



# TENNESSEE

FORESTRY COMMISSION



# 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

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**TOM MIDYETT**  
**CHAIR OF FORESTRY COMMISSION**

*It is my pleasure to again present the Tennessee Forestry Commission's annual report to Governor Bill Lee and the members of the Tennessee General Assembly. The Commission sincerely appreciates Governor Lee's, the General Assembly's and Tennessee Department of Agriculture Commissioner Charlie Hatcher's support for Tennessee's forests and related forestry industries.*

*The Commission also wishes to recognize the nearly 400 individuals who comprise Tennessee's Division of Forestry, especially our newly named State Forester Heather Slayton. These men and women advise and support individual forest landowners and industries across Tennessee, while also effectively managing our state's vibrant and productive state forests for timber, forest health, and for recreation. These same individuals comprise Tennessee's lead wildland fire organization, working extensively on wildfire prevention and mitigation with volunteer and local fire department and agencies across the state to prevent and minimize the impact of wildfires. Wherever and whenever fires do occur, they bring unmatched expertise to wildfire control and suppression, utilizing state-of-the-art heavy equipment and trucks, as well as drones to capture critical information and imagery that empowers informed, timely decisions.*

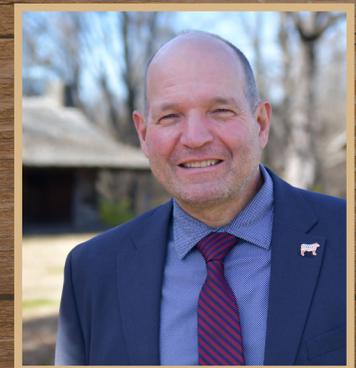
*Lastly, I want to recognize and thank the other six members of the Commission for their work this year in the selection process for the State Forester, and for their commitment to forestry in Tennessee.*

**CHARLIE HATCHER, D.V.M.**  
**COMMISSIONER OF AGRICULTURE**

*A common refrain at the Tennessee Department of Agriculture is "to work as hard as the farmers and foresters we serve." For those committed to agriculture and forestry, this life isn't so much a choice as it is a calling. We are proud to highlight that perseverance and the accomplishments that result in this Annual Report.*

*I extend my most sincere thanks to the Division of Forestry staff and leaders who are dedicated to safeguarding our state's forest resources. I am also grateful to the Tennessee Forestry Commission, the Tennessee Forestry Association, Governor Lee, and the state legislature. These longstanding partnerships remain strong and they are vital to reaching our goals.*

*The next time you enjoy a walk in the woods, I hope you will consider the highlights and achievements found in the pages that follow. We are so fortunate to benefit from the leadership of State Forester Heather Slayton and the labor of the men and women driving the state's largest and most important industry.*



**HEATHER SLAYTON**  
**STATE FORESTER**

*On January 17, 2024, I was appointed as Tennessee's 10th State Forester, succeeding David Arnold. I've been fortunate to work under David's mentorship for over a decade. He dedicated his entire career to Tennessee's forests, advocating for healthy, productive forests and serving the forest landowners and stakeholders. He left us well-positioned to continue the Division's 109-year mission of protecting, conserving, and enhancing Tennessee's forests. As you read our accomplishments in this report, know that we, the Division, are a skilled team of foresters and wildland firefighters dedicated to this mission. I am honored to continue serving the forests, landowners, forest industry, and the incredible people of the Division*

*of Forestry. I'm proud of what we've achieved this past fiscal year and excited to support the Division as we continue to protect and manage Tennessee's forests.*



## FY2024 AT A GLANCE

The Tennessee Forestry Commission convened in person five times during Fiscal Year 2024, with all meetings properly noticed. At each meeting, the Commission received reports from the State Forester and the Division of Forestry's executive staff, as well as comments from the public when provided, on a range of forestry topics and issues impacting forest landowners and the State of Tennessee. Additionally, the Commission discussed and took action on several important matters.

During FY24, David Arnold announced his retirement from his position as State Forester, prompting the Commission to hold an emergency meeting to discuss the process for filling the State Forester role. The Commission created a subcommittee to submit position announcements to candidates that were identified to the Commission members. One of those candidates was Heather Slayton, who went on to be appointed as Arnold's successor and now serves as Tennessee's 10th State Forester. The Commission congratulated Arnold on his retirement and thanked him for his service to the Division of Forestry, the Tennessee Forestry Commission, and the people of Tennessee.

All Commission members toured the Department of Agriculture Division of Forestry's East Tennessee Nursery in Delano, providing first-hand understanding and insights relevant to nursery oversight. As it does each year, the Commission evaluated seedling production at the nursery, as well as the online ordering system and the proposed pricing structure for seedling sales. Following this discussion, the Commission approved a modest increase in seedling prices, reflecting higher costs for fertilizer, seed supply, and other production-related expenses.

In its budgetary oversight capacity, the Commission reviewed the approved FY24 budget, then turned its attention to the FY25 budget, which was approved unanimously.



# TDF FACILITATES CRITICAL WILDFIRE MITIGATION WORK

Wildfires are a significant issue in Tennessee, where **87% of the population is exposed to wildfire risk** and about 1,000 wildfires burn approximately 18,000 acres each year. Tennessee counties rank in the top 50% for potential wildfire occurrence compared to all counties nationally and consist of some of the most difficult wildland firefighting terrain in the country.

In addition, **the state's Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI)—areas where communities meet undeveloped, wildfire-prone land—is rapidly expanding, placing homes, businesses, and infrastructure at greater risk** of experiencing wildfires. In fact, Tennessee ranks 9th nationally for highest land area in the WUI, which now spans 7.2 million acres in the state. This places 64% of buildings in Tennessee at direct risk of exposure to wildfires.

To address this, the **Tennessee Department of Agriculture Division of Forestry (TDF) invests significantly in wildfire prevention and mitigation programming**, particularly in WUI areas. Prevention efforts aim to stop fires before they start, while mitigation focuses on reducing the damage wildfires can cause to communities.

TDF's goal is to equip Tennesseans to develop **Fire Adapted Communities (FACs)**. Fire Adapted Communities are **a group of people, ecosystems, and infrastructure that are resilient to the impact of wildfires because they have designed and established systems to mitigate, adapt to, and recover from fire events**.

To help communities become fire adapted, TDF provides financial assistance through programs like Hazard Mitigation and Community Education Grants. Additionally, TDF works directly with communities to develop Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs), which identify wildfire risks, outline a plan of action to reduce those risks, and guide communities in plan execution.

In mountainous Sevier County, wildfires are a top-of-mind issue, particularly after the devastating fires in 2016 that burned nearly 18,000 acres, destroyed more than 200 structures, claimed 14 lives, and nearly overtook downtown Gatlinburg.

**The same forests and mountains that draw 12 million tourists to the area each year also pose a deadly threat**, providing plentiful fuel for wildfires and terrain that can dramatically accelerate fire spread. This area also has a massive and ever-expanding WUI, driven by new



## Remembering the 2016 Gatlinburg Fires

**Left:** View from downtown Gatlinburg of Ripley's Aquarium and the mountain and structures on fire behind it. **Middle:** Wildland firefighters putting in hand lines to halt fire spread. **Right:** Homes destroyed after the fires.

development supporting the area's tourist industry and population growth.

