

Southern

Regional

Extension

Forestry

2019

**ANNUAL
REPORT**



www.sref.info
contact@sref.info



Southern Regional
Extension Forestry

2019 ANNUAL REPORT | Southern Regional Extension Forestry

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Extension Forestry



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Colleagues and partners,

It has been a transformative and exciting year at Southern Regional Extension Forestry (SREF). I am happy to have the opportunity to share a report of changes and accomplishments from 2019. While many things have changed at SREF, our general goals have not. SREF's goals continue to be providing capacity to aid state Extension programs; and facilitating cooperation and education program delivery with and amongst state Extension programs, state forestry agencies, the United States Forest Service (USFS) Region 8, State and Private programs and other partners. SREF implemented a new governance model in 2019 to increase accountability, transparency and a structure that focuses on state input. Our goal, in short, is to help develop and coordinate regional programs and resources that help states carry out their work.

At the beginning of 2019, I became the lead for SREF as the Coordinator for the program, on an interim basis. I have worked for SREF as an Extension Associate since 2011, and throughout that time, I have worked with many partners across the South on numerous

regional programs and resources. SREF has streamlined its operations to focus on regional coordination and continue to provide Internet Technology (IT) consultations and services through our grant-funded IT team. I am excited to work in this new role at SREF and am looking forward to continued engagement with partners and colleagues, as well as looking for new ways to serve the southern forestry community.

While 2019 was a year with many adjustments for the SREF program, we worked to complete ongoing projects and commitments while looking ahead to the future. We collected information from stakeholders about their ideas on how SREF could help them achieve their goals and on what the priorities for regional work should be. Our first annual advisory board meeting was held in August 2019, and participants provided guidance and feedback on the SREF workplan. Some of the programs we worked on in 2019 included the Woodland Stewards regional landowner education program. Woodland Stewards is a great example of a strong regional collaboration with measurable impacts. This multi-state program included ten southern forestry Extension programs and included delivery of four weekly live webinars to nearly 400 participants hosted by agents at almost 70 different sites. Another program completed in early 2019, was the Seeding Success online course for early career forestry and natural resource Extension faculty. This national program included collaboration and input from seven lead partners and numerous speakers and will help new FNR Extension personnel to learn from their colleagues and hit the ground running. The SREF IT team continues to support development and maintenance of web-based tools and websites for forestry and natural resource programs. Their knowledge of the forestry and natural resources community helps them to provide informed guidance on internet technology Extension methods.

While there have been many positive changes over the past year, there is still a need to secure funding from more state partners to ensure that SREF can continue to facilitate programming and communication across all of the southern states. We look forward to further opportunities to work together in the future and will continue to explore new ways to enhance southern forestry extension and outreach programs and collaborations.

Sincerely,

Leslie Boby
Interim Coordinator

IN 2019, SREF...

- Implemented a **new advisory board structure**
- Collected **stakeholder input**
- Continued with **regional recognition awards program** and awarded more than 30 projects
- Completed **Master Gardeners' Firescaping Modules**, including 11 videos, a training toolbox and more
- Added new features to the **Forestry Webinar Portal**
- Represented Extension Forestry in the **Keeping Forests Collaborative**
- Planned **Regional Forest Economic Summit**

-  **1** co-lead **REGIONAL LANDOWNER EDUCATION WEBINAR SERIES**
-  **30** interviewed and surveyed more than **REGIONAL PARTNERS** for input on new goals and workplan for SREF
-  **40** wrote and delivered **WEEKLY AND BI-WEEKLY NEWSLETTERS** to **3,000** regional and national subscribers
-  **2** served on **ADVISORY BOARDS** and numerous regional and national committees
-  **12** created, updated or redesigned **WEBSITES** and **3** **MOBILE APPLICATIONS** in addition to the 60+ that are already managed by SREF IT
-  **20** consulted on more than **INTERNET TECHNOLOGY PROJECTS** with regional partners, some of which were funded



Restructuring

The stakeholder-led SREF restructuring effort has resulted in a significantly reduced budget, appropriate capacity and improved oversight. Currently there is one full-time Coordinator position and three full-time IT solutions positions, as well as student workers. The retention of IT staff is purposeful as the Extension units, stakeholders, and partners have indicated the importance of continued SREF engagement in developing online platforms to support state programs. Further, SREF's IT staff have led the nation in providing the most successful continuing education platforms in forestry and natural resources and it was recognized that retaining this capacity is in the best interest of the region at this time.



