity. The forestry and forest products industry, with its astounding \$12.79 billion annual economic impact, is a testament to the enduring value of our forests.

The MFC plays a crucial role in preserving Mississippi's natural resources and ensuring the health and safety of our communities through forest management and protection efforts. In FY 2023, our dedicated forest team extinguished 1,070 fires and managed 485,000 acres of forested non-federal public land.

Our forest management programs and services assist private landowners and provide forest management assistance on School Trust forestland in Mississippi. This department works to support private forestland owners by providing on-the-ground services, technical assistance, cost-share assistance, and advice. The goal is to increase timber production and ensure the sustainable management of forest resources.

I want to thank our partners in the private and public sectors, including state and federal regulators, associations, and our state commissioners. Relationships are essential to what we do. So many of our accomplishments are directly attributable to these great partnerships that ensure that Mississippians get the most assistance and best service possible.

Workforce development is crucial to ensure that we recruit, train, and retain the best-trained personnel to safeguard the forest health and safety of the public. The MFC works closely with our schools and universities to allow us to foster skilled workers out in the field. Like many industries, some barriers exist to recruiting and retaining valuable entry-level personnel. We continue to work diligently toward these efforts as we move forward. The MFC Heavy Equipment Academy was also a great success again this year. This unique equipment training event has been so successful, that other states ask about sending their wildland firefighters to it. Other state forestry personnel also asked to observe the event so they could create something similar in their states.

The MFC is proud of our assistance and connection to the public, protecting our state's most valuable resources. Our agency appreciates the continued privilege of caring for Mississippi's trees, forests, and the many other services the commission provides.

Please feel free to reach out to our office. We look forward to continuing our work to serve Mississippians.

Best regards,,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Russell Bozeman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Russell" being more prominent.

Russell Bozeman
State Forester

Ken Martin, Chairman

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Representing: At-large

** Members, by statute, may serve after their expiration date until they are replaced.*

Mississippi Forestry Commission State Office

3139 Hwy 468 West
 Pearl, MS 39208
 Phone: (601) 359-1386
 Fax: (601) 359-1349

Region 1 Office

1711 McCullough Blvd.
 Tupelo, MS 38801
 Phone: (662) 842-5312

Serving the counties of:

Alcorn, Benton, Calhoun, Chickasaw, Coahoma, DeSoto, Itawamba, Lafayette, Lee, Marshall, Monroe, Panola, Pontotoc, Prentiss, Quitman, Tallahatchie, Tate, Tippah, Tishomingo, Tunica, Union, Yalobusha

Region 3 Office

3139 Highway 468 West
 Pearl, MS 39208
 Phone: (769) 218-6830
 Fax: (601) 420-6027

Serving the counties of:

Claiborne, Clarke, Copiah, Covington, Hinds, Issaquena, Jasper, Jefferson, Jones, Lauderdale, Madison, Newton, Rankin, Scott, Sharkey, Simpson, Smith, Warren, Wayne, Yazoo

Region 2 Office

1801 Highway 51 South
 Grenada, MS 38901
 Phone: (662) 226-3321
 Fax: (662) 226-0170

Serving the counties of:

Attala, Bolivar, Carroll, Choctaw, Clay, Grenada, Holmes, Humphreys, Kemper, Leake, Leflore, Lowndes, Montgomery, Neshoba, Noxubee, Oktibbeha, Sunflower, Washington, Webster, Winston

Region 4 Office

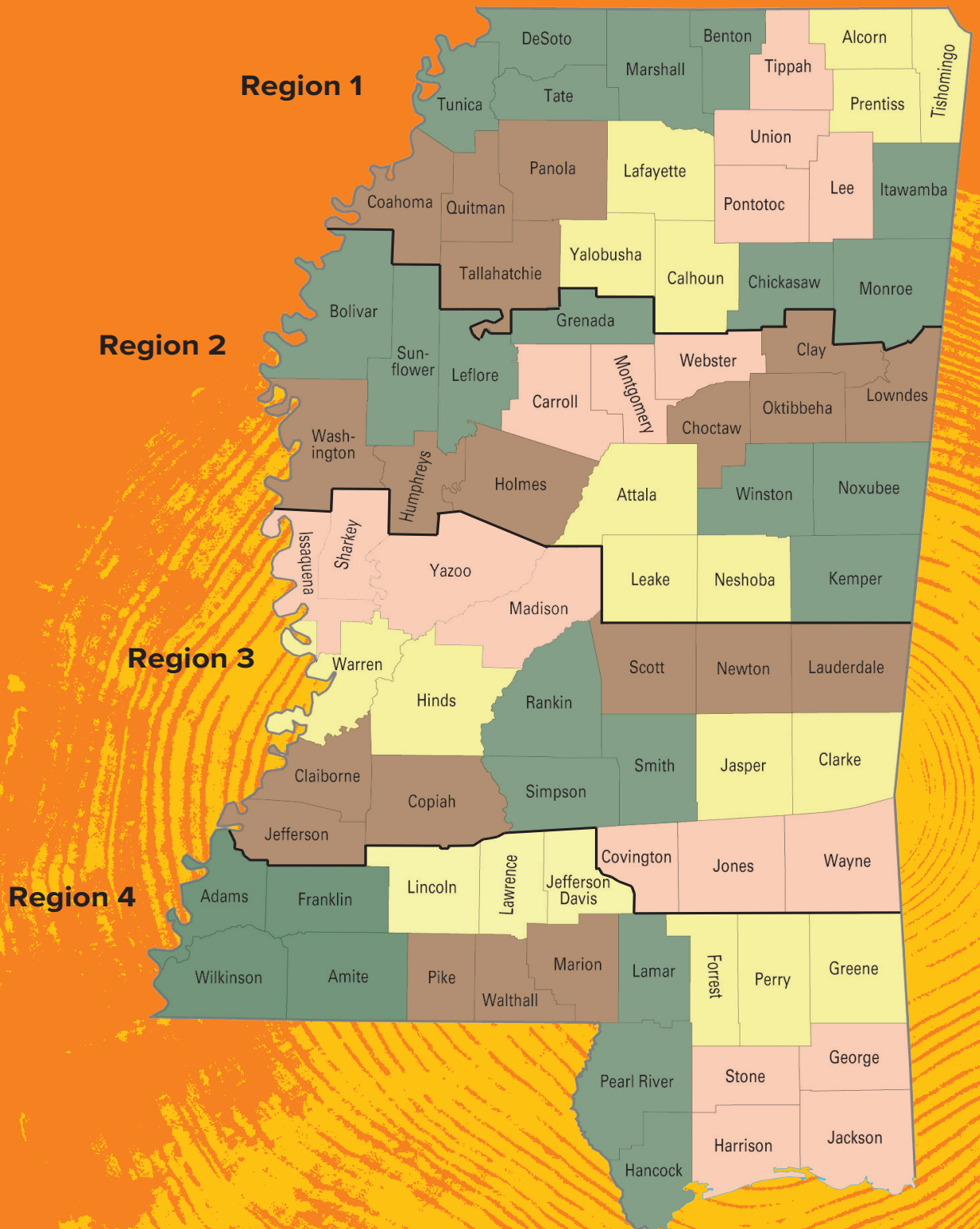
477 South Gate Rd.
 Hattiesburg, MS 39401
 Phone: (601) 540-5239
 Fax: (601) 544-0839

