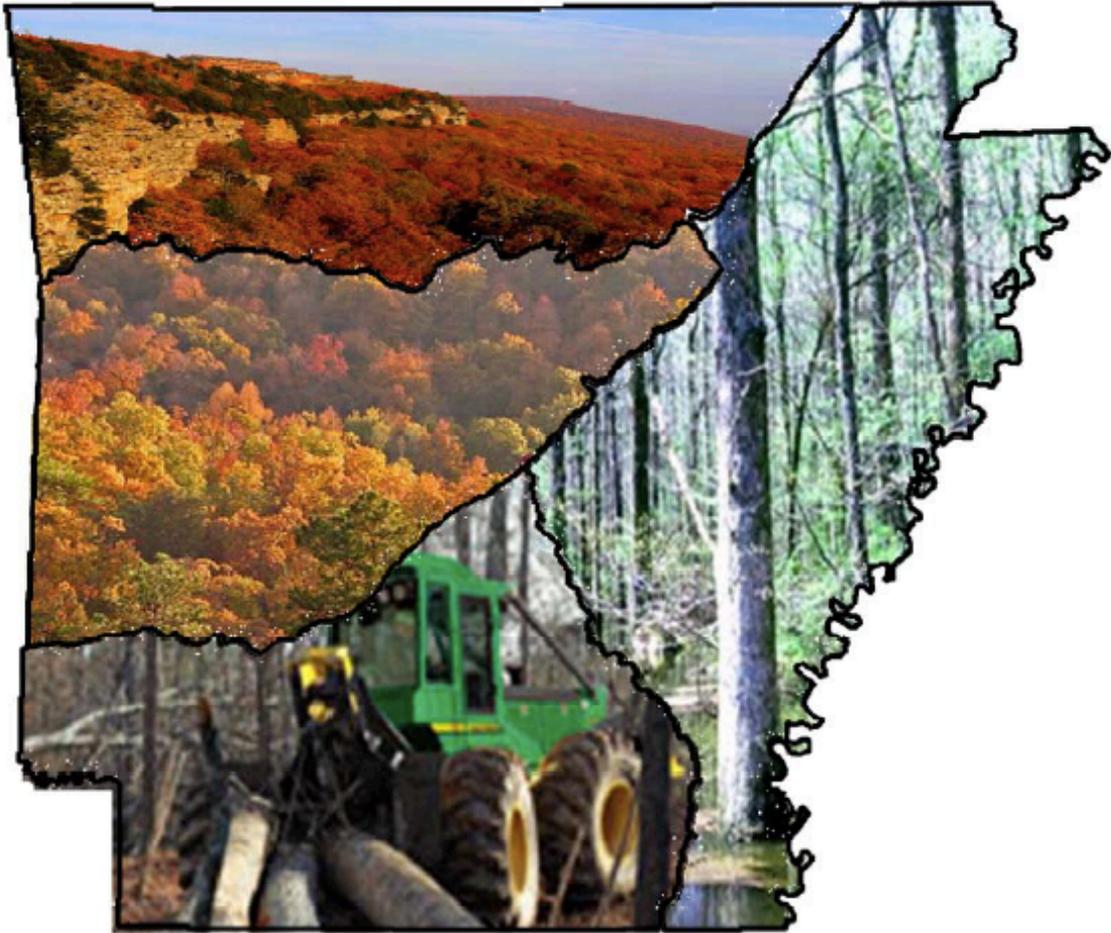


# Arkansas Statewide Forest Resources Strategy

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*A comprehensive strategy for investing resources  
to address management and landscape priorities*

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**2010**



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## **Executive Summary**

In 2008, the US Forest Service (USFS) responded to the combined impacts of increasing pressure on the nation's forests and decreasing S&PF resources and funds by focusing on three national priorities: conserve working forests, protect forests, and enhance benefits from trees and forests. Each state is required by the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act (CFAA), as enacted in the 2008 Farm Bill, to analyze its forest conditions and trends and determine priorities in a State Assessment.

Based on the State Assessment, a Statewide Forest Resource Strategy, or response plan, is required by each state and will become the foundation for formulating S&PF competitive project proposals and guiding S&PF program direction.