After the tragic 2016 fires, individual communities in the county reached out to TDF for guidance on how to reduce their wildfire risk. As a result, **ten Sevier County communities are now nationally recognized as Firewise Communities**, a national designation for areas that take specific proactive steps to reduce wildfire risk. TDF's foresters have played a key role in supporting these efforts in Sevier County and in 17 other Firewise Communities across Tennessee.

While individual communities have taken significant strides in risk mitigation in Sevier County, community members and local leaders decided to take a larger step to protect their homes, establishing a county-level position to coordinate wildfire prevention, mitigation, and suppression, and approaching TDF to help them acquire funding to develop a county-wide CWPP.

Working with Sevier County, TDF's prevention and mitigation staff applied for a competitive federal **Community Wildfire Defense Grant** to facilitate creation of a county-wide CWPP. The project was selected and awarded \$232,000 in funding in FY 2024.

Today, **TDF and Sevier County are working together** to facilitate collaboration and communication among communities, conduct a comprehensive risk assessment, create understanding and cooperation between structural and wildland firefighting agencies, and roll out a detailed action plan to empower the county to protect its residents, communities, and infrastructure from wildfires.

Sevier County is the first county in Tennessee to pursue wildfire mitigation at this scale and is becoming a model of excellence across the country nationwide.

However, **Sevier County is just one of 95 counties in a state prone to wildfires, and with the growth of WUI areas across the Tennessee, the need for mitigation efforts continues to expand.**

Wildfires are a reality of life in Tennessee, and they can happen anywhere. **Empowering communities and counties to develop and implement wildfire mitigation solutions to protect themselves is a critical way TDF serves Tennesseans.** As we look to the future and anticipate continued WUI growth across the state, that work will only become more essential.



## Fire Mitigation Work in Sevier Co.

**Top:** Cross-agency team meets to strategize.

**Middle:** TDF and local fire departments partner to mitigate wildland fire risk.

**Bottom:** Community members, TDF staff, and wildland fire professionals assess risk.

# FY24 HIGHLIGHT REEL

In the following pages, you will find many specific and quantifiable ways in which the Division of Forestry has impacted Tennesseans and faithfully pursued its mission to protect, conserve, and enhance Tennessee's forest resources - from wildfire prevention and mitigation to landowner assistance, education and workforce development, state forest management, forest health, reforestation, and forest industry support. Our work has many facets and impacts many people across Tennessee. This year, we asked each Unit to share the top two achievements from FY2024 of which they are most proud. Here is what they shared...



## ADMINISTRATION

- **Customer Service:** Increased customer satisfaction ratings from an average of 86% to 95%.
- **Capital Projects:** Facilitated breaking ground on new Standing Stone State Forest work center, which will be a hub for wildland fire resources, state forest management, landowner outreach, and fleet maintenance in the area.

## COMMUNICATIONS & OUTREACH

- **Workforce Development:** Hosted the first Commissioner of Agriculture's Forest Industry Jobs Camp at Natchez Trace State Forest, utilizing the new work center to advance workforce development objectives. Camp introduced FFA and 4H students to career opportunities in the forest industry.
- **Public Education:** Established social media accounts to support the TN Wildland Fire campaign by sharing fire prevention and mitigation messaging, prescribed fire education, and public information regarding major wildfire incidents. Saw significant organic account growth and engagement.

## FOREST DATA & ANALYSIS

- **Process Improvement:** Increased process and communication efficiency by initiating a new State Forest system-level plan workflow, utilizing online StoryMaps. Modernized data collection process for water quality and forest health surveys by implementing Survey123 technology.
- **Expanding Capacity:** Recruited and trained 3 new drone pilots, bringing the total roster of pilots certified or in training to 12. This strengthens TDF's wildland fire capabilities.

## STATE FOREST MANAGEMENT

- **Active Management:** Boosted number of state forest compartment plans approved by nine times the previous average, shaping a roadmap for multi-year active forest management across the system to promote forest health, biodiversity, and productivity.
- **Data-Driven Decisions:** Launched state forest inventory project, contracting with a third party to conduct a comprehensive inventory. This will provide current information about forest composition and volume that will drive informed management decisions.

## REFORESTATION

- **Future Investments:** Partnered with the University of Tennessee and American Forests to develop the Tennessee's Wild Seed Network to identify and collect high-quality seeds to support the state seedling nursery's reforestation needs.
- **Customer Service:** Implemented, tested, and improved the new online seedling store to provide optimized customer experience.

## FOREST HEALTH & SUSTAINABILITY

- **Community Investment:** Developed and launched the Tennessee Urban and Community Inflation Reduction Act grant program, offering \$3.3 million in financial assistance to communities to invest in urban and community forests. Twelve projects from across the state were selected in the first round of funding and awarded \$1.9 million total.
- **Customer Service:** Initiated the development of a customer resource management software tool which will enhance TDF foresters' effectiveness and efficiency in working with landowners.



## FIRE MANAGEMENT

- **Staff Development:** Provided three L-280 Followership to Leadership trainings across the state to cultivate leadership capability among wildland fire staff among 85 individuals.
- **Supporting Partners:** Secured \$195,000 in grant funding to supply 65 volunteer fire departments with wildfire suppression kits, including personal protective equipment, hand tools, and backpack blowers.



# WILDLAND FIRE PROTECTION

The Division of Forestry is legally tasked to protect Tennessee's forest resources (TCA 11-4-405). Wildland fire prevention and suppression are the primary responsibilities of the Division (TCA 11-4-406), which is uniquely equipped and qualified for this role. Fire occurrence and acres burned in Tennessee have gradually decreased during the past 50 years.

Forest resources have benefited, particularly with improved hardwood timber quality. As the forest landscape experiences an influx of homes in the wildland-urban interface, the Division's fire role has remained consistent. What has changed is suppression equipment, communication, training, and emphasis on safety, prevention, and education.

## UNIT MISSION

The mission of the Fire Management Unit is to minimize damage caused by wildland fire to forest resources and personal property while giving priority to firefighter and public safety. This is accomplished through cost-effective and creative programs and collaboration, as well as safe and effective fire and fuels management operations.