Serving the counties of:

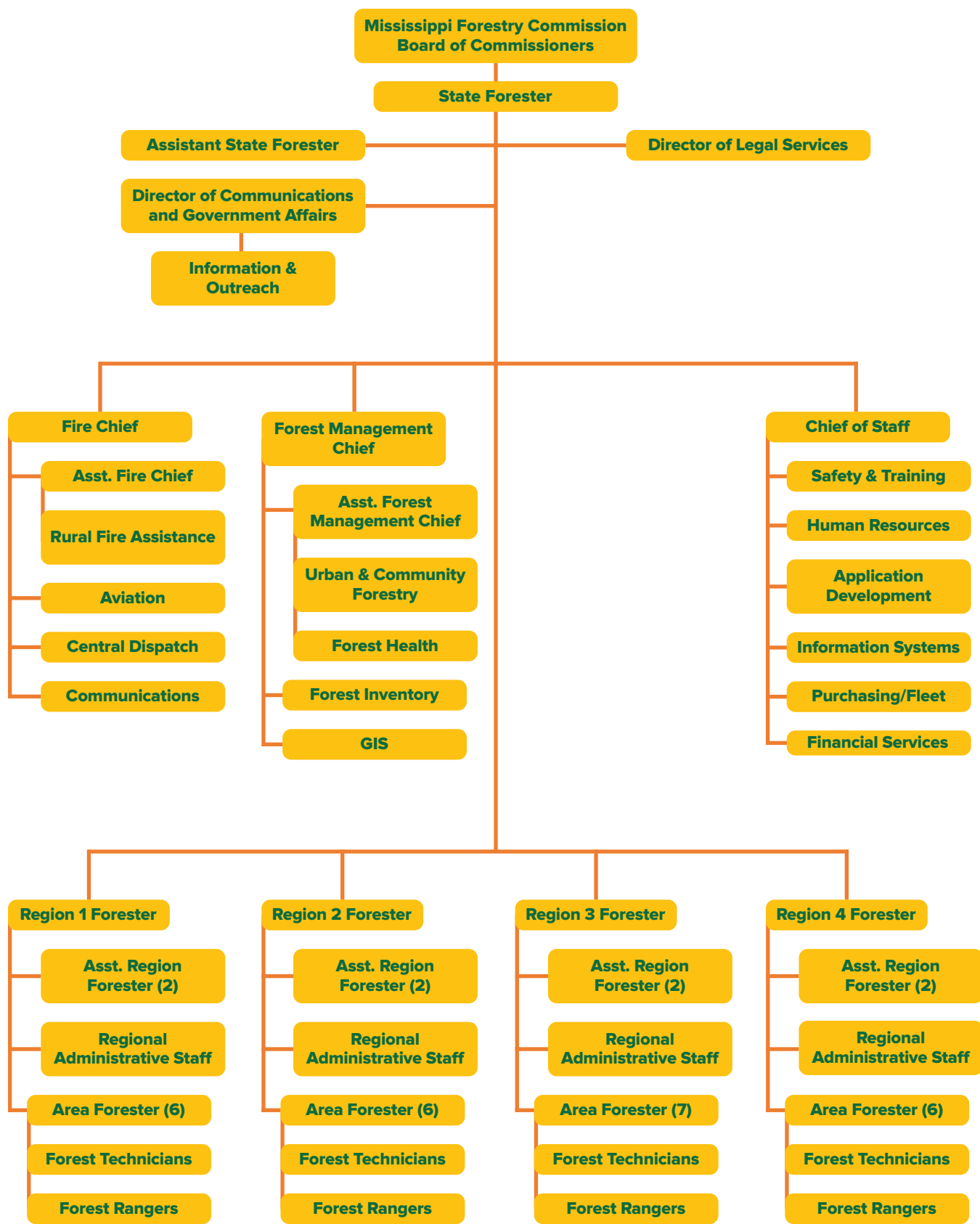
Adams, Amite, Forrest, Franklin, George, Greene, Hancock, Harrison, Jackson, Jefferson Davis, Lamar, Lawrence, Lincoln, Marion, Pearl River, Perry, Pike, Stone, Walthall, Wilkinson



MISSISSIPPI FORESTRY COMMISSION REGION MAP



ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



The Mississippi Forestry Commission (MFC) is charged with promoting sound forest management practices, which help maintain the integrity of the environment and provide for our state's future natural resource needs. The MFC offers a variety of forest management programs and services to assist private landowners. The MFC also provides forest management assistance on School Trust forestland in Mississippi.

The Forest Management Department provides private forest landowners with limited on-the-ground services, technical assistance, cost-share assistance and advice to increase timber production and provide for the sustainable management of forest resources.