Funding Changes

The SREF funding model requires base funding from university members and partners solely for a full-time Coordinator, while IT staff will continue to be funded 100% through fees for using SREF IT services and/or tools (ex. website development and hosting regional webinars). Previously, funding for the lead of SREF (regional forester) and a business manager came from the Association of Southern Region Extension Directors (ASRED), and funding for all other positions came through contracts or grants. In order to continue to sustain Southern Regional Extension Forestry, support from more university forestry programs will be necessary. Current funding for SREF during this transition period has generously been provided by:

In order to continue to sustain Southern Regional Extension Forestry's support for the region, support from more university programs will be necessary.



SCHOOL OF FORESTRY
AND WILDLIFE SCIENCES



UNIVERSITY OF
GEORGIA
Warnell School of Forestry
& Natural Resources



REGION 8 STATE
& PRIVATE FORESTRY



American Forest Foundation



COLLEGE OF NATURAL
RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT
VIRGINIA TECH.



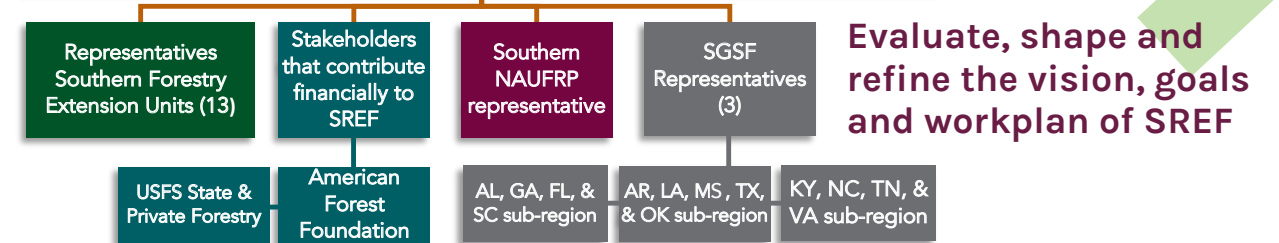
Forestry and Natural Resources Extension
College of Agriculture, Food and Environment

ADVISORY BOARD & EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE PROVIDE PROGRAM GUIDANCE

SREF has a new advisory board and executive committee to shape program directions and to guide the coordinator through regular updates.



Advisory Board



The advisory board, which will meet annually, is comprised of all southern university forestry extension unit leaders, three sub-regional representatives of the Southern Group of State Foresters (SGSF) and southern National Association of University Forest Resource Programs (NAUFRP), and stakeholders and partners that fund SREF, including the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) State and Private Forestry and the American Forest Foundation.



Executive Committee



A five-member executive committee meets regularly with the SREF coordinator to oversee workplan implementation. The executive committee includes forestry Extension Unit leaders from the three sub-regions of the south and a representative from SGSF and NAUFRP. The executive committee meets at least quarterly, and as needed with members holding two-year rotating appointments.

Advisory board at First Annual Meeting, August 2019



Advisory board members represent the following organizations:



REGION 8 STATE
& PRIVATE FORESTRY



COLLEGE OF NATURAL
RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT
VIRGINIA TECH.



SCHOOL OF FORESTRY
AND WILDLIFE SCIENCES



Forestry and Natural Resources Extension
College of Agriculture, Food and Environment

SREF's new accountability and decision-making structure with region-wide representation, streamlined staffing and reduced base budget requirements was created to serve southern forestry partners.

The information below was collected in a questionnaire in an interview with stakeholders prior to the first advisory board meeting. Stakeholders were asked, "How do you think that SREF could most benefit your team, the region, forestry, etc.?" The input was summarized into these categories. This information can be used by the advisory board and the executive committee to refine SREF's goals.