# OPERATIONS AND TRAINING

## OBJECTIVES FOR THE YEAR

- Continue to provide professional and developmental training to TDF personnel and partner agencies.
- Strengthen interagency partnerships through open dialogue, training, and support.
- Build proficiency and develop our fire management organization by supporting out-of-state deployments, incident management team participation, and national training opportunities.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR JULY 1, 2023 – JUNE 30, 2024

- Secured more than \$195,000 in grant funding to supply 65 Volunteer Fire Departments with wildfire suppression kits. These kits included personal protective equipment, hand tools, and backpack blowers.
- Deployed 132 personnel and 64 pieces of equipment to national wildfire and all hazard emergencies across 13 states.
- Suppressed 1,001 fires, which burned 21,344 acres, protecting 734 residences and 373 additional structures. Residential home values protected are estimated at \$238million based on mean Tennessee home values.
- Implemented 150 prescribed fires treating 6,244 acres with ecologically beneficial fire.
- Hosted 2 Certified Prescribed Burn Manger courses and certified 80 new burn managers.
- Facilitated the 21st annual Tennessee-Kentucky Wildland Fire Academy, presenting 49 courses to 521 students. TDF's Grand Divisions Incident Management Team (IMT) managed academy operations. TDF provided 44 instructors and support personnel.
- Supported regional and national training opportunities by sending personnel to the Southern Area Heavy Equipment Operator Academy, National Medical Unit Leader training, Southern Area Engine Academy, and the Women-in-Fire Prescribed Fire Training Exchange. Provided an instructor to the Colorado Wildland Fire and Incident Management Academy.
- Provided an S-130 wildland fire training field day to 40 structural fire recruits at the Tennessee Fire and Codes Enforcement Academy as part of a new initiative to prioritize provision of nationally accredited wildland fire training to cadets seeking firefighter certification in Tennessee.
- Organized a training cadre to travel throughout the state and provide the National Wildfire Coordinating Group L-280 Followership to Leadership training to 85 TDF employees.
- Facilitated a joint two-day Helicopter Operations training experience with the Tennessee Army National Guard to develop and improve operational safety, ground-to-air communications, and water dropping capabilities. This opportunity benefitted 32 TDF wildland firefighters and 7 National Guard flight crews.
- Supported the Cherokee National Forest by temporarily loaning out 2 dozers (one to each forest management zone) so the forest would have a standby dozer to meet agency prescribed fire staffing requirements.

# OAK RIDGE RESERVATION PROJECT

*After a one year postponement, on Sept. 4, 2023, the Grand Divisions Incident Management Team (IMT) was deployed to Oak Ridge Reservation for a fire and fuels reduction and mitigation project.*

*Over the two-week project period, TDF personnel worked on firebreak installation, burn site preparation, fuels reduction along the wildland-urban interface areas, and invasive species reduction. Prescribed burns were not completed due to unfavorable weather conditions.*

*The IMT completed 17 tasks during the project, deploying 20 team personnel, 52 TDF personnel, a TDF skid steer unit, and 11 dozer plow units to the enterprise.*

*The U.S. Department of Energy paid TDF \$364,000 for work done by the Division.*



## VOLUNTEER FIRE ASSISTANCE

### OBJECTIVES FOR THE YEAR

- Assist local volunteer fire departments (VFDs) serving populations of fewer than 10,000 citizens to obtain wildland fire equipment, personal protective equipment, tools, communication supplies, and technical assistance.
- Provide wildland fire training to VFDs across Tennessee, covering topics including incident command systems, tactics, leadership, mutual aid, and wildland-urban interface education.
- Prioritize and support economically distressed counties and VFDs within those areas.

### ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR JULY 1, 2023 – JUNE 30, 2024

- Secured \$295,859 in federal grant funding and awarded \$195,000 in grants to 65 VFDs.
- Maintained 400 agreements with VFDs for cooperative wildfire protection.
- Provided free wildland fire training to 300 firefighters representing 15 fire departments across Tennessee.
- Coordinated with the Tennessee Department of Commerce and Insurance and various media outlets promoting services and opportunities available through the Volunteer Fire Assistance Program.



# SAFETY AND RISK MANAGEMENT

## OBJECTIVES FOR THE YEAR

- Provide a structured approach to control safety risks in operations and promote a culture of open dialogue and reporting of accidents and near misses.
- Provide high level of guidance and mitigation strategies commensurate with the tasks and risks associated with all disciplines within the agency.
- Implement and provide oversight to OSHA workplace and employee safety reporting requirements and timelines.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR JULY 1, 2023 – JUNE 30, 2024

- Facilitated defensive driving, hazard communication, first aid/CPR, and bloodborne pathogen training for Division personnel.
- Investigated, reviewed, and reported all job-related injuries, accidents, and illnesses.
- Revised the Division's Safety and Health Manual providing policies and procedures that create a safe work environment for all employees.
- Developed a new facility safety inspection process utilizing GIS Technology to provide a database of safer work centers, towers, and offices.



TDF staff providing wildland firefighting training to local fire department

# HAZARD MITIGATION AND PREVENTION

## OBJECTIVES FOR THE YEAR

- Develop Community Wildfire Protection Plans, expand Tennessee's Fire Adapted Communities network, and increase certified Firewise USA Communities®.
- Provide the public with safety information, including updates on current hazard situations and mitigation steps to prevent devastating wildland fire impacts.
- Manage the Division's safe debris burn permit program to limit the risk of a planned fire growing into a wildland fire. The program has resulted in significant decrease in wildland fires year-over-year.
- Pursue new and diverse revenue opportunities and effectively manage growing wildland fire mitigation needs in Tennessee.
- Serve as Tennessee's sponsor for the National Fire Protection Agency's Firewise USA Communities® Program and the Smokey Bear Wildfire Prevention campaign.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR JULY 1, 2023 – JUNE 30, 2024

- Secured \$300,000 in federal grant funding to implement wildland fire mitigation activities.
- Awarded \$136,000 in hazard mitigation grants to 19 communities for Community Wildfire Protection Plan development, outreach, education, and community mitigation action items.
- Contracted with multiple hazard mitigation specialists and the Appalachian Resource and Conservation District using federal funding to expand capacity for hazard mitigation assessments and improvements.
- Issued 201,613 safe debris burn permits to residents, agencies, and private companies, decreasing wildland fire risk.
- Facilitated Tennessee's annual Fire Adapted Communities Workshop and Awards Banquet in Sevier County with representatives of numerous local communities, fire departments, and interested stakeholders, such as National Fire Protection Association.



Annual 2-day joint fire suppression training exercise with Tennessee Army National Guard



TDF's multi-faceted TN Wildland Fire Module conducting prescribed burns



# FLEET MANAGEMENT

## OBJECTIVES FOR THE YEAR

- Coordinate with the Division of Vehicle and Asset Management for the necessary procurement of essential fleet assets required by TDF to protect, conserve, and enhance Tennessee's forests.
- Manage federal excess property distribution to Tennessee fire departments, supporting local wildfire suppression efforts.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR JULY 1, 2023 – JUNE 30, 2024

- Acquired 6 fire suppression engines with 300-gallon capacity, enhancing TDF's response and prescribed fire capabilities.
  - Completed fabrication, installation, and distribution of 40, 150-gallon slip-on units as part of an ongoing, multi-year, 80-unit project.
  - Strategically overhauled the agency's administrative processes related to fuel purchases to maximize support and meet time-sensitive needs during public safety operations.
  - Secured a five-row spray apparatus to enhance efficiency of nursery operations at the East Tennessee Nursery.
  - Coordinated with local fire departments on inventory and alterations to the federal excess property program. Established new agreements to bring the federal firefighter property program to Tennessee.
- 

# RADIO COMMUNICATIONS

## OBJECTIVES FOR THE YEAR

- Maintain the highest level of integrity for the Division of Forestry's statewide radio communications network.
- Establish interoperability solutions with emergency response partners at all levels of government.
- Support staff's continued advancement of knowledge, skills, and abilities.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR JULY 1, 2023 – JUNE 30, 2024

- Installed necessary backup power generation upgrades, improving radio tower site electric power stability and operations during interim or long-term utility power interruptions due to natural disasters.
- Established radio tower site remote monitoring systems focused on power interruption notifications, preventative maintenance needs, and radio transmission status.
- Installed 34 Quantar repeater upgrades across the statewide system improving communication capacity, clarity, and system coverage.
- Coordinated with the Federal Communications Commission and established a dedicated Division of Forestry air-to-ground communication frequency for fire suppression air operations and jointly trained with the Tennessee Army National Guard on utilization.