Private Land Activities

In FY23, the MFC continued to provide technical and financial assistance to non-industrial private forest landowners in Mississippi. This assistance is provided through programs designed to enhance and protect Mississippi's natural resources.

Private Landowner Services

The Mississippi Forestry Commission offers services to non-industrial, private forest landowners. This includes forest management planning and advice and direct, fee-based maintenance services.

Landowners with large tracts of forestland are routinely referred to private consulting foresters. MFC has a list of private Registered Foresters in Mississippi on the website (mfc.ms.gov). For more information about available local resources, please contact the Region Office that serves your area to be referred to the correct Area Forester and Area Office.

Most technical assistance and forestry advice is free to the landowner. Direct services are available for a fee. Prices and types of service may vary on an individual job basis. Some of these services may be obtained from private vendors. Contact your local Mississippi Forestry Commission Regional Office for requested services.

**\$2.66
MILLION**
**IN FRDP FUNDING
WAS DISTRIBUTED
TO PRIVATE FOREST
LANDOWNERS.**

SERVICES PROVIDED FREE-OF-CHARGE:

- Conducting compliance checks for state and federal forest improvement cost-share programs
- Providing forest management advice regarding forest-damaging insects, diseases, invasive species, and Best Management Practices (BMPs) to improve forest productivity and water quality.

DIRECT SERVICES (FOR A FEE):

- Forest Management Plans
- Hazard mitigation/prescribed burning
- Firelane/firebreak establishment and maintenance
- Logging road/skid trail/loading deck maintenance
- Southern Pine Beetle suppression activities (ground location, flagging, marking, coordination of harvest)
- Vegetation management (only as a last resort if the landowner is unable to find another source) - control of competition, wildlife habitat enhancement, and invasive species control (landowner must provide herbicide and surfactant)

The Mississippi Forestry Commission assists Mississippi timber owners in forest pest management by conducting forest pest surveys and evaluations. Recommendations on practices to salvage timber, reduce, and prevent damage from forest pests will be provided to landowners upon request.



FY23 Forest Management Accomplishments

Private Land Activities

Landowners Assisted.	6,985
*Total Forest Management Plans . . .	1,386
Acres under Management Plans . . .	116,158
Prescribed Burning (Acres)	3,984

Public Land Activities

Timber Sale Receipts	\$9,957,180
Number of Sales.	197
Acres Regenerated.	31,157
Boundary Line Maintenance (Miles). . .	749
Fire Maintenance (Miles)	336
Prescribed Burning (Acres)	4,643

Prescribed Burning

Private & Public Land

Total (Acres).	12,590
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Forest Resource Development Program

Impacted Acres	90,501
Funds Distributed.	2,655,740

*Certified Stewardship & other Forest Management plans

Forest Resource Development Program

The Forest Resource Development Program (FRDP) was established in 1974 by the Mississippi Legislature to aid in the development of Mississippi's forest economy.

In FY23, the FRDP distributed \$2.66 million to private forest landowners, and 86,385 acres were regenerated or improved. This program helps offset landowner's expenses by reimbursing a portion of the costs associated with implementing specific forestry practices.

Cost-share funding provides reimbursement for tree planting and forest improvement practices designed for long-term timber production and enhanced wildlife development.

Payments cover approximately 50-75 percent (depending on the practice) of the total cost of implementing these forestry practices, with a maximum limit set for each practice.

Eligible landowners may receive up to \$10,000 of FRDP assistance per year. In return, the landowner agrees to manage and protect the area receiving FRDP assistance from fire and grazing for a minimum of 10 years, using the proper practices. To learn more about FRDP, visit the MFC website or contact your local MFC office. Please note: submission of an application does not guarantee participation in the FRDP, or that cost-share funds will be available. The local MFC office will confirm funding amounts and participation in the FRDP when the application is final.



Forest Stewardship

The Forest Stewardship Program promotes natural resource planning on privately owned forestland. Landowners not classified under other forest management programs are encouraged to utilize stewardship management to care for their natural resources by developing and implementing a Forest Stewardship Management Plan.

Forest Stewardship Management Plans are based on sound management principles designed to restore and protect forest resources while improving fish and wildlife habitats. Forest Stewardship Management Plans share the same format as those required by the American Tree Farm System (ATFS) for their certification program. 116,158 acres were reported under a Certified Stewardship plan or another type of forest management plan in FY23.

The Forest Stewardship Program is funded by the USDA Forest Service and administered by the MFC. The MFC provides technical assistance for the Forest Stewardship Management Program in conjunction with federal, state, and private natural resource agencies and organizations.

For more information, please visit mfc.ms.gov/Forest-Stewardship.

Public Land Activities

The MFC provides forest management assistance on approximately 485,000 acres of non-federal public forestland in Mississippi. In FY23, the MFC managed four state forests (Three Rivers, Kurtz, Camden, and Jamie L. Whitten) and assisted school boards with forest management on Mississippi School Trust (16th Section) Lands. The MFC also rendered assistance to other agencies, boards, departments, or entities that have jurisdiction over state and other public forestland statewide.

**REVENUE FROM TIMBER
SALES ON NON-FEDERAL
PUBLIC FORESTLAND
TOTALED**

\$9,957,180

**TIMBER SALE REVENUE
FROM SCHOOL TRUST LANDS**

**DIRECTLY
BENEFITS**

**CHILDREN ATTENDING
NEARBY SCHOOLS.**

School Trust Lands

The MFC is charged by state law to manage forested 16th Section Public School Trust lands located in 67 counties throughout the state.

The MFC sustainably manages approximately 480,000 acres of forested 16th Section Public School Trust lands. Timber sale revenue from school trust lands directly benefits students attending nearby schools. Funds are reinvested into the school districts where they are earned at the discretion of the local school board.

In addition to timber production, management considerations also include wildlife, soil and water quality, aesthetics and other appropriate benefits of forestlands.