Central Facilitation and Coordination Across the Region

Facilitate getting work done, but do not create the content necessarily

Assist with connecting individuals across the region

Identify issues that states may not be working on that could impact forest management in the future and share with the group

Create Regional Products

Factsheets, web-based products or other materials that are needed

Regional program development which may include educational outreach

Webinars and short courses

Assist with development of regional online training for agents, for example on grant-writing or ethics training or specific skills-driven courses

Enable Strong Regional Communication

Share information on regional efforts outside the South

Regularly communicate what is happening in participating states that could lead to better regional efforts

Share Extension forestry or general forestry work or good news

Create or share success stories

Market or advertise forestry program

Inform the region of issues/programs at the national level that may affect state programs

Provide Internet Technology (IT) Consulting and Support

The SREF IT team should provide consultation on feasibility of projects and possible support, though specific project work is done on a "pay-as-you-go" model

Assist with Developing Project Ideas for Funding

This may include grant-writing assistance or connecting stakeholders who may be working on compatible projects for grant development

Provide Opportunities to Connect

Foster relationships amongst forestry extension agency and other partners by providing opportunities to connect with one another

SREF IT professionals provide information technology consultations and solutions for forestry and natural resource organizations. For over 15 years, they've worked with organizations to help them create and develop custom websites and mobile applications that help bring extension, research, and education-based initiatives and information to life.

*Providing Information Technology solutions for forestry and natural resource organizations for **more than 15 years.***

IT services

- Consultations
- Website and business process consulting
- Website and mobile app development
- Graphic design
- Workflow processing
- Multi-device information collection
- Workflow-based business processing
- Optimized information delivery methods
- Leading-edge end-user technology experiences
- Secure enterprise content management systems

SREF's IT staff have led the nation in providing the most successful continuing education platform in forestry and natural resources, the Forestry Webinar Portal. Funding for the IT Services team comes exclusively from contracts, grants, and web-hosting fees.



DARRYL OUTLAW
IT ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

Expertise:
End-to-end IT business solutions, technology integration, project management, website design & development, database management, API development



DANIEL DRUMMOND
IT DEVELOPER & MOBILE APPLICATIONS DIRECTOR

Expertise:
Website design & development, mobile application development, 3rd party API development & tool integration, system tools development



STEVEN WEAVER
EXTENSION ASSOCIATE – GEOSPATIAL APPLICATIONS & IT PROGRAMMER

Expertise:
Website development, GIS & web-mapping development, forestry content

The SREF Digest Newsletter is a biweekly newsletter that provides subscribers with current and impactful news relevant to their work. Content for the newsletter is targeted towards sharing important information and helpful resources for forestry and natural resources personnel from Cooperative Extension and state and federal agencies, as well as other partners and outreach professionals.

The SREF Digest includes news sections that cover regional and national news, funding opportunities, Extension forestry and forestry agency jobs and upcoming events. Next steps for the newsletter include surveying readers for feedback and looking for new ways to improve and better utilize it as a regional communication tool.