# FOREST HEALTH AND SUSTAINABILITY

The health of a forest directly influences all aspects of forestry and is a part of every Unit within the Division. Not limited to insects and diseases, forest health is also influenced by abiotic events, invasive plants, improper silvicultural prescriptions, harvesting damage to the residual stand, air and water quality, soil compaction, wildland fire, and much more.

Forest health is considered in all settings, whether the forest exists within an urban environment, a riparian strip between two agricultural fields, or a rural forest.

This focus on forest health provides the Unit with a holistic and sustainable approach to all forest management. It demonstrates the connectivity among forest health, the human interface, and the ecosystem services all forests provide.

## UNIT MISSION

The mission of the Forest Health and Sustainability Unit is to protect and enhance the health and productivity of Tennessee's forests.



# FOREST HEALTH

Forest health programs involve detecting, monitoring, managing, and suppressing native, non-native, and abiotic damaging forest health issues. The major forest health issues managed within this Unit are spongy moth, hemlock woolly adelgid, laurel wilt disease, southern pine beetle and other pine bark beetles, and invasive plants.

Other threats to Tennessee's forests are addressed through consistent off-plot monitoring by aerial detection, ground detection, and technology, including satellite imagery. A significant component of this Unit is education and outreach that emphasizes current and imminent threats and their transportation vectors (i.e. firewood).

## PROGRAM MISSION

Enhance the health of Tennessee's forests and minimize forest resource losses caused by forest pests through effective prevention, detection, evaluation, suppression, and technical assistance measures.

## OBJECTIVES FOR THE YEAR

- Promote forest health through monitoring and management activities, staff trainings, technical assistance, outreach, and social media.
- Improve the collection, analysis, and sharing of data internally and externally to enhance customer relationships.
- Partner with USDA Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) and Slow the Spread Foundation to conduct annual survey of spongy moth by placing and monitoring traps across all 95 counties in Tennessee.
- Monitor for southern pine beetle and other pine bark beetles to evaluate areas at a higher risk and mitigate outbreaks.
- Support research, collect data, and conduct outreach for emerald ash borer, laurel wilt disease, and other invasive forest health threats.
- Promote management of invasive plants through outreach and by providing funding to local government and nonprofit organizations for implementation of invasive plant management projects across the state.
- Work within our state forests to create demonstration areas for invasive plant management.
- Provide leadership to the Tennessee Hemlock Conservation Partnership through meeting facilitation, cooperative field days, and outreach.
- Protect significant hemlock forests from extinction through continued operation of the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (HWA) Strike Team.
- Work towards establishing a biocontrol insectary for hemlock woolly adelgid within Tennessee.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR JULY 1, 2023 – JUNE 30, 2024

- Recorded 442 forest health observations submitted statewide by Division personnel on ESRI's Survey123 platform. Observations included widespread abiotic injury, particularly freeze damage and tornado damage, oak decline from various causal agents, invasive plants, and a variety of native and non-native pests.

- Established an online “Report a Pest” tool for the public that proved to be a valuable resource for identifying issues after it received many spotted lanternfly reports for Davidson, Wilson, and Sullivan counties before the insect’s presence had been confirmed in those areas.
- Monitored spongy moth activity via placement of 5,000 traps, capturing 60 male moths in 10 counties. Most moths were found within the Slow the Spread Action Area in northeast Tennessee, which is closest to the current range of spongy moth.
- Deployed southern pine beetle (SPB) traps to assess the number of SPB and clerid beetles present in four counties. Catch numbers for both SPB and clerid predatory beetles at three sites were higher than previous year, so more traps will be placed in FY2025 targeting southern counties.
- Completed road and ground surveys for the presence of laurel wilt disease, detecting the disease in three additional counties. This disease has spread to 25 counties in Tennessee since its first detection in 2019.
- Conducted several forest health training events for Division personnel, partner agencies, and private landowners. Provided forest health training at several Tennessee Master Logger classes across the state.
- Funded five invasive plant control projects, which were initiated during this reporting period. Projects are multi-year and will support invasive plant removal and native seedling replanting in project areas. Total project funding for all project areas is \$79,600, with \$37,400 provided through federal funding, and \$42,200 provided as a match from participating organizations. This includes project areas at Donaldson Park (Celina), Jacob’s Nature Park (Johnson City), Lytle Creek (Murfreesboro), Reflection Riding Arboretum and Nature Center (Chattanooga), and Overton Park (Memphis). Project areas will manage invasive plants on approximately 32 acres and 1.2 miles of riparian habitat in total.
- Treated 18,000+ eastern hemlocks on over 1,800 acres across 17 Hemlock Conservation Areas.
- Represented TDF at the National HWA Manager’s meeting in Nova Scotia, Canada.



## GOATS AT NATCHEZ TRACE STATE FOREST

*As part of an invasive species control project, TDF engaged goats at Natchez Trace State Forest to reduce the prevalence of kudzu, an invasive species that usually outcompetes desirable native tree and plant species.*

*Using livestock for invasive species management — known as targeted grazing — is a sustainable approach that utilizes the natural grazing habits of animals like goats, sheep, and cattle to control invasive plant species.*

*These animals selectively feed on unwanted vegetation, reducing its spread and allowing native plants to thrive.*

# RURAL FOREST MANAGEMENT

Family forest owners are the key to keeping Tennessee's forests productive and healthy. They play an important role in providing all Tennessee citizens with forest products, clean water, wildlife habitat, and natural beauty. Many of these landowners are unaware of the role forest management plays in maintaining sustainable and resilient forests. This lack of awareness often results in activities that leave forests less productive or at risk of insect, disease, and water quality problems.

The Division of Forestry provides forest management planning and financial assistance to encourage landowners to manage their forest resources in a manner that increases productivity, maintains forest health, and protects water quality. Forest management planning assistance is provided as individualized management plans, published materials, and group presentations. Financial assistance is offered through various federal and state cost-share programs.

## PROGRAM MISSION

Encourage and assist landowners to implement forest management practices that yield healthy, productive forests.