The MFC ensures that proper care is taken to manage forested 16th Section Public School Trust lands sustainably and Best Management Practices (BMPs) are employed during the management process.

The combined revenue from timber sales on Mississippi school trust lands and other public lands totaled \$9,957,180 in FY23.

The MFC converted its collective management data into a GIS system to prepare the first comprehensive 16th Section Public School Trust lands assessment. This assessment, together with more intensive forest management practices, allowed the MFC to meet its goal for timber-generated revenue. Mississippi's forested 16th Section Public School Trust lands are certified by the American Tree Farm System (ATFS), the first-ever large-scale certification of non-federal public forestland in the nation. ATFS certification ensures that School Trust Lands will continue to be managed sustainably, for the benefit of future generations.



**116,158
ACRES**

**WERE REPORTED UNDER A
CERTIFIED STEWARDSHIP PLAN
OR ANOTHER TYPE OF FOREST
MANAGEMENT PLAN IN FY23.**

Mississippi Forest Inventory


The Mississippi Forest Inventory (MFI) Program is responsible for developing and implementing the statewide forest resource inventory, necessary for Mississippi's sustainable forest-based economy.

The forest inventory also effectively compiles forest inventory-based information for economic development and policy purposes. In order to present an accurate picture of Mississippi's forest resources, the statewide forest inventory operates on a continuous five-year cycle.

The MFC uses the information compiled during the inventory to respond to resource requests for forest product, ethanol conversion and wood pellet facilities. The MFC leverages its Geographic Information Program to use forest inventory data to develop forest resource analysis.

In an effort to promote the economic development of Mississippi's forest resources, the MFC, in conjunction with the Mississippi Development Authority (MDA), provides forest resource maps and information to businesses investigating the possibility of locating in Mississippi.

Maintaining an up-to-date analysis of the state's forest resources is critical information for both existing and potential forest-industry investors. The MFI Program continues to provide the necessary data to keep Mississippi's \$12.79 billion forest-based economy competitive. Companies wishing to locate in Mississippi often consult MFI Program data during their decision-making process.



**THE AMERICAN TREE FARM
CERTIFICATION GROUP
CERTIFICATION ON SCHOOL
TRUST LANDS**

**ENSURES THAT
MISSISSIPPI
WILL REMAIN
A STRONG
COMPETITOR
IN THE GROWING GLOBAL
NEED FOR CERTIFIED WOOD.**

Forest Health

The MFC provides forest pest detection, evaluation, and control recommendations on Mississippi's private, urban and non-federal public forestland. The MFC conducts at least one statewide aerial survey each year and additional surveys if necessary. Insect and disease spots identified during the aerial survey are then mapped on the Southern Pine Beetle Activity Map, which makes the data available to the public, allowing private landowners the opportunity to determine if any SPB activity was located near their property. Visit mfc.ms.gov/southern-pine-beetle-activity-map to view the map.

The MFC also provides technical assistance and special incentive programs to private landowners to combat threats from invasive plants, such as Cogongrass and kudzu. Visit the MFC website for more information.

In FY23, the southern pine beetle continued to threaten more timber in the southern region of the United States than any other forest insect. In response to this ongoing risk, the MFC continued to partner with the USDA Forest Service's Forest Health Protection Program (Southern Region) to administer a Southern Pine Beetle (SPB) Prevention/Education Program. This program aims to teach landowners about the benefits of thinning to reduce the risk of SPB hazards. In addition, the associated SPB cost share program was designed to provide a financial incentive for landowners who applied approved first thinning management practices to their pine stands to reduce their risk of southern pine beetle infestation.

The second leading insect to threaten pine timber in the South continued to be the Ips Engraver Beetle. Drought conditions and stress from severe winds can cause Ips Engraver Beetle populations to increase dramatically.

Mississippi and Florida are the only two eastern U.S. states to have not yet located the presence of the emerald ash borer (EAB). Given the high invasiveness of the EAB, it is likely that infestations already exist in Mississippi but have not yet been detected. The EAB can attack and kill all species of ash in North America and decimate ash trees throughout eastern North America.

In FY23, alongside a media campaign to urge landowners to help report EAB infestations in Mississippi, the MFC conducted an EAB survey. This survey was targeted based on high ash density areas, proximity to the nearest infestations in neighboring states, and the presence of railroads connecting those nearby infestations. Recent research has indicated that the mileage of railroads in a county and proximity to the nearest infested areas are the two most important predictors of new EAB infestations. No EAB was detected in the 2023 MFC EAB trapping survey. There were 24 traps put out across the state (six in each Region).



The Exotic Invasive Species Plan addresses the detection, identification, information, control, and reduction of six species of concern that impact the forest resources of Mississippi. These species are Cogongrass (*Imperata cylindrica*), kudzu (*Pueraria montana*), Chinese tallow tree (*Sapium sebifera*), Chinese/European privet (*Ligustrum sinense*), Japanese/glossy privet (*Ligustrum japonicum*) and Japanese climbing fern (*Lygodium japonicum*). The plan also addresses the need to develop partnerships with other agencies and organizations to achieve shared goals regarding invasive species. Cogongrass is an aggressive invasive species that chokes out native vegetation, creates fuel for wildfires by burning at extremely hot temperatures, and devastates ecosystems.

Infested areas of Cogongrass are found on more than one (1) million acres throughout the southeastern United States. In FY23, the MFC's Cogongrass program assisted 107 landowners. The program treated 1,021 Cogongrass spots, which were comprised of 300 acres.

Kudzu is a climbing, semi-woody, perennial vine in the pea family. Kudzu kills other plants by smothering them under a blanket of leaves and by breaking branches or uprooting entire trees and shrubs through the sheer force of its weight. Kudzu plants grow rapidly, extending as much as 60 feet per season at a rate of about one foot per day. In FY23, the MFC Kudzu Cost Share Program assisted 17 landowners and treated 438 acres of kudzu.