QUICK FACTS

31%

open rate with a

15%

click rate

3,000

subscribers

40 total SREF
digests sent
for calendar year

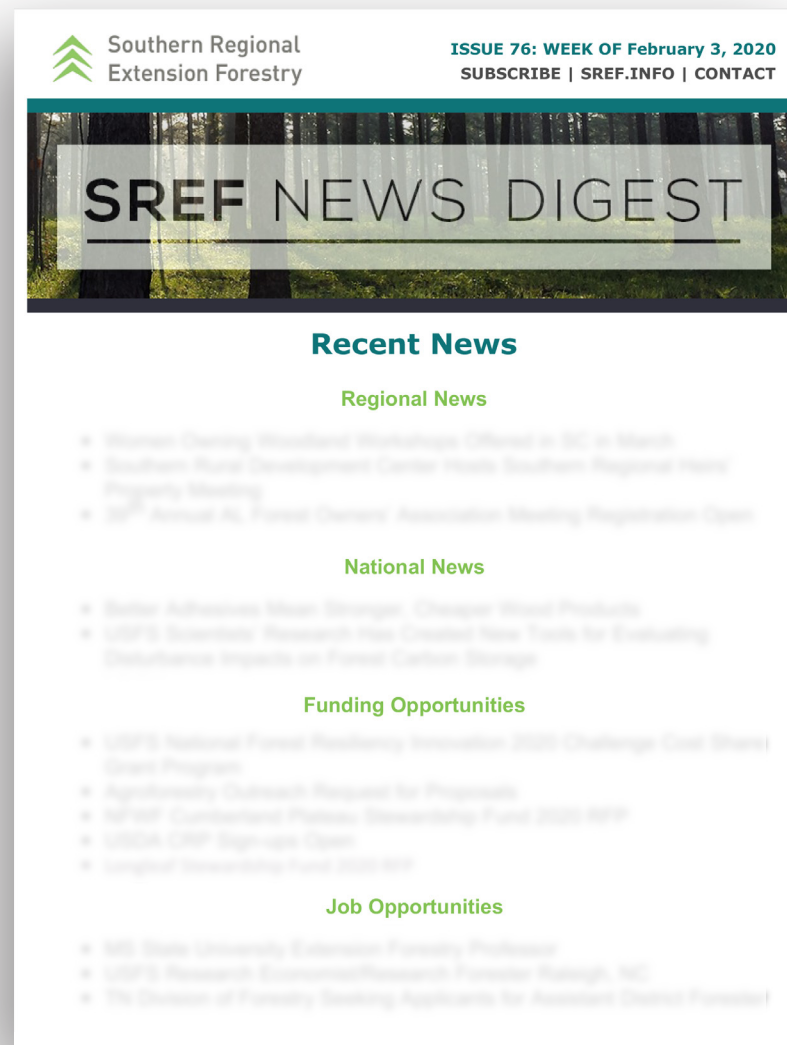
SUBSCRIBER FEEDBACK

"very useful, keeps regional activities in the forefront"

"very useful for compiling regional forestry info into one place"

"great, and good information +++"

"the weekly e-news is a very useful resource and regional communication tool"



have some news to share? New publication, event, etc.?
Email SREFNewsletter@sref.info



Regional Collaborations and Impacts

WS WOODLAND STEWARDS

A Regional Extension Program for Landowners

In February and March 2019, Forestry and Natural Resource professionals from Cooperative Extension programs across the southeast US, in collaboration with university, state and federal partners, collaborated to deliver a regional education program for woodland owners. The goal of the program was to empower woodland owners to promote environmental and forest health through increased awareness, experience and access to resources.

The series included four sessions conducted over four weeks. County and regional agents from participating states hosted landowner groups while speakers presented via webinar software. Over the four-week period, as many as 13 states representing as many as 70 sites tuned into the webinar series, with an average of over 380 registrants per session. Over 90% of the sites were across six states: Kentucky, Missouri, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee and Virginia.

The goal of the program was to **empower woodland owners** to promote environmental and forest health through increased awareness, experience and access to resources.



NC STATE EXTENSION



Forestry and Natural Resources Extension
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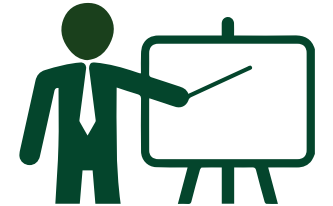
OVERALL QUALITY OF THE PROGRAM: 3.3/4



4.1/5
participants would recommend the
webinar series to other landowners

NEARLY 100%

of attendees said that they now know who to contact if they have questions about their woodlands, as a result of this workshop



4.3/5 participants felt the information
presented was relevant to their needs

"...that presentation was really
an eye-opener for me on the
need to manage timber"

"The class gave me a base of
information that I can take into
my woods, and start evaluating
my trees."

"The information was excellent,
more people need to hear these
presentations!"

97% of participants felt the information was easy to understand



Participants averaged a
34% INCREASE
in knowledge related to
the topics of the webinar



60% of participants plan to contact a
natural resource professional within
the next three months

participants indicated
collectively owning over

42,227 ACRES



SEEDING SUCCESS

Tools, Technology and Techniques
for a Successful Extension Natural Resources Career

funding for this project
was provided by USDA NIFA



Funded by a grant from the USDA National Institutes of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)'s Renewable Resources Extension Act, the course serves as an asynchronous webinar series to onboard next generation Extension professionals. This course could best be described as providing a roadmap for new Extension forester or natural resource specialists who are just beginning their Extension and natural resources journey. It was designed to supplement institutions' individual training programs. While initially the course was planned to be asynchronous, it was offered to a live cohort in Fall 2018.



National Planning Team!

Planning for this course took nearly a year, as it included a survey to determine what information Extension specialists felt would be important to include. Lead organizers included Leslie Boby, Karen Bennett, Marc Thomas, Janean Creighton, Eli Sagor, Jim Johnson, Mark Megalos, Jim Finley, Titus Andrews, Bill Hubbard, and Jeff Stringer. Each module was planned by a team lead who recruited other individuals to co-plan and co-present, leading to diverse perspectives.



Course Delivered Synchronously in Fall 2018

From September to December 2018, 8 distinct modules were delivered synchronously via online webinars. These webinars used clips recorded from video interviews with 33 experienced Extension personnel. This course put New Extension foresters or natural resource specialists in touch online with much of the national network of diverse, knowledgeable colleagues that are a part of the Land-grant University System. This allowed participants to learn from their experiences and perspectives, as well as engage and build connections with them.