## OBJECTIVES FOR THE YEAR

- Provide professional development and continuing education opportunities for Division foresters.
- Finalize landscape management plan for Tennessee.
- Develop Customer Relation Management (CRM) program to assist and integrate with the ArcGIS Pro landowner assistance mapping, geospatial database, and performance tracking suite of tools.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR JULY 1, 2023 – JUNE 30, 2024

- Assisted 17,739 forest landowners and educated 101,261 Tennesseans through direct outreach programs.
- Wrote 22 Forest Stewardship plans addressing 3,301 acres, 182 other forest management plans addressing 26,065 acres, and 477 prescription plans improving 39,049 acres.
- Published Landscape Management Plan (LMP) on TDF Website. This project will reduce the burden of individual management plan development, allow foresters to spend more time with landowners on the ground, and contribute to accomplishing landscape-level goals.
- Continued to improve the implementation the ArcGIS Pro landowner assistance mapping, geospatial database, and performance tracking suite of tools specifically designed for landowner assistance.
- Began the development of a Customer Relation Management (CRM) program. Contracted with an outside vendor for the development and integration of the new CRM with the existing ArcGIS Landowner Assistance program database.
- Provided services 13 times for public and 115 times for private landowners through the vendor service program, impacting 4,441 acres. This included services for standby, firebreak construction, tree planting, and timber marking, as well as prescribed burns on 828 acres of public land and 3,613 acres of private land.
- Funded 33 cost share applications totaling \$250,833 to complete forest management practices. The total project spend with cost share applications and match was \$407,401.



Nashville team hosting annual Arbor Day event

## URBAN & COMMUNITY FORESTRY

The Urban and Community Forestry Program's (U&CF) purpose is to ensure all Tennesseans experience the numerous benefits of urban and community forests. The program works to catalyze and support the full-circle management of healthy urban and community forests through community outreach, education, public engagement, technical support, workforce development, and financial assistance.

### PROGRAM MISSION

To grow, manage, and sustain healthy urban and community forests throughout Tennessee.

### OBJECTIVES FOR THE YEAR

- Aggregate and utilize relevant data to inform U&CF programmatic planning, implementation, assessment, and reporting.
- Increase public awareness of urban and community forest benefits, environmental justice issues related to tree canopy and greenspace, U&CF programs, and funding opportunities.
- Increase knowledge and technical skills related to full-circle management of urban and community forests.
- Develop and implement a competitive subaward program to fund projects aligned with the full-circle management of urban and community forests and/or address issues of equity related to tree canopy coverage and access to greenspace.
- Connect to and engage with disadvantaged communities and governmental entities external to the Division of Forestry,

### ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR JULY 1, 2023 – JUNE 30, 2024

- Developed and launched the Tennessee U&CF Inflation Reduction Act grant program that offers \$3.3 million in financial assistance to qualified proposals. Received 23 proposals via the new online grant application, requesting a combined \$7,413,381. For the first round of funding, 12 proposals from across the state were competitively selected and awarded \$1,940,527 in funding.

- Created three ArcGIS StoryMaps to feature Arbor Day Foundation Programming, the TAEP Community Tree Planting Grant, and Urban and Community Wood Utilization efforts.
- Co-hosted the Memphis Urban Wood Academy in collaboration with the US Forest Service and Urban Wood Economy.
- Awarded \$130,015 in TAEP Community Tree Planting funds to 18 projects across the state. A total of 1,238 trees were planted. These trees will provide numerous ecosystem services including the interception of over 45,652 gallons of rainwater and storage of approximately 8,443 pounds of carbon annually. As these trees grow to 6 inches in diameter, the total economic value of the carbon they store will be around \$21,263.
- Celebrated the 149th Tennessee Arbor Day and recognized 45 Tree City communities, 16 Tree Line utility companies, 9 Tree Campus higher education institutions, and 2 Tree Campus K-12 schools throughout the state. This year's recognition included one new Tree City and one new Tree Campus – Higher Education.
- Collaborated with the Tennessee Urban Forestry Council to host the 2-day 2023 Urban and Community Forestry Conference at Fall Creek Falls State Park, welcoming 84 attendees.
- Provided 14 educational presentations on urban and community forestry, the benefits of trees, what our program offers, and more to community groups, local government entities, and other partners.
- Hosted a week-long Level 1 Arborist training workshop.

## MEMPHIS URBAN WOOD ACADEMY

*The U&CF Program partnered with the US Forest Service and Urban Wood Economy to plan and host the Memphis Urban Wood Academy. State Forester Heather Slayton, Communications & Outreach Unit Leader Megan Carpenter, and U&CF Program Specialist Ashley Kite-Rowland were all speakers at the event.*

*Urban wood is created when trees come down in communities. Currently, 15+ million tons of urban wood ends up in landfills annually nationwide.*

*The academy hosted attendees and presenters from across the country and provided a forum to develop and hone solutions to leverage urban and community wood to support local economies rather than sending it to landfills.*



# FOREST LEGACY

This USDA Forest Service program, authorized by the Farm Bill and facilitated by the Division of Forestry, works to identify, permanently protect, and maintain well-managed, working forests on the landscape.

## PROGRAM MISSION

To protect environmentally important, private forestlands threatened with conversion to non-forest uses.

## OBJECTIVES FOR THE YEAR

- Finalize the conservation easement on Myers Cove.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR JULY 1, 2023 – JUNE 30, 2024

- Formalized the Forest Legacy Program conservation easement on Myers Cove, protecting 1,933 acres for continued forest and agriculture products, water quality, wildlife habitat and biodiversity, natural ecosystem functions, forest sustainability, and the cultural and economic vitality of rural communities. Myers Cove is a working forest and farm dominated by forestland interspersed with agricultural fields.





## WATER QUALITY

Water is a valuable product of the forest. The benefits of water are difficult to measure, but changes in quality and quantity are easily observed. Forests act as buffers and filters to reduce damage to waterways caused by practices from other land uses, such as urban runoff, and protect stream banks from erosion caused by flooding. Since the mid-1980s, the Division has provided leadership to ensure timber harvesting operations do not pollute Tennessee's streams and rivers.

### UNIT MISSION

Improve the quality of surface and sub-surface water using forest cover as a filter and buffer for industrial, urban, and agricultural point and non-point pollution sources.

### OBJECTIVES FOR THE YEAR

- Improve industry assistance programs by transferring TAEF funds through the Pallet Mat, Skidder Bridge, and Erosion Control Grant for the Tennessee Forestry Foundation. It will now be an Incentive program helping to pay for eligible equipment.
- Improve the Master Logger Program by expanding further in West Tennessee.

### ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR JULY 1, 2023 – JUNE 30, 2024

- Developed a new Spanish version of the Best Management Practices (BMP) manual for use by Spanish-speaking forest industry professionals.
- Created new Master Logger presentations that thoroughly cover all points in the BMP manual.
- Partnered with the Tennessee Forestry Association to conduct ten Master Logger classes and three program trainings.



# REFORESTATION

The Division of Forestry's seedling nursery in Delano produces approximately 3-to-4 million tree seedlings annually that are available for sale to landowners in Tennessee. These seedlings are adapted to growing conditions found in the state and are used primarily for reforestation and forest conservation projects.