Chinese tallow tree is another rapidly spreading invasive species that can invade almost all habitats from wet to dry and sun to shade. It crowds out native tree species once it becomes established, and its leaves and fruit are toxic to cattle and cause nausea and other sicknesses in humans. The agency has also made herbicide available to municipalities interested in treating and controlling Chinese Tallow Tree on public property. To identify and stop the spread of the Chinese Tallow Tree and other non-native invasive species throughout the state, the MFC developed and launched the MS Invasive Species interactive web-based app, designed for crowdsourcing the mapping of invasive species in Mississippi. The website has been widely used and received much publicity through various media outlets. As a result, the agency (and the public) is beginning to understand better the distribution of invasive species in the state.

Forest Legacy Program

The Forest Legacy Program was authorized by the 1990 Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act to identify and protect environmentally important private forestland threatened by conversion to non-forest uses.

The MFC administers the Forest Legacy Program through an agreement with the USDA Forest Service. Private forestland is protected through fee-simple or conservation easement acquisition from interested landowners. The program is implemented in states that have completed an Assessment of Need or have incorporated the assessment information into their State Forest Action Plans. States in the Southern Region that have completed Assessments of Need are Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia.

There are three Forest Legacy Areas (FLAs) in Mississippi - Southeast, Central and Northeast. FLAs were identified based on many factors, including the habitat diversity, types of natural forest communities in each area, significant past and projected increases in human population and recent conversion of forestland to other uses.

\$50,583
**FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE
PROVIDED TO STATE AND
LOCAL GOVERNMENTS,
NON-PROFIT GROUPS, AND
EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS
THROUGH THE URBAN AND
COMMUNITY FORESTRY
PROGRAM.**

Urban and Community Forestry Program

The Urban and Community Forestry (U&CF) Program provides technical assistance to support planning, demonstration projects, training, and continuing education in urban areas for the development of viable and continuing community forestry programs. Support is offered to municipalities and communities to further program components such as tree ordinances, street tree inventories, and urban forest management plans. The Urban and Community Forestry Program provides technical advice to developers and building contractors on tree preservation during site planning and construction and assists homeowners with advice on insects, diseases, and other tree care issues. The program also supports outreach, training, and continuing education opportunities for certified arborists and tree care professionals, as well as volunteers across the state.

The Urban and Community Forestry Grant Program is funded by a grant from the USDA Forest Service for administration, demonstration projects, and educational programs. The purpose of the Urban and Community Forestry Grant Program is to aid in the development of long-term, self-sustaining urban and community forestry programs -- local or statewide -- with an emphasis on increasing local capacity, volunteer involvement, planning, and training and continuing education.

The Urban Forestry Division also promoted and administered the Arbor Day Foundation's Tree City USA®, Tree Campus Higher Education, and Tree Line USA® recognition programs in Mississippi. The Urban and Community Forestry Program promotes HelpStopThePop.com for reporting Chinese tallow tree locations, provides technical assistance to homeowners, and administers the delivery of Chinese tallow tree control assistance to municipalities in the state.



Forest Protection

MFC Wildland Firefighters work long hours in demanding and dangerous conditions to protect lives, homes and natural resources. The MFC suppresses, monitors and detects wildfire activity occurring day and night on approximately 19.2 million acres of forestland statewide.

**MFC WILDLAND
FIREFIGHTERS RESPONDED
TO AND SUPPRESSED
1,070
WILDFIRES
THAT BURNED
19,803
ACRES**

Fire Services

The MFC responded to and suppressed 1,070 wildfires that burned 19,803 acres in FY23. MFC Wildland Firefighters saved 1,541 structures threatened by wildfire activity. Wildfire damaged or destroyed 16 structures. The average wildfire size was 19 acres. The MFC dispatches wildland firefighting personnel and equipment to the location of reported wildfire activity 24/7. To report a wildfire, call 1-833-MFC-FIRE or dial 911.

Nationwide, nearly 9 out of 10 wildfires are human-caused and could have been prevented with proper care. In FY23, debris burns that escaped control were one of the leading known causes of wildfires in Mississippi. In an effort to reduce the number of human-caused wildfires in Mississippi, burn bans are issued by each County Board of Supervisors and approved by the MFC.

Burn ban notifications are posted and updated on the MFC's website and social media pages. Visit mfc.ms.gov/burn-bans for an up-to-date list of burn bans statewide. Any person who knowingly and willfully violates a burn ban is guilty of a misdemeanor and may be fined. Burn bans are enforced by the local Sheriff's Department.

In addition, any individual who starts an outdoor fire will be held responsible for the fire and the smoke generated as a result. If a fire escapes their control and becomes a wildfire, which burns or damages the forestland/ property of another person, the individual who started the fire will be held liable for any damages and suppression charges incurred.



1,541

**STRUCTURES WERE
THREATENED BY WILDFIRE
ACTIVITY AND SAVED BY MFC
WILDLAND FIREFIGHTERS.
IS YOUR HOME FIREWISE?**

The MFC coordinates the management of wildland firefighting resources within the state and deploys MFC employees to assist with federal wildland firefighting detail in times of need (as long as wildfire conditions permit in MS). The MFC collects the necessary data to make sound decisions and long-range plans to ensure the adequate allocation of resources needed for pre-suppression and suppression of wildfires. Burning permits are issued by MFC dispatch (upon request) when weather conditions are favorable for controlled burning,

To request a burning permit, call 1-833-MFC-FIRE.

Help the MFC prevent human-caused wildfire activity by checking burn bans and weather conditions before doing any outdoor burning. The wind can carry embers long distances, causing new spot fires one-half mile away from the original burning area. Check the local weather forecast - do not engage in any outdoor burning on dry, windy days. Everyday activities can cause wildfires. Sparks from dragging vehicle chains, hot equipment parts, cigarette ash and exhaust particles can cause unintended wildfires when vegetation is dry. One less spark, one less wildfire.

The MFC manages 12 Remote Area Weather Stations (RAWS) strategically located across the state as part of a national grid. The MFC also provides assistance to Mississippi and other states with natural disaster clean-up and recovery from weather-related events (hurricanes, ice storms, and large-scale wildfires).