TOPICS COVERED:

INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE
MODULE 1: ONBOARDING BASICS
GETTING STARTED IN FORESTRY & NATURAL RESOURCES
MODULE 2: NETWORKING YOUR WAY TO SUCCESS
THE ROLE OF MENTORS
MODULE 3: AUDIENCES & NEEDS ASSESSMENTS
MODULE 4: PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT & DELIVERY
MODULE 5: AN INTRODUCTION TO PROGRAM EVALUATION
MODULE 6: EXTENSION SCHOLARSHIP
MODULE 7: FINDING FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR PROGRAM ENHANCEMENT
MODULE 8: NEGOTIATING EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIPS
FINAL WEBINAR & WRAP-UP

"Modules, 3, 4 and 5 presented **information I desperately needed**, so they were my favorites. Several of the resources mentioned in those sessions are ones that I have looked up and used since."

"I liked **the broad range of experts** that shared experiences and/or suggestions with us. I also liked the flexibility of the course."

~25 attendees per session

35 video interviews of Extension personnel

Social media page created for interaction

Numerous resources added for each module

90% of participants agreed that the Seeding Success course was very helpful for their Extension and/or outreach work

HELPFUL TOPICS

86% development & delivery

77% audience needs assessments

76% program evaluation

OVERALL WEBINAR RATING: 4.1/5 STARS



100% of attendees reported that they would recommend the program

<https://sref.info/seeding-success>



For forestry and natural resource extension and education, the portal leads in providing a wide range of forestry and natural resource content for participants. For presenters or webinar providers, the portal is a full-featured online platform that enables them to present relevant and impactful information and research.

In the ten years the Webinar Portal has existed, it has grown and added new features to better serve webinar providers and users.

The **#1** free educational webinar platform for forestry, natural resources, conservation and climate science.

One-Stop Shop for Webinar Viewers

- Single platform for participants to find content on the latest research and issues
- Webinars presented by a wide range of professionals
- Intuitive and easy-to-use interface
- Home page features make each visit unique
- Easy to obtain CEUs

Provides a suite of tools that assist with and automate time-consuming pre- and post-webinar tasks and access to **21,000+ active subscribers.**

New Features and Improvements in 2019: GROUP VIEW AND IMPACT SURVEY TOOL

New this year to the Webinar Portal are two new major features that extend the functionality of the Portal for webinar providers and participants. The new **Group View capabilities** allow groups to participant in both live and on-demand webinars as a group from a single remote location. Each member of the group can obtain a Certificate of Participation and earn continuing education credits that may be offered.

The **Impact Survey Tool** allows webinar providers the ability to define custom impact surveys for their webinars that are automatically sent to participants six months after the participant's viewing of a webinar. The impact survey gives webinar providers another tool to help gauge knowledge transfer and improvements realized in the field.

Additional Webinar Portal improvements and changes include expanded statistical gathering of participant and feedback data as well as real-time statistical reporting of aggregated attendance, demographics, feedback and website traffic.

One-Stop Shop for Webinar Deliveries

- Subscriber management
- Email marketing & campaign analytics
- Continuing education application and approval
- Participant registration

"Very applicable. Love hearing from the professionals that have both the academic and boots-on-the-ground experience."

- D. Fox, Florida

MAJOR FUNDING IN 2019 FOR THE WEBINAR PORTAL WAS PROVIDED BY:

NC STATE EXTENSION



Our ongoing partners and stakeholders include NC State, UGA Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources, USDA Forest Service, USDA Northeast Climate Hub, and the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service.