Geographically, Arkansas is a diverse state with an area of 33.3 million acres, 56% of which is forested. Arkansas's forests provide a multitude of economic and environmental services. With input from stakeholders, Arkansas Forestry Commission (AFC) program leaders identified six primary issues for the rural and urban forests of the state. A geospatial analysis was conducted to delineate high priority areas across the Arkansas landscape where future efforts might be focused for each of the following issues:

- Water Quality and Quantity
- Forest Health/Invasive Species
- Forest Fragmentation/Parcelization/ Changing Ownerships
- Increase and Enhance the Benefits of Working Forests
- Climate Change
- Fire Management

The Arkansas Statewide Forest Resources Strategy highlights how AFC plans to use the S&PF program to address priority issues and areas identified in the Statewide Assessment. The document contains the following elements:

- In response to these issues, the Statewide Resource Strategy has been divided into two sections; a Strategic Issues Section and a Programs Section.
- Most of the elements required for the Statewide Resource Strategy by the Farm Bill and USFS Assessment and Strategy national guidance are located in the Strategic Issues Section of this Statewide Forest Resource Strategy document.
- The Programs Section provides a general description of all current AFC programs. More detail is provided for those programs that do not appear individually or specifically in the Issues Section of the document.

## **Introduction**

Following completion of the statewide assessment, states are to complete a statewide forest resources strategy to detail how priority forest landscapes will be addressed and how State and Private Forestry (S&PF) funds can contribute to that effort. The forest resource strategy provides a long-term, comprehensive, coordinated strategy for investing state, federal, and leveraged partner resources to address the management priorities identified in its assessment. The resource strategy incorporates existing statewide forest and resource management plans and provides the basis for future program, agency, and partner coordination.

Direction for the Statewide Forest Resource Strategy was provided by the 2008 Farm Bill, which states:

### **SEC. 2A. STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT AND STRATEGIES FOR FOREST RESOURCES.**

(a) ASSESSMENT AND STRATEGIES FOR FOREST RESOURCES - For a State to be eligible to receive funds under the authorities of this Act, the State forester of that State or equivalent State official shall develop and submit to the Secretary, not later than two years after the date of enactment of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008, the following:

- (1) A State-wide assessment of forest resource conditions, including—
  - (A) the conditions and trends of forest resources in that State;
  - (B) the threats to forest lands and resources in that State consistent with the national priorities specified in section 2(c);
  - (C) any areas or regions of that State that are a priority; and
  - (D) any multi-State areas that are a regional priority.
- (2) A long-term, State-wide forest resource strategy, including—
  - (A) strategies for addressing threats to forest resources in the State outlined in the assessment required by paragraph (1); and
  - (B) a description of the resources necessary for the State forester or equivalent State official from all sources to address the State-wide strategy.

There are three components to the assessment and planning required by the S&PF Redesign approach to identify priority forest landscape areas and highlight work needed to address national, regional, and state forest management priorities.

**Statewide Assessment of Forest Resources** – provides an analysis of forest conditions and trends in the state and delineates priority rural and urban forest landscape areas.

**Statewide Forest Resource Strategy** – provides long-term strategies for investing state, federal, and other resources to manage priority landscapes identified in the assessment, focusing where federal investment can most effectively stimulate or leverage desired action and engage multiple partners.

**Annual Report on Use of Funds** – describes how S&PF funds were used to address the assessment and strategy, including the leveraging of funding and resources through partnerships, for any given fiscal year. Each State is required to complete a State Assessment and Resource Strategy within two years after enactment of the 2008 Farm Bill (June 18, 2008) to receive funds under CFAA.

The 2008 Farm Bill is can be reviewed in its entirety at the link below:

[http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=110\\_cong\\_public\\_laws&docid=f:publ246.pdf](http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=110_cong_public_laws&docid=f:publ246.pdf)

The strategy outlines long-term approaches for addressing priority landscapes identified in

the state forest resource assessment and the following national themes and associated management objectives:

**Conserve Working Forest Lands:** conserving and managing working forest landscapes for multiple values and uses.

- Identify and conserve high priority forest ecosystems and landscapes.
- Actively and sustainably manage forests.

**Protect Forests From Harm:** protect forests from threats, including catastrophic storms, flooding, insect or disease outbreak, and invasive species.

- Restore fire-adapted lands and reduce risk of wildfire impacts.
- Identify, manage and reduce threats to forest and ecosystem health.

**Enhance Public Benefits from Trees and Forests:** including air and water quality, soil conservation, biological diversity, carbon storage, and forest products, forestry related jobs, production of renewable energy, and wildlife.

- Protect and enhance water quality and quantity.
- Improve air quality and conserve energy.
- Assist communities in planning for and reducing wildfire risks.
- Maintain and enhance the economic benefits and values of trees and forests.
- Protect, conserve, and enhance wildlife and fish habitat.
- Connect people to trees and forests, and engage them in environmental stewardship activities.
- Manage and restore trees and forests to mitigate and adapt to global climate change.