Before engaging in any outdoor burning, visit mfc.ms.gov/fire-weather for the following predictive services information:

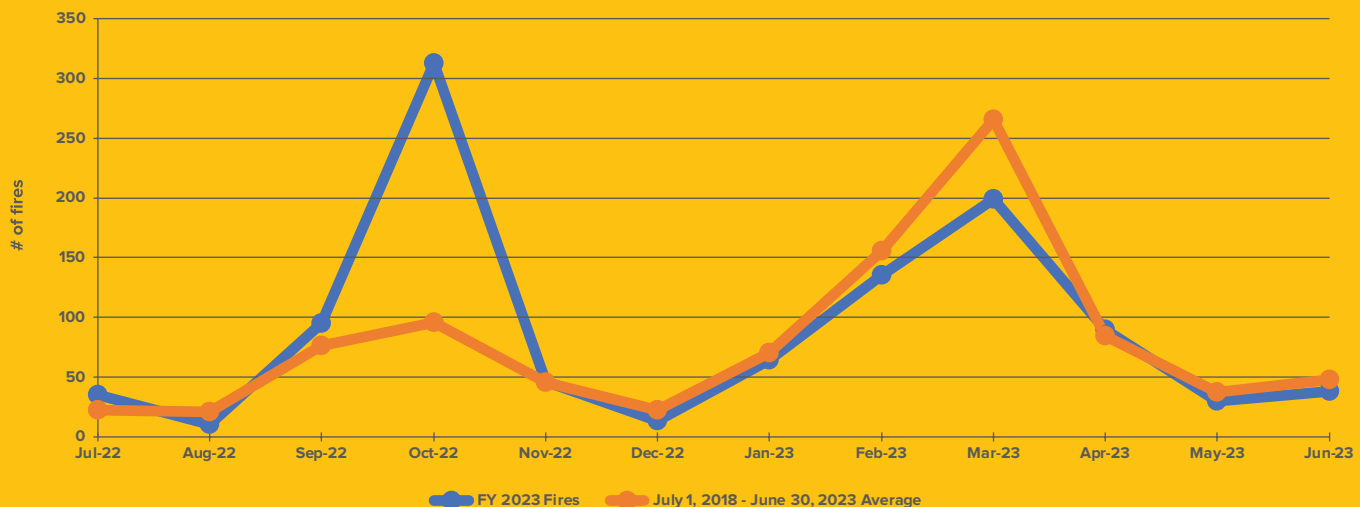
- Fire Danger Rating (USDA Forest Service Wildland Fire Assessment System)
- Current Weather
- Forecast

- Fire Danger Rating and Color Code
- Keetch-Byram Drought Index (KBDI)
- Southern Area Coordination Center (SACC)
- National Weather Service (NWS) Enhanced Radar Image Loop for the United States
- NWS Enhanced Radar Image Loop for Lower Mississippi Valley Sector
- NWS Fire Weather Report

FY23 Wildfires by Cause

CAUSE	WILDFIRES	ACRES BURNED
Undetermined	523	12,174
Debris Burning	372	5,313
Incendiary	132	2,041
Equipment Use	30	156
Lightning	2	2
Smoking	5	44
Campfire	2	64
Railroad	3	7
Total	1,070	19,803

FIVE-YEAR WILDFIRE AVERAGE 944 FIRES/22,051 ACRES



Rural Fire Assistance

The MFC offers several grant programs designed to help Mississippi's volunteer fire departments (VFDs) obtain equipment and supplies needed to fight wildland fires. The MFC provides assistance to VFDs through the Federal Excess Personal Property Program (FEPP) and the Firefighter Program (FFP). The MFC administers these programs through an agreement with the USDA Forest Service. In FY23, the MFC's FEPP/FFP programs issued 132 pieces of wildland firefighting equipment, including vehicles, with an estimated value (or acquisition cost) of \$6,696,228.92.

Since 1956, the FEPP Program has allowed the USDA Forest Service to loan property to state forestry agencies for the purpose of fighting wildland and rural fires. The MFC delivered the first FFP equipment in FY10. The use of the equipment is reserved for wildland/rural firefighting and emergency response situations.

Visit mfc.ms.gov/rural-fire-assistance for more information on VFD grant programs.