AVERAGE WEBINAR RATING

4 STARS ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

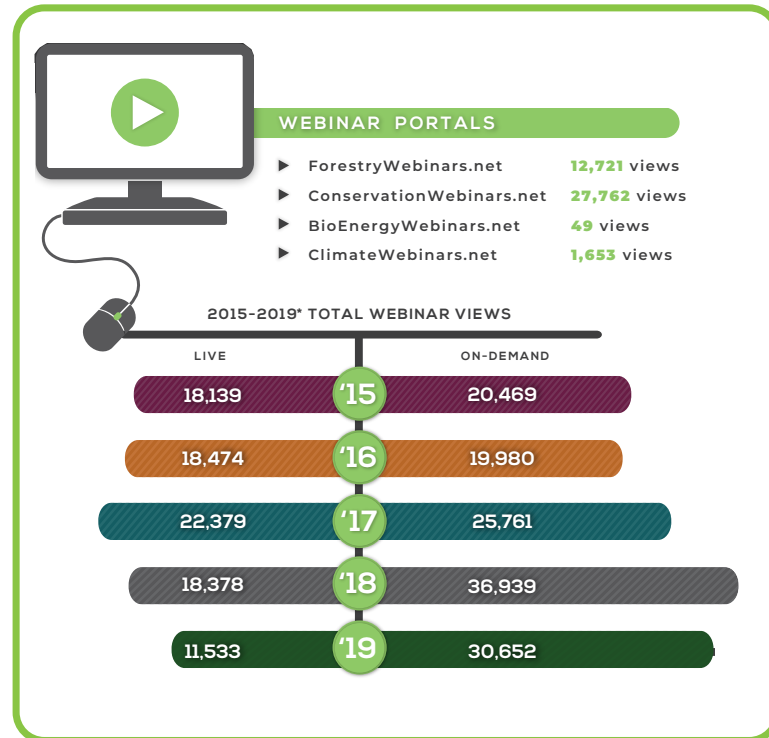
RATED BY **49,817** PARTICIPANTS

"I appreciate the **specific guidance** contained in this webinar; it is very helpful."

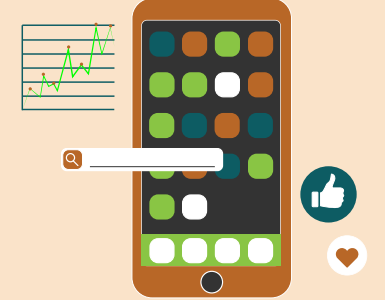
- K. Clause, Federal Agency Employee,
Wyoming

"Very informative...it will be **useful on the job**...
thank you!"

- W. Stewart, Logger,
Mississippi



SREF has over a decade of experience developing a wide variety of custom mobile application solutions for both the iOS and Android platforms, utilizing technologies such as custom API (Application Programming Interface) & data integration, calculators & decision support tools, interactive charts & graphs, GIS & mapping intelligence, calendar- & event-based push notifications, & accessibility & multilanguage support.



CARINATA YIELD CALCULATOR



**provides interactive
charts on growth
information**

- Provides interactive charts for comparing available growth information regarding the production of Carinata in the Southeastern United States
- Serves both state and regional interests and needs

iFERTIGATE



**helps formulate ideal
ratios for nursery
combined fertilization
& irrigation**

- Assists with the creation of tank mixes for nursery fertigation practices
- Serves regional, state, national, and international nursery manager interests and needs

IT Accomplishments

eYIELD (COMING SOON)



Southern Regional
Extension Forestry

This website was created to assist private landowners with financial and silvicultural decision-making by providing them access to decision support tools.

Landowners can plug their information into the website and receive feedback on their hardwood and natural pine forests.

two models and **several reports** have been integrated into the website



beta testing phase begins in **Spring 2020**

FOREST VEGETATION MANAGEMENT (COMING SOON)



This is a regional website updated to promote the management of forest vegetation for forestry and wildlife objectives.

Resources include educational materials arranged by tool or goal such as using herbicides, prescribed fire, hand tools or managing for wildlife objectives.

updates to the website include a **redesign** of the layout to improve information delivery



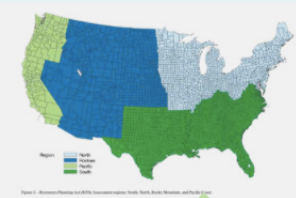
the updated website serves both **state** and **regional** interests and needs

FOREST & RANGELAND RENEWABLE RESOURCES PLANNING (COMING SOON)



The national Renewable Resources Planning Act (RPA) Assessment was conducted in 2019, and this website was created to share research and findings from the 2020 report. The RPA assessment forecasts changes in land uses for the coterminous United States between 1997 and 2060.

Website includes **customized communication tools** that produce interactive bar charts and choropleth maps of findings.