Approximately half of the 80 acres available for seedling production at the nursery are used for this purpose each year. The remaining seedbed area is planted in cover crops to ensure the long-term productivity of the soil.

## UNIT MISSION

The mission of the Reforestation Unit is to provide high quality, affordable seedlings to Tennessee landowners and to optimize genetic improvements to increase the productivity of the state's forests.

## OBJECTIVES FOR THE YEAR

- Build partnerships to plan for high quality diverse native species of bareroot seedlings for customers' reforestation needs now and into the future.



## ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR JULY 1, 2023 – JUNE 30, 2024

- Collaborated with partner agencies to make the nursery's Hydrology Capital Improvement Project become a reality. This project will increase seedling production and quality and addresses operational safety issues caused by poor drainage.
- Partnered with the University of Tennessee Tree Improvement Program and American Forests to develop the "Wild Seed Network" to identify high quality seed production trees for seed collection. This supports the nursery's reforestation needs and diversifies the genetic stock of nursery seedlings. In recent years, the nursery's seed vendors have not been able to meet the nursery's demand, leading to the initiation of this project.
- Debuted a new online seedling ordering store after the previous system failed in January 2023. Performed testing and refined the system prior to go-live date in September 2023 to create an excellent customer experience.
- Replaced 30-year-old bag strappers at the nursery using Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) grant funding.
- Installed a generator to protect seedlings in the nursery's coolers from power outages, utilizing BIL grant funding.
- The nursery team, with help from the Nashville office, overcame significant staffing challenges and continued smooth operations while nursery staff members were out with major injuries and family care. This included the period when the new online seedling store was being tested and needed improvements identified.



TDF staff from across the state pitched in to help nursery team eliminate invasive plants from seedling beds.



Yellow poplar (state tree) seedlings



# STATE FOREST MANAGEMENT

Tennessee's 16 State Forests total 173,269 acres and range from mountain coves in the east to bottomlands along the Mississippi River. They are managed primarily for natural resources, including high-quality, sustainable timber game and non-game wildlife, and biodiversity.

Recreation is a secondary offering by state forests. State forests do not feature inns, golf courses, or restrooms, but instead welcome the public for passive recreation opportunities like hunting, hiking, bird watching, and tranquility.

Tennessee's state forest system is certified by the Sustainable Forestry Initiative® (SFI), one of the forest industry's leading authorities on sustainable forestry. TDF maintains compliance with rigorous SFI® management standards and submits to periodic audits to ensure continued compliance in all aspects of forest management.

Many state forest lands were in poor condition when acquired, either eroded or unsustainably harvested. Some were planted with trees to control erosion; others regenerated naturally into hardwood forest. After decades of restoration, conservation, and careful management, the state forest system now contains a vast supply of high-quality timber and other forest products.

Timber harvested from some of these forests helps support local forest products industries. Money spent by consumers in the pursuit of recreational opportunities on the forests supports local merchants.

State forests also provide opportunities to demonstrate the application of sustainable forestry practices that maintain and enhance multiple use values. Demonstration sites show how forestry best management practices maintain, protect, and enhance water quality.

State forests also provide data to characterize the resources and values provided to local communities and local economies.

## UNIT MISSION

Provide for the multiple-use management of all resources on state forest lands so that those resources are protected and utilized to best meet the long-term needs of the citizens of Tennessee.

### OBJECTIVES FOR THE YEAR

- Generate \$3.2 million in timber sale revenue to maintain health and sustainability objectives across the state forest system.
- Support forest industry and local economies through active forest management.
- Complete Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) third-party audit.

### ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR JULY 1, 2023 – JUNE 30, 2024

- Approved 17 state forest compartment plans. These 10-year management plans drive all forest operations for an area (typically 1,000 acres) of a particular state forest.
- Initiated a state forest inventory project designed to provide comprehensive data on current state forest composition, facilitate data-driven decisions, and support SFI compliance. Awarded the contract to a third-party organization that started field work in 2024.
- Finalized an MOU with the Tennessee Department of Environment & Conservation (TDEC) for law enforcement assistance from park rangers on five state forests collocated with state parks – Natchez Trace, Chickasaw, Cedars of Lebanon, Standing Stone, and Pickett.
- Completed the final yearly SFI audit of the five-year certification cycle. The report showed no major or minor corrective actions needed. The audit was conducted on Bledsoe, Franklin, and Prentice Cooper state forests.
- Hosted two Tennessee Health Hardwood events in partnership with the University of Tennessee at Chickasaw and Cedars of Lebanon state forests.
- Conducted an Invasive Species Workshop at Chuck Swan State Forest for landowners and community members, demonstrating invasive species control and removal techniques.
- Hosted a Wildlife Field Day at Prentice Cooper State Forest, in a joint effort with the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, Marion County Soil Conservation District, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, UT Extension, and TSU Cooperative Extension.
- Continued working with TDEC to monitor the White Fringeless Orchid at Bledsoe, Prentice Cooper, and Franklin state forests. This plant is on the rare, threatened, and endangered (RTE) species list, but active management and species protection on state forests is promoting the species' resurgence in Tennessee.
- Sold \$3.4 million in state forest timber and concluded a 1,400-acre salvage operation from tornado damage at Natchez Trace State Forest.
- Completed the first compartment plan to prescribe a commercial timber sale at Lone Mountain State Forest.
- Created a tracking program that captures long term harvest planning, all scheduled timber stand improvement operations, and compartment plan scheduling.
- Rehabilitated 20+ acres of roads and trails at Franklin State Forest, repairing significant off-highway vehicle damage.



# FOREST DATA AND ANALYSIS

The Forest Data and Analysis Unit manages Division of Forestry data resources, provides visualization and analytical services, interprets data, and communicates findings to internal and external audiences. Core focus areas include statewide forest inventory, integrated database management, analytics, mapping, and remote-sensing technology.

The Unit tracks availability and sustainability of Tennessee’s forest resources and provides this information to landowners, forest industry, other state agencies, external partners, and the public. The Unit facilitates the evaluation and implementation of technologies for efficient data collection and management, mapping, and distribution to field staff.

## UNIT MISSION

Empower the Division of Forestry and its partners with data-driven insights to enhance operations and business intelligence through data collection, management, visualization, analysis, and communication.

This Unit develops and manages data systems and governance and administers the Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA), Geographic Information Systems (GIS), and Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) programs.