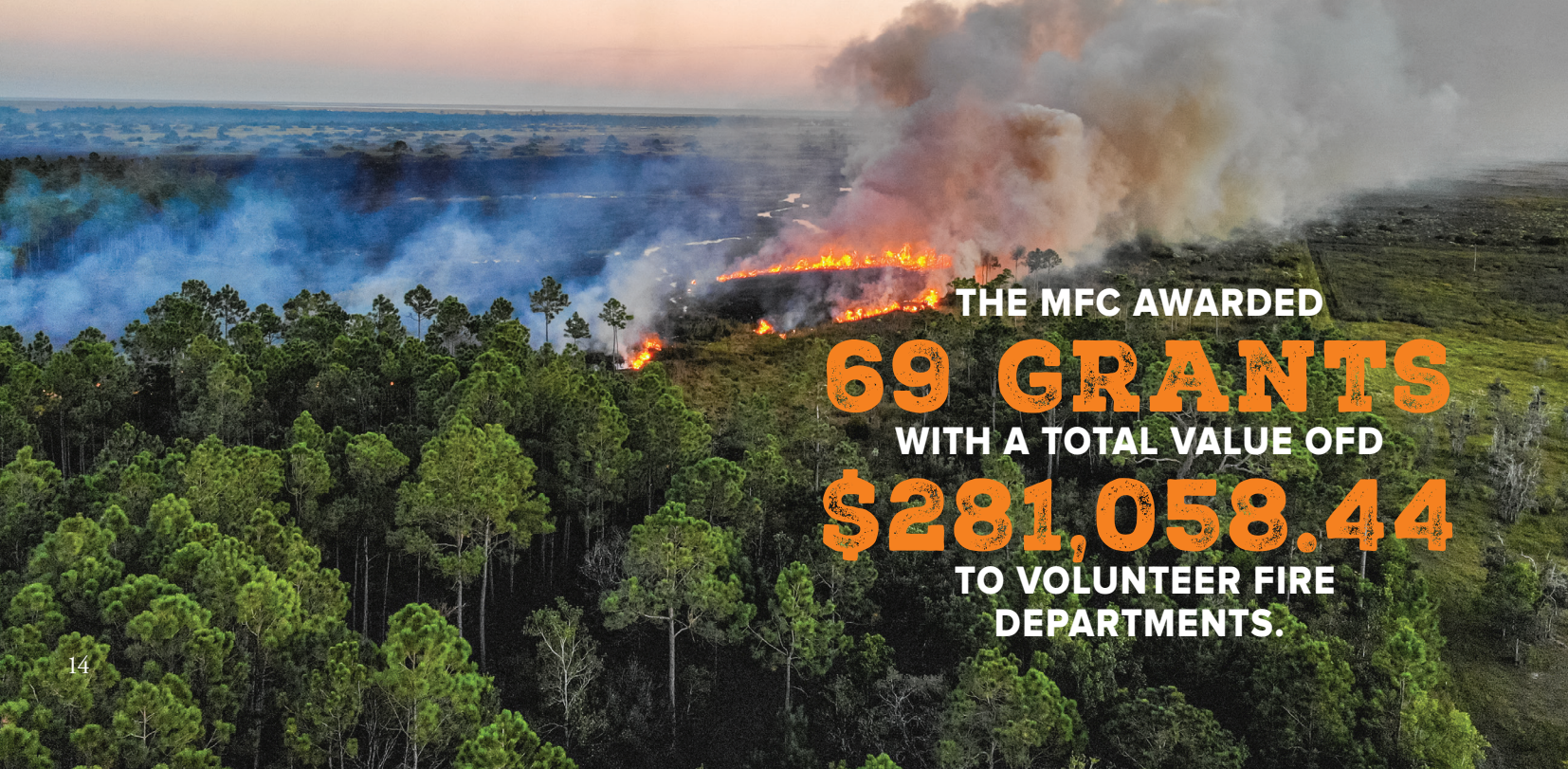
Volunteer Fire Assistance Program (VFA)

Formerly known as the Rural Community Fire Protection Program, the Volunteer Fire Assistance Program (VFA) provided grants to eligible rural VFDs for the purchase of wildland firefighting and personal protection equipment in FY23. The MFC administers this program through an agreement with the USDA Forest Service. In FY23, the MFC awarded 69 grants with a total value of \$281,058.44 to volunteer fire departments through the VFA Program.

Aviation

In FY23, aerial surveillance was used to manage wildfire activity. On large fires, planes fly above the wildfire, delivering real-time information to wildland firefighting units on the ground to help them manage the current fire situation.

The MFC's Aviation Department also provides service and support to Forest Health and other Forest Management program areas.



THE MFC AWARDED
69 GRANTS
WITH A TOTAL VALUE OF
\$281,058.44
TO VOLUNTEER FIRE
DEPARTMENTS.



Communications

Dependable radio communication is an essential element of the MFC's ability to deploy firefighting resources and maintain situational awareness of wildfire activity. The Communications Department is responsible for maintaining and upgrading the MFC's radio network, which spans the state.

Components of the network include: mobile radios in the agency's fleet of vehicles and lightweight hand-held radios for field personnel, which provide statewide communication between dispatch centers and field personnel.

In FY11, the first set of radios was purchased for the Mississippi Wireless Integrated Network (MSWIN) system as required by the Mississippi Wireless Communications Committee (WCC). During FY23, the MFC continued to implement and use the new radios. The MSWIN system provides interoperable emergency radio communication across the state with all levels of government agencies and partner organizations.

IT ONLY TAKES A SPARK OR EMBER TO START A WILDFIRE



CHECK FOR BURN BANS ON MFC WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA
MFC.MS.GOV

IF YOUR OUTDOOR FIRE BECOMES A WILDFIRE, YOU CAN BE HELD RESPONSIBLE

\$6,696,228
IN WILDLAND FIREFIGHTING
VEHICLES & EQUIPMENT WERE
ISSUED TO MISSISSIPPI VFDS
THROUGH THE FEPP/FFP
PROGRAMS.





Forest Information

The MFC distributes relevant information to the public regarding all MFC program areas. The Forest Information Department supports MFC program areas by providing information dissemination, educational presentations and public relations support. This Department oversees media relations, internal and external communications, agency publications and management of the MFC's digital presence.

The Forest Information Department utilizes traditional media (radio, television, newspaper, web, print) and social media outlets (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube) to reach the public.

**FY23 MFC
OUTREACH PROGRAMS**

**260
PROGRAMS**

**608,208
PARTICIPANTS**

Public Outreach

During FY23, the Public Outreach Division of the Forest Information Department continued to provide public information, outreach programs and area communication support for the MFC. The MFC maintains an active Public Outreach Program designed to heighten the public's awareness of wildfire prevention, the MFC's mission, services, and the importance of forest resources. Local outreach activities include civic club presentations, sporting events, information booths at community events, forestry field days and visits to school groups, which are carried out across the state to reach individuals at the community level.

Two topic-specific outreach programs are also included as Public Outreach efforts in FY23, the Firewise Program and the Underserved Landowner Outreach Program.

Public Outreach Officers provide customized presentations and displays for schools, community organizations, and events based on the following topics:

- Wildfire Prevention
- Smokey Bear Appearances
- Firewise
- Forest Health
- Forest Stewardship
- General MFC Information
- Best Management Practices
- Underserved Landowner Outreach Program
- Urban and Community Forestry





Underserved Landowner Outreach Program

The Underserved Landowner Outreach Program is a collaborative project between the MFC, Alcorn State University, and the USDA Forest Service. This program offers assistance to underserved landowners in Mississippi and has three primary goals:

- To provide outreach support and technical assistance to underserved landowners.
- To encourage young people to seek careers in forestry.
- To work with Alcorn State University to develop and/or enhance projects of mutual forestry interest.

