



# ALABAMA FORESTRY COMMISSION

PROTECT • SUSTAIN • EDUCATE

[www.forestry.alabama.gov](http://www.forestry.alabama.gov)

June 11, 2025

The Honorable Kay Ivey  
Governor, State of Alabama  
Alabama State Capitol  
Montgomery, Alabama

Dear Governor Ivey:

Thank you for all the many ways in which you supported the Alabama Forestry Commission during fiscal year 2024, which coincided with our Centennial Year. Your participation in our anniversary celebration, as well as your assistance in securing funding for the AFC, made this a truly memorable year for the AFC.

Once again, the agency is submitting a StoryMap version of our 2024 Annual Report to uniquely tell our story with both words and pictures. This report highlights various programs and accomplishments of the agency in the past year while serving as the steward of Alabama's vast forests, the second-largest commercial forest in the nation.

The fiscal year began with Alabama experiencing above-average wildfire activity due to drought conditions, prompting the agency to issue a Fire Alert for all 67 counties. This situation evolved into the Governor's Declaration of a statewide Drought Emergency. This 'No Burn Order' was eventually lifted in early December. During the year, our wildland firefighters suppressed 2,207 wildfires burning approximately 38,200 acres of forestland across the state. We also conducted prescribed burning on 52,908 acres, a proactive management tool that significantly reduces the risk of devastating wildfires that occur in the western states.

Forest health issues were also at the forefront in the summer of 2024, with the South experiencing the worst epidemic of southern pine beetles in the last 23 years. Across Alabama, the insect devastated approximately 52,000 acres of pine forests – more than 2 million trees!

The temporary absence of wildfires at home in late summer allowed the agency to lend assistance to the Pacific Northwest states. These 14-day wildfire details ran from July through September, with the AFC deploying 32 wildland firefighters and equipment to Oregon and Washington State.

On a positive note, at Flagg Mountain the new Fenvkvcēkv (*pronounced finuh-guh-jee-guh*) Creek Preserve was dedicated by The Nature Conservancy (TNC) on Earth Day in April. This 1,000-acre tract's name honors the Muscogee People, the original caretakers of the land, and is the original Muscogee name for the bordering, ecologically rich Finikochicka Creek. The Preserve will significantly contribute to conservation efforts of this biologically rich watershed and old-growth montane forests.

As always, the AFC placed emphasis on personnel training in 2024, including 18 new employees who graduated from the Forestry Academy in May. Our people also coordinated landowner tours, Learn & Burns, workshops, and seminars in every county, conducted numerous educational programs and career events at schools, and even helped celebrate Smokey Bear's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday!

Traditional forest management activities included our staff of forestry professionals recognizing forest landowners across the state with TREASURE Forest, Stewardship, and Tree Farm certifications. We provided landowners with a total of 269 management plans, forest certifications/recertifications, and stand management recommendations. Urban forestry activities included tree distributions and plantings for Arbor Day, as well as recognition of Tree City USAs and Champion Trees.

To see all our FY24 accomplishments, I invite you to click the 'virtual tour' link on our website at [www.forestry.alabama.gov](http://www.forestry.alabama.gov) or use the QR code at the bottom of this letter, which will take you directly to Storymap. If your office would like a hard copy of this document for archiving, we will be happy to provide that. We will keep both an electronic and a hard copy at our office.

Our employees find it rewarding that the jobs we perform every day affect the lives of so many people, not only today, but for decades to come. Our work helps to ensure that Alabama has a healthy environment and vibrant economy. We extend our thanks to you and the members of the Alabama Legislature for your continued crucial support of the Alabama Forestry Commission.

Sincerely,



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rick Oates".

Rick Oates  
State Forester

*Serving Alabama's Forest Landowners for 100 Years*