## OBJECTIVES FOR THE YEAR

- Expand the capacity and utilization of the Unit's Unmanned Aircraft system (UAS) program to support landowner assistance, forest health, and emergency response operations.
- Support the Landowner Assistance Strategic Plan's goal for configuring customer relationship manager (CRM) software.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR JULY 1, 2023 – JUNE 30, 2024

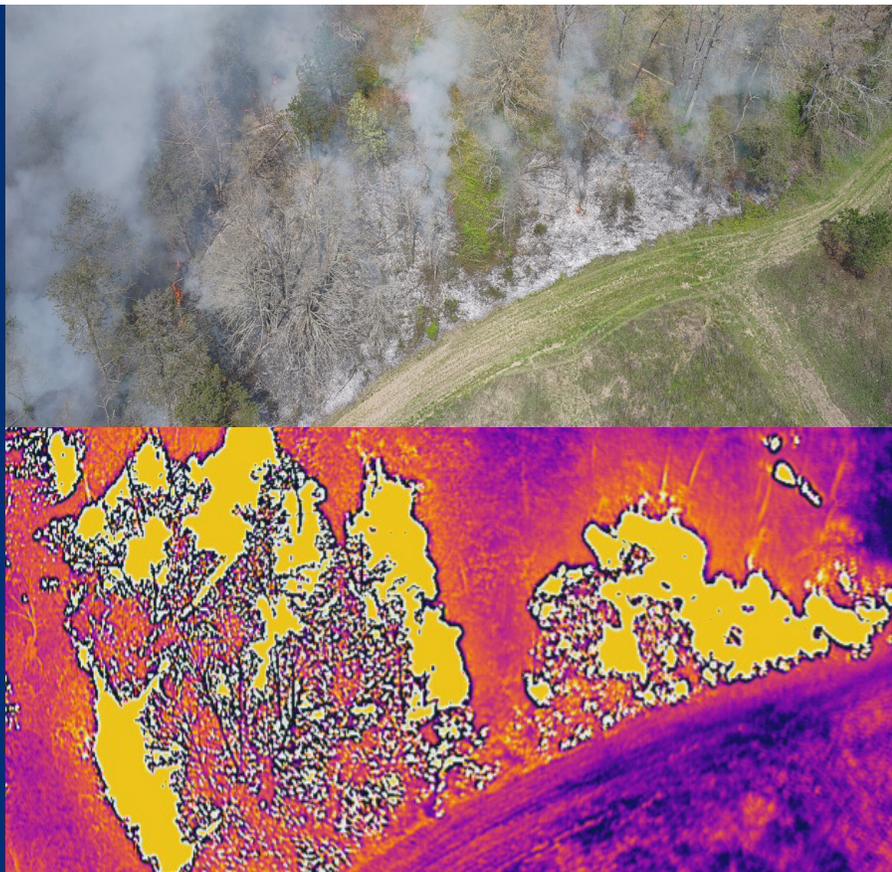
- Recruited and trained 3 new drone pilots, for a roster of 12 certified or in-training pilots.
- Initiated a new state forest system level plan workflow utilizing online StoryMaps to increase efficiency and communication.
- Modernized data collection for water quality and forest health surveys through implementation of Survey123 technology.
- Purchased 12 new drones to increase the capacity of the UAS program in support of forest health and wildland fire suppression efforts.
- Flew 29 successful UAS missions to support landowner assistance, forest health, emergency operations, and public education.
- Scoped CRM system requirements and cooperated with a third-party vendor to develop and configure a custom a CRM for landowner assistance.
- Contracted and collaborated with ESRI, a leading global software company, to develop a change management strategy for development and implementation of a new customer relationship management (CRM), engaging key stakeholders within TDF who will interface with the new Landowner Assistance Program CRM.

## UAS MISSIONS

*This year, 14 of the total 29 UAS missions were flown to support wildfire suppression and monitoring.*

*UAS use during fire incidents provides burn teams another perspective on the fire, both in terms of the aerial and thermal imagery provided. These photos from one prescribed fire in February 2024 demonstrate how hot spots can be illuminated with thermal imagery. This information assists leaders in making informed fire management decisions.*

*Similar to hot spots on the ground, staff members on the ground are also detectable using UAS thermal imagery. Deploying UAS on wildfire suppression incidents increases the safety and efficiency of TDF staff deployed on the incident.*





## FOREST INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS

Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) is a continuous census of forest resource extent, condition, productivity, and sustainability that dates back to the late 1940s. Tennessee's FIA foresters complete detailed forest inventory measurements on more than 4,200 permanent plots on public and private lands on a 7-year cycle.

The FIA Program also conducts felled tree studies and timber product output surveys, gathering information from loggers and facilities in the state that utilize wood produced by forests. The FIA Program provides information on forest age dynamics, health, ownership patterns, socioeconomic benefits of forests, and emerging market opportunities.

The multi-resource information gathered by FIA informs policy, economic development, and forest program development, and to provide a scientific basis for forest ecosystem monitoring.

### PROGRAM MISSION

Collect and process data on the condition, productivity, and sustainability of Tennessee's forest resources to support economic, policy, and program development.

### OBJECTIVES FOR THE YEAR

- Complete measurements for Inventory Year 2021.
- Begin measuring Inventory Year 2022.
- Use supplemental federal funding to increase staffing.
- Complete the Timber Products Output survey of Tennessee's primary mills.



### ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR JULY 1, 2023 – JUNE 30, 2024

- Completed measurements on 589 plots and 26 National Forest intensification plots, achieving a productivity increase of 44% over FY23.
- Created an FIA Forester 3 position to increase cohesion and retention among regional crews and create growth opportunities for FIA foresters.
- Utilized supplemental federal funds to support 3 staff who completed 67% of the year's total plot production.
- Administered the Timber Products Output survey with a response rate of 75%.

# HARDWOOD TIMBER GRADING WORKSHOP

*Several Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) staff attended the Hardwood Timber Grading Workshop hosted by the Kentucky Division of Forestry in May 2024.*

*Groups from several Forest Inventory and Analysis programs across the south attended the three-day training taught by Dr. Jeffery Stringer of the University of Kentucky.*

*Hardwood tree grading is a challenging measurement that all FIA timber cruisers must master to succeed in an FIA program.*

*The purpose of this workshop was to align cruisers from various crews to the same understanding of what a grading defect is, how it impacts the wood beneath, and how to correctly assign a tree grade to sawtimber-sized trees.*

*Cruisers were able to see firsthand how far defects marked on the tree's bark extended into the wood as boards were sawn from the tree. The workshop also reinforced using a key to grade trees in the woods and provided opportunity for cruisers to discuss and come to a consensus around more difficult tree grades.*

*Once cruisers know where and what to look for, they can begin to correctly assign a grade to sawtimber-sized trees. The grade assigned is a variable that judges the quality and usefulness of the wood inside of the tree.*

*This type of formal training is important to attend as it standardizes measurements taken by FIA crews across the region.*



Students at the 74th annual Forestry Camp at Fall Creek Falls State Park group camp.



# COMMUNICATIONS AND OUTREACH

The Communications and Outreach Unit strives to inform and educate audiences by providing a better understanding of forestry as a discipline, the role that the Division plays in maintaining a healthy and productive forest resource, and services and resources available to forest landowners in Tennessee. It also educates the public on wildfire prevention and mitigation and provides time-sensitive information during serious wildfire incidents.

A successful effort enhances the appreciation for the state's forests and teaches citizens the benefits of conserving, protecting, and enhancing the resource. As a result, our society receives essential ecological benefits.

The Unit also helps foster healthy communication within the Division itself.