Firewise

Firewise is an educational program for homeowners and community leaders. This program is for anyone connected to the wildland/ urban interface. Information is available on how to protect homes or communities until wildland firefighters arrive on the scene.

Factors addressed include design, construction and landscaping techniques to help structures better withstand wildfires.

Firewise workshops were conducted statewide in FY23. Workshops were provided free of charge to the public and brought citizens together to learn about protecting their communities in the wildland-urban interface.

Firewise literature can be found by visiting mfc.ms.gov.

A WILDFIRE'S DANGER CAN QUICKLY SPREAD BEYOND THE FOREST.

ARE YOU AND YOUR COMMUNITY FIREWISE?

LEARN MORE AT FIREWISEMS.COM.



Business Support

The Business Support Department consists of five (5) service-oriented divisions: Financial Services, Information Systems, Purchasing and Property, Human Resources, and Safety and Training. These divisions provide services to support the MFC's program areas statewide.

Financial Services

The MFC Financial Services Department plays a vital role in managing the financial needs of the agency. Planning and executing a FY23 total budget of roughly \$26M, the department provides in-depth analysis and financial insights to navigate complex financial landscapes, optimize asset allocation, and maximize financial efficiencies as well as fulfill the daily operation needs of the agency. Moreover, our skilled financial services team stays attuned to evolving economic trends and regulations, adapting strategies to mitigate risks and capitalize on opportunities in an ever-changing financial environment.

Human Resources

The MFC's Human Resources (HR) department serves as the cornerstone of our organization's people-centric approach, fostering a positive work environment and driving employee success. This multifaceted department strategically handles recruitment, talent acquisition, and onboarding, ensuring a diverse and qualified workforce. It goes beyond administrative tasks, actively engaging in employee development by designing training programs, performance management systems, and career advancement pathways. By staying abreast of labor laws and industry trends, our HR professionals ensure compliance and create policies that prioritize employee well-being, work-life balance, diversity, and inclusion. Ultimately, our HR staff propels organizational growth by nurturing a motivated workforce, aligning individual goals with the agency's mission, and cultivating a culture of collaboration and continuous improvement.

Information systems

The MFC I.T. Department plays a pivotal role in the organization by seamlessly integrating technology to optimize operations, enhance productivity, and foster innovation. I.T. staff manage and maintain the company's digital infrastructure, ensuring uninterrupted access to critical systems, data, and applications. The department also collaborates cross-functionally to understand and

address the unique technological needs of different departments, facilitating streamlined communication and efficient problem-solving. By staying updated on emerging technologies and best practices, the department continuously seeks opportunities to streamline processes, automate repetitive tasks, and drive overall organizational growth through technological advancements.

Purchasing and Property

Our Purchasing and Property Department serves as the strategic backbone of an organization's procurement and asset management efforts. This department expertly manages the acquisition of goods, services, and equipment, negotiating favorable terms, and optimizing cost-efficiency. Through meticulous research and evaluation, they strive to ensure that the agency receives quality products at competitive prices, contributing to overall financial savings. The Purchasing and Property Department also oversees property management, efficiently allocating and maintaining physical assets and spaces, from office facilities to wildfire equipment. By implementing robust inventory control systems and lifecycle management strategies, the department maximizes asset utilization and minimizes waste, thus fostering the organization's commitment to responsible resource management.

Safety & Training

Our Safety and Training Department plays a pivotal role in fostering a culture of safety, learning, and growth within the organization. This department is dedicated to ensuring the well-being of employees by implementing comprehensive safety protocols, conducting risk assessments, and designing and delivering rigorous training programs. By identifying potential hazards and proactively addressing them, the Safety and Training Department minimizes accidents and promotes a secure work environment. It empowers employees with the knowledge and skills they need to perform their roles safely and efficiently, whether through hands-on workshops, e-learning modules, or simulations. Moreover, this department remains adaptable, continuously refining training methods and safety measures based on evolving industry standards and technological advancements. Through its efforts, the Safety and Training Department not only safeguards personnel and assets but also cultivates a workforce that is confident, proficient, and dedicated to upholding the highest standards of safety and operational excellence.

MISSISSIPPI FORESTRY COMMISSION

Fiscal Year 2023 Finances

July 1, 2022 - June 30, 2023

Revenue

	PROJECTED	ACTUAL	VARIANCE
State General Funds	\$ 15,364,121.00	15,364,121.00	\$ 0.00
Severance Tax	\$ 3,250,000.00	\$3,345,472.00	\$ 95,472.00
Acreage Tax	\$ 1,450,000.00	\$1,459,714.00	\$ 9,714.00
Crew Assistance (Agency Generated)	\$ 2,300,000.00	\$2,424,888.00	\$ 124,888.00
Federal Funds	\$ 3,500,000.00	\$3,287,225.00	-\$ 212,775.00
Misc (Equip Sales, Rent, Etc.)	\$ 400,000.00	\$337,470.00	-\$ 62,530.00
Totals	\$ 26,264,121.00	\$ 26,218,890.00	-\$ 45,231.00

Expense

	PROJECTED	ACTUAL	VARIANCE
Beaver Control Program	\$ 200,000.00	\$ 200,000.00	\$ 0.00
Salaries & Related	\$ 15,000,000.00	\$ 14,495,425.00	\$ 504,575.00
Travel	\$ 150,000.00	\$ 148,706.00	\$ 1,294.00
Operating (Recurring)	\$ 5,000,000.00	\$ 5,049,482.00	-\$ 49,482.00
Non-Operating (Equipment, etc.)	\$ 600,000.00	\$ 587,309.00	\$ 12,691.00
Subsidies, Loans, & Grants	\$ 5,250,000.00	\$ 5,537,943.00	-\$ 287,943.00
Totals	\$ 26,200,000.00	\$ 26,018,865.00	\$ 181,135.00





*The mission of the Mississippi Forestry Commission 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.*



MISSISSIPPI FORESTRY COMMISSION

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