This strategy will;

- Discuss each critical issue, as defined in the assessment, and the goals, objectives, and strategies for addressing them.
- Identify performance measures to be used to assess progress at meeting goals and objectives.
- Describe Arkansas's State Forestry Programs—their priority areas, goals, objectives, and strategies, and performance measures.

Planning for and protecting Arkansas's forest resources are multifaceted tasks that are accomplished through coordinated efforts and feedback from representatives of natural resource agencies, organizations, and public and private entities to ensure the successful development and implementation of Arkansas's Statewide Resource Strategy.

Arkansas's forests provide numerous ecosystem services that can be maintained and even increased with communication concerning active forest management. Many forest owners may be hesitant to employ the forest management techniques unless education and outreach programs are available concerning forest management. Other landowners will be unable to employ these forest management techniques without financial assistance in the form of cost-share programs.

Forestland ownerships are becoming smaller as a result of ownership changes and management objectives. It is possible that an increasing number of owners lack forest management knowledge. Increasing and enhancing working forest can be accomplished through education and outreach to forestland owners, continued funding of cost share programs, and developing new biomass/fiber markets.

An increasing amount of forestland may be considered "working" as these markets continue to develop. Continued funding of cost share programs, education and outreach to forest landowners, as well as continuing to improve pine seed source will increase and enhance the benefits of working forests. Opportunities available to address this issue include developing

values associated with ecosystem services, implementing cost share incentives, tax credits for conservation easements, and public education on the value of forest land.

Arkansas forests continue to become more fragmented as ownerships change and population growth occurs. New owners of forestland may not have objectives that are compatible with sustainable forest management. Because of fragmentation, the trend towards passive management may be growing. Opportunities exist to “get the word out” through education and outreach programs to ensure landowners are aware of the benefits of active forest management.

Developing added values to forest land such as those associated with environmental services, implementation of more focused incentives for reforestation and afforestation, and other forest practices, further developing tax credits for conservation easements, and educating landowners on the value of forest land – especially economic benefit to individuals are potential opportunities for creating more active forest landowners that will have sustainable forest management goals. Financial assistance or “cost-share” for forest management practices is usually available to landowners.

Financial assistance programs are funded by the federal government and administered at the state level. Forest practices eligible under these programs include site preparation, tree planting, prescribed burning, fire lane construction, pre-commercial thinning, herbicide application, and Best Management Practices implementation.

The Arkansas Forestry Commission continually strives to expand forestry practices and related benefits to individual landowners all across the state. Additional funds for cost-share programs will ensure all non-industrial private landowner interested in active forest management are afforded that opportunity.

## **Strategic Issues**

### **Issue 1. Water Quality and Quantity**

#### ***Description***

Forests around water bodies act as buffers and should be protected. Many factors impact water quality and quantity including the conversion of forestland to non-forest uses such as urbanization. Management should be tailored to reduce impacts to water quality. Opportunities exist to establish buffers in urban and agricultural areas and to improve the implementation of forestry Best Management Practices.

Opportunities exist to preserve and expand forested areas along waterways. These opportunities include protecting forested karst recharge watersheds from development, forested riparian zones from conversion to non-forested uses and watersheds critical to public drinking water supplies and aquatic life. Methods for accomplishment include prioritizing the purchase of conservation easements within riparian corridors and lands that contain known cave structures, sinkholes, and other openings to groundwater recharge. Conservation easements will ensure protection against forestland conversion.

#### ***Priority Areas***

Identified priority areas in Arkansas to benefit from forested waterways include the Buffalo River, Saline River, Lake Maumelle watershed, Arkansas River, Mississippi River, and the karst features associated with the landscape of the Ozark Mountains.

There are many areas in the state where opportunities exist to establish and restore forest cover to riparian areas. Two primary areas are in the urban areas of the state and along agricultural fields. The restoration of forest cover in these areas will provide many benefits not only to the sources of human drinking water but also to aquatic and terrestrial fauna that depend of the riparian areas for cover.

#### ***Goals, Objectives and Strategies***

There are opportunities to improve BMP implementation on all ownerships, especially Non-industrial Private Landowners who scored the lowest on the BMP Implementation Survey conducted by the Arkansas Forestry Commission. Financial incentives made available to private landowners to assist in implementing Arkansas BMPs and landowner education would improve implementation rates.