## UNIT MISSION

Communicate clearly and accurately to Tennessee's citizens the information necessary to accomplish the Division's mission and to optimize in-house communications.

## OBJECTIVES FOR THE YEAR

- Grow the public's awareness of the Division's services and resources and educate the public on foundational forestry and forest management concepts.
- Create and expand online resources for wildfire prevention, mitigation, and suppression; forest health; and forest management.



## ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR JULY 1, 2023 – JUNE 30, 2024

- Held educational outreach events across the state, reaching 101,261 adults and students statewide.
- Hired new Forestry Outreach Content Manager contractor to focus on social media and website management.
- Launched and grew social media accounts on Facebook (2.47K new followers, 309K reach) and Instagram (27 new followers, 7K reach) in support of *TN Wildland Fire* campaigns, leveraging these media to promote fire prevention and mitigation messaging, educate on prescribed fire, and inform the public on major wildfire incidents across the state. Accounts can be found at TNWildlandFire on Facebook and Instagram.
- Executed communications plan for state forest management issues at Franklin State Forest (FSF) and Pickett State Forest (PSF). FSF related to temporary usage restrictions and changes to designated use areas. PSF related to temporary usage restrictions to facilitate critical road maintenance and repair operations.
- Administered a contract with the Tennessee Forestry Association to fund a Conservation Education Coordinator who manages the Project Learning Tree program, conducts Teacher Conservation Workshops, and trains facilitators. This effort educates teachers and students on forestry topics.
- Facilitated the 74th Tennessee Forestry Camp for 60 FFA high school students.
- Partnered with field staff and district leadership in West Tennessee to host the Commissioner of Agriculture's Forest Industry Supply Chain Tour & Jobs Camp at Natchez Trace State Forest, utilizing the new work center as a venue to host guests. This included engagement and tours for legislators and other VIP guests, as well as the Division's first Forestry Jobs Camp, which supported TDF's workforce development objectives by introducing 4-H and FFA students to forestry career opportunities in an engaging and hands-on manner.
- Gave multiple radio and television interviews addressing Division programs and topical issues.
- Promoted Division services and outreach campaigns across multiple media outlets and on social media. This included advertising campaigns for wildland fire prevention, safe debris burning, prescribed fire, landowner assistance, forest health, Tennessee Wood Products, and East Tennessee Nursery tree seedlings.
- Strengthened partnership with the Tennessee Forestry Association's communications manager, leading to opportunities for collaboration and further amplifying the Division's messaging.
- Overhauled, modernized, and launched new forest health website, [ProtectTNForests.org](https://ProtectTNForests.org), which provides education and resources on common invasive plants and insects, pathogens, and pest pathways impacting Tennessee's forests.
- Grew reach of social media profiles for the *Protect TN Forests* conservation campaign, including Facebook (819 new followers, 193K reach) and Instagram (59 new followers, 17.1K reach) to connect with a broad audience and promote conservation education, share TDF's activity in forest management, and expand awareness of Division services and resources.
- Represented the Division at the Memphis Urban Wood Academy and presented on communication strategies to promote urban wood utilization.



# ADMINISTRATION

The Division of Forestry employs a workforce of 394 individuals (331 full time and 63 seasonal employees). The Division is administered from headquarters in Nashville, four district offices, and one reforestation office.

The business of the Division is led by the Director of Forest Protection (wildland fire, communications & outreach, fleet) and Director of Forest Management (state forests, forest health & sustainability, reforestation, data & analysis, real property, fiscal administration).

Effective planning, priority setting, and communication within the Division are crucial to organizational effectiveness. The directors work with staff to refine systems that improve customer services and operational efficiencies.

## UNIT MISSION

Increase the effectiveness of management, the quality of customer services, the efficiency of operations, and the cost effectiveness of Division programs.



## OBJECTIVES FOR THE YEAR

- Support internal workforce development initiatives to support succession planning, increase capabilities, and reduce staff turnover.
- Support external workforce development initiatives to support forest industry.
- Streamline grants administration and fiscal monitoring processes.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR JULY 1, 2023 – JUNE 30, 2024

- Increased customer satisfaction ratings from an average of 86% to 95%.
- Held a groundbreaking ceremony at Standing Stone State Forest on May 31, 2024, for a new work center. This work center will be a hub for wildland fire resources, state forest management, and fleet maintenance.
- Revised training guides for Forestry Aide 2 and Forestry Technician positions.
- Converted 20 seasonal firefighter positions to 10 full-time Forestry Aide 2 positions.
- Increased the number of conservation education and outreach events and workshops aimed at promoting green jobs from 30 to 50.
- Collaborated with 23 Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology (TCATs) and high schools to develop forest industry curriculum that can be tailored to meet local market needs.
- Created a new Administrative Services Director 1 position from an existing position and equity.
- Reduced the approval time for administrative, financial, and programmatic compliance during invoice reviews from 14 to 7 business days.





### FORESTRY COMMISSION DUTIES AND FUNCTIONS

The Tennessee Forestry Commission was established by the legislature under T.C.A. 11-4-201 to:

1. Nominate candidates for State Forester.
2. Review, approve, and submit the annual budget of the Forestry Division to the Commissioner of Agriculture.
3. Provide an annual report to the Governor; Commissioner of Agriculture, the Senate Energy, Agriculture, and Natural Resources Committee, and the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee.
4. Recommend to the General Assembly legislation to protect, conserve, and develop the forest resources of the state.
5. Approve the Division's comprehensive strategic plan for the state's forest resources.
6. Establish state forestry policies that will enable the Division to manage its programs.
7. Include in budget recommendations those goals and objectives necessary to implement state forestry policies.

### THE STATE OF TENNESSEE POLICY OF NON-DISCRIMINATION

Pursuant to the State of Tennessee's policy of non-discrimination, the Tennessee Department of Agriculture does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, religion, color, national or ethnic origin, age, disability or military service in its policies or in the admission or access to treatment or employment in its programs, services, or activities.

If you seek more information or feel that you have been treated unfairly in regard to the State's services or hiring practices, contact the Tennessee Department of Agriculture, EEO/AA/ADA Coordinator, P.O. Box 40627 Melrose Station, Nashville, TN 37204, 615-837-5115.

## MEMBERS

**Chair Tom Midyett** | Knoxville | Represents pulp and paper manufacturers

**Vice-Chair John Charles Wilson** | Collinwood | Represents conservation organizations

**Secretary Sharon Jean-Philippe** | Knoxville | Represents public at large

**Bill Legg** | Westpoint | Represents owners of fewer than 500 acres

**Drew Getty** | Winchester | Represents hardwood industry

**Jake Almond** | KINGSTON | Represents owners of greater than 500 acres

**Mark Rogers** | CARYVILLE | Represents owners of fewer than 500 acres

**Ex-Officio Charlie Hatcher, D.V.M.** | Commissioner - Tennessee Department of Agriculture

**Ex-Officio Jason Maxedon** | Director - Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency

**Ex-Officio Roger McCoy** | Director of Conservation - Tennessee Department of Environment & Conservation





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**Agriculture**

Forestry



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