NATIONAL URBAN & COMMUNITY FORESTRY ADVISORY COUNCIL GRANT PORTAL



The new grant portal streamlines and automates many manual tasks related to applying for and reviewing grant applications for the NUCFAC Challenge Cost-Share Grant program. The portal integrates automatically with NUCFAC's Grant Review Portal to eliminate manual processes previously required to accept and review grant applications.

workflow-based portal automatically creates one combined grant application package



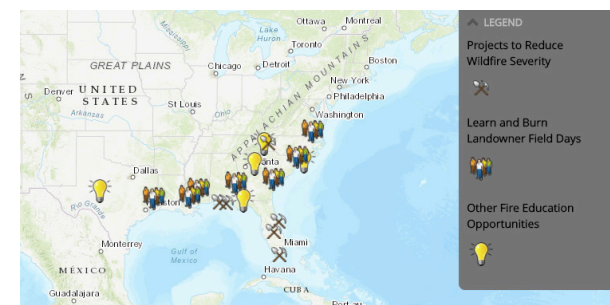
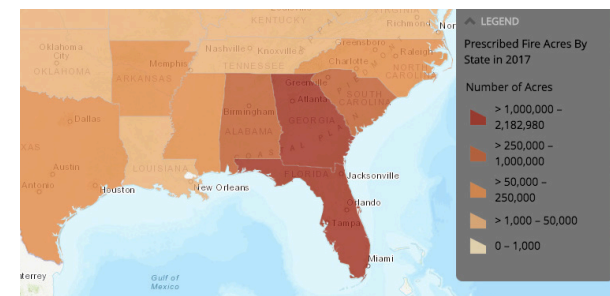
Storymap for the Southeastern Region



The goal of the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy is to address complex challenges in wildland fire management and the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) areas.

This Storymap was developed for the Southeastern Cohesive Strategy in order to:

- Communicate the past & present story of wildland fire in the South
- Provide examples of programs that are addressing wildfire challenges
- and more!



Release date coming soon!

Developed by Holly Campbell and Steven Weaver with the Southern Regional Extension Forester office at UGA, in collaboration with Gary Wood, Southeast Regional Coordinator Cohesive Wildland Fire Strategy.

General websites for partners



Southeastern Forest Vegetation Management
<https://fvm2.sref.info>

Longleaf Alliance Website
<http://longleafalliance.org>



Southern Forest Health
<https://southernforesthealth.net>

Southeastern Cohesive Fire Strategy
<http://southernwildfire.net>



Shortleaf Pine Initiative
<http://shortleafpine.org>

Southern Fire Exchange
<https://southernfireexchange.org>

Georgia Wild Pigs
<http://georgiawildpigs.com>

Georgia Master Timber Harvester
<https://gamth.org>



Plantation Management Research Cooperative
<http://pmrc.sref.info>

eYield
<http://eyield.sref.info>

Continuing Education at Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources
<https://conted.warnell.uga.edu>



PINEMAP
<http://pinemap.org>

Southeastern Partnership for Integrated Biomass Supply
<http://ibss.sref.info>



ProForest Health
<http://proforesthealth.org>

Wood Decay Fungi Identification
<http://wdfi.sref.info>



US Department of Agriculture Forest Service Websites and portals

Eastern Forest Environmental Threat Assessment Center
<https://forestthreats.org>

Reforestation, Nurseries, & Genetics, Resources
<https://rngr.net>

Native Plant Network
<https://nnp.rngr.net>

RNGR Forum
<https://forum.rngr.net>



Urban Forestry South
<https://urbanforestrysouth.org>

National Timber Tax Website
<https://timbertax.org>

National Urban and Community Forestry Advisory Council Intranet
<https://nucfac.org>



Ten-Year Urban Forestry Action Plan
<https://urbanforestplan.org>

NUCFAC FS Challenge Cost-Share Grant
<https://grants.nucfac.org>

Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning
<http://rpa.sref.info>

Learning Modules
<https://elearn.sref.info>

National Forest Resiliency Innovation Grant Portal
<https://grants.urbanandcommunityforests.org>

National Forest Resiliency Innovation Review Portal
<https://review.urbanandcommunityforests.org>



Southern Group of State Foresters

Southern Group of State Foresters
<https://southernforests.org>

Forest Products Locator
<https://primary.forestproductslocator.org>

Forestry Economic Impacts
<https://forestryimpacts.net>

Webinar Portals

SREF Forestry Webinars Portal
<http://forestrywebinars.net>

USDA NRCS East West Technology Transfer
<http://conservationwebinars.net>

SREF BioEnergy Webinars Portal
<http://bioenergywebinars.net>

SREF Climate Science Webinars Portal
<http://climatewebinars.net>