#### ***Goal 1: Protect and enhance water quality through forest conservation***

**Objective 1.1:** Identify watersheds where continued forest conservation and management is present or where restoration or protection improve a water source

**Strategy 1.1.1:** Improve BMP implementation on all ownerships

**Strategy 1.1.2:** Educate Non-Industrial Private Landowners about BMP implementation Survey

**Strategy 1.1.3:** Educate landowners about available cost shares

**Objective 1.2:** Educate public to identify and conduct activities to restore and protect watersheds

**Strategy 1.2.1:** Properly and actively manage forests:

- A. Address issues through employing the use of properly managed forests across all ownerships in the state
  1. Avoid impairments to water quality and quantity by implementing voluntary Best Management Practices
  2. Ensure maximum participation in cost-share programs, even by those with income limitations

3. Educate residents, contractors, and property owners about the benefits of buffers along waterways, not only for the individuals directly affected but also the public
4. Protect habitat for aquatic vertebrates, invertebrates, and plant communities, many of which are endangered or threatened
5. Address fragmentation and parcelization, which threaten water quality when forest land is converted to non-forest uses because of economic pressure
6. Protect priority areas in Arkansas that benefit from forested waterways such as:
  - a. Karst features associated with the Ozark Mountains
  - b. Forested riparian zones or streamside management zones
  - c. Priority watersheds critical to public drinking water supplies
  - d. Aquatic life
  - e. Threatened and endangered species

**Strategy 1.2.2:** Use PLT, WET and WILD in schools

**Strategy 1.2.3:** Partner with nonprofits in urban areas dedicated to watershed management

***Goal 2: Continue to provide high quality training and educational opportunities both to general forest stakeholders as well as to specific groups***

**Objective 2.1:** Identify specific regions, woodland practitioners groups, and BMP categories that are in most need of targeted training

**Strategy 2.1.1:** Identify groups, regions, and categories of BMPs that are in need of improvement

**Objective 2.2:** Continue to provide both technical and non-technical educational and training platforms for woodland practitioners and landowners

**Strategy 2.2.1:** Promote BMP implementation in the Arkansas Logger Education and Training Program

**Strategy 2.2.2:** Increase awareness of the Courtesy Exam Program

**Strategy 2.2.3:** Develop and disseminate fact sheets, brochures, and other non-technical materials to landowners

**Strategy 2.2.4:** Continue to evaluate and update/revise the Arkansas BMP Guidebook as necessary

**Strategy 2.2.5:** Improve the access to BMP information and resources through the restructuring of the water quality portion of the AFC website

***Goal 3: Serve as the primary contact and mediator of complaints resulting from the potential adverse effects of silvicultural practices on water quality***

**Objective 3.1:** Maintain the current memorandum of understanding with the Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) concerning the handling of complaints of degradation of water quality by forestry operations

**Strategy 3.1.1:** Include ADED and industry representatives on complaint site visits

***Goal 4: Serve as the primary contact and mediator for AWAG quarterly meetings and other State and Federal groups***

**Objective 4.1:** Maintain a presence at AWAG to provide awareness and promote the use of BMPs

**Strategy 4.1.1:** Participate in quarterly meetings and annual conference

**Strategy 4.1.2:** Participate in local watershed meetings

**Objective 4.2:** Participate in the Arkansas Natural Resources Commission and EPA annual meeting

**Strategy 4.2.1:** Be informed of current regulatory and water protection needs

**Strategy 4.2.2:** Be proactive in adopting and revising the current BMPs to meet the present water quality issues

**Goal 5: Continue to assess BMP implementation statewide through an unbiased examination of harvesting operations**

**Objective 5.1:** Maintain funding for the Arkansas BMP Implementation Survey

**Strategy 5.1.1:** Use the EPA 319 Grant Program as the primary source of funding for the BMP Implementation Survey

**Objective 5.2:** Perform the BMP Implementation Survey in a scientifically grounded manner

**Strategy 5.2.1:** Use most efficient means to identify tracts for survey

**Strategy 5.2.2:** Monitor randomly selected tracts by one individual

**Strategy 5.2.3:** Statistical software will be used for analysis of data

**Goal 6: Continue to assess the need for research to address particular BMP effectiveness and identify potential future issues**

**Objective 6.1:** Respond to new questions or concerns of BMP effectiveness and identify potential future issues

**Strategy 6.1.1:** Effectiveness studies will be done in conjunction with qualified partners

**Goal 7: Continue to participate in the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) non point source pollution 319 grant program**

**Objective 7.1:** Use to funds allocated from the EPA 319 grant program and the primary means to finance the BMP Implementation Survey and subsequent training and educational platforms.

**Strategy 7.1.1:** Continue to produce the deliverables and reporting required by the 319 Grant in a timely and acceptable manner

**Objective 7.2:** Seek other funding sources for additional programs.

**Strategy 7.2.1:** Maintain and build relationships with partners to stay abreast of potential grant opportunities

**Strategy 7.2.2:** Provide resources such as portable bridges for skidding logs across creeks

**Strategy 7.2.3:** Provide incentives to private landowners for leaving SMZs during timber harvest





Goals, Objectives, Strategies	AFC Program Areas										AFC Partners										Nat. Prior.				
	Reforestation	Fire Mgt.	Forest Legacy Program	U&CF	Forest Stewardship	Water Quality/BMP	Forest Health	Conservation Education	USDA Forest Service	NRCS	FSA	TNC	AFA, ATPA, Am Tree Farm System	AR Assoc of Conservation Districts	AR Urban Forestry Council	UofA Monticello	AR Natural Heritage Com.	ANRC	AG&FC	ADEQ	AR St Plant Board	Forest Certification Systems	Conserve	Protect	Enhance
<b>Goal 6: Continue to assess the need for research to address particular BMP effectiveness and identify potential future issues.</b>																									
<b>Objective 6.1:</b> Respond to new questions or concerns of BMP effectiveness by implementing a scientific study designed to address the problem																									
<b>Strat: 6.1.1:</b> Effectiveness studies will be done in conjunction with qualified partners						X			X	X		X	X	X		X		X		X		X	X		X
<b>Goal 7: Continue to participate in the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) non point source pollution 319 grant program.</b>																									
<b>Objective 7.2:</b> Seek other funding sources for additional programs																									
<b>Strat: 7.2.1:</b> Maintain and build relationships with partners to stay abreast of grant opportunities						X			X	X		X	X	X		X		X		X		X	X		X
<b>Strat: 7.2.2:</b> Provide resources such as portable bridges for skidding logs across creeks.						X				X			X	X				X					X	X	X
<b>Strat: 7.2.3:</b> Provide incentives to private landowners for leaving SMZs during timber harvest						X			X			X	X				X					X	X		X

## Issue 2. Forest Health/Invasive Species

### **Description**

All forests in Arkansas are threatened by nonnative invasive species. Enhancing those threats are the forests' proximity to the Wildland Urban Interface, lack of active forest management, and/or proximity to highways that cross state boundaries. Nonnative invasive species are a threat to forest health and productivity and as a result threaten the economic and environmental benefits that forests provide.

### **Priority Areas**

Priority areas in Arkansas threatened by nonnative, invasive species are along the Mississippi River as cogongrass is just across the border and the northeastern portion of the state as emerald ash borer has been confirmed in southeastern Missouri. Also, the Ozark region is the most likely point of reentry for the next gypsy moth outbreak due to tourism, human migration from the north, and vast quantity of host type forests. The Gulf Coastal Plain and Ouachita Mountains are the most susceptible to the native Southern Pine Beetle.

### **Goals, Objectives and Strategies**

Factors that contribute to forest health threats are developmental patterns, land use changes, lack of active forest management, and quarantine/eradication policies in neighboring states. These threats are enhanced by the forests proximity to the Wildland-Urban Interface, lack of active forest management, and transportation networks that cross state lines.

Opportunities are available to diminish or decrease the potential impact of an invasive species infestation in the state. Public education about the importance of active forest management, identification of potential invasive species, and communication with neighboring states regarding locations and potential treatments of new invasive species should all be at the forefront of state natural resource managers' objectives.

### **Goal 1: Develop and make available tools, training and public awareness campaigns for SPB prevention and suppression in South Arkansas**

**Objective 1.1:** Increase public awareness of SPB and how to prevent and/or control infestations

**Strategy 1.1.1:** Provide SPB information to media outlets including AFC website; provide workshops for landowners and forestry professionals

**Objective 1.2:** AFC personnel need basic knowledge of SPB detection and management

**Strategy 1.2.1:** Provide SPB identification and management training to AFC field personnel

**Strategy 1.2.2:** Provide SPB southwide predictions to Arkansas's registered foresters

**Objective 1.3:** Deliver information and federal cost shares when available for the prevention of SPB infestations

**Strategy 1.3.1:** Focus SPB prevention priorities in high-hazard areas using protocols developed by USFS FET

**Strategy 1.3.2:** Continue to promote SPB Prevention Restoration Project; give high priority to thinning

**Objective 1.4:** Monitor SPB activity and predict pending SPB beetle outbreaks in South Arkansas

**Strategy 1.4.1:** Conduct spring SPB survey to predict SPB trends, following the southwide protocol

**Strategy 1.4.2:** Conduct annual 25% SPB detection flights in alternating counties over the traditional range of the SPB in South Arkansas

**Strategy 1.4.3:** Contribute to development and implementation of SPB detection, ground check and control reporting system

**Strategy 1.4.4:** Follow up on reports received from the public, forest industry, other agencies and the USFS

**Objective 1.5:** Implement an effective SPB suppression program when an SPB outbreak occurs

**Strategy 1.5.1:** Implement 50% detection flights in counties in outbreak area, 25% in all traditional counties. Conduct flights every four weeks during beetle season.

**Strategy 1.5.2:** Provide literature outlining recommended control techniques to landowners

**Strategy 1.5.3:** Download detection data directly from GPS to AFC and cooperators

**Objective 1.6:** Cooperate with universities, State entomologists in other states and the USFS to develop and field test new approaches to control

**Objective 1.7:** Strengthen the monitoring and reporting of native insect pests, which may outbreak periodically

**Strategy 1.7.1:** Send seasonal information to field personnel to increase awareness of native pest conditions

**Strategy 1.7.2:** Follow up on general public, other agency and industry reports of insect activity

**Strategy 1.7.3:** Report all insect activity of more than 40 acres to the USFS

***Goal 2: Detect, monitor, prevent and control invasive, nonnative forest insects***

**Objective 2.1:** Monitor the presence of invasive, nonnative forest insect pests

**Strategy 2.1.1:** Increase public awareness for prevention and detection of invasive insect pests.

**Strategy 2.1.2:** Prepare and distribute information on the invasive insect pests

**Strategy 2.1.3:** Increase collaboration among stakeholders involved with invasive insects

**Objective 2.2:** Build cooperation with other agencies and organizations

**Strategy 2.2.1:** Contribute to preparedness plan invasive insects

**Strategy 2.2.2:** Continue to represent the AFC on the Cooperative Agricultural Pest Survey (CAPS) Committee

**Strategy 2.2.3:** Continue to cooperate in the Early Detection Rapid Response program and Gypsy Moth trapping program.

**Strategy 2.2.4:** Conduct field studies to increase knowledge of distribution, biology, and seasonal habits of invasive insect pests

***Goal 3: Take a leadership role in the detection, prevention and management of invasive plants affecting forests and woodlands in Arkansas***

**Objective 3.1:** Monitor the presence of invasive, nonnative forest plant pests in Arkansas

**Strategy 3.1.1:** Increase public awareness of invasive plants affecting forests and woodlands

**Strategy 3.1.2:** Prepare and publish articles on invasive plants; Make presentations to various agencies (Arkansas Urban Forestry Council, etc.)

**Strategy 3.1.3:** Collaborate with other state agencies and organizations involved with invasive plants

**Strategy 3.1.4:** Support the detection and reporting of invasive plant species

**Objective 3.2:** Contribute to efforts to eradicate invasive plants on public and private lands

**Strategy 3.2.1:** Continue to represent AFC on CAPS and other groups involved in invasive species detection and control

**Strategy 3.2.2:** Train AFC foresters and field resource specialists on recognizing, reporting and managing invasive plants

**Strategy 3.2.3:** Contribute to the treatment and eradication of invasive plants that have yet to become established in Arkansas, such as cogongrass

**Strategy 3.2.4:** Give priority to treatment of invasive plants on the State Forests as demonstration sites



Goals, Objectives, Strategies	AFC Program Areas										AFC Partners										Nat. Prior.					
	Reforestation	Fire Mgt.	Forest Legacy Program	U&CF	Forest Stewardship	Water Quality/BMP	Forest Health	Conservation Education	USDA Forest Service	NRCS	FSA	TNC	AFA, ATPA, Am Tree Farm System	AR Assoc of Conservation Districts	AR Urban Forestry Council	UofA Monticello	AR Natural Heritage Com.	ANRC	AG&FC	ADEQ	AR St Plant Board	Forest Certification Systems	Conserve	Protect	Enhance	
<b>Objective 1.5:</b> Implement an effective SPB suppression program when an SPB outbreak occurs																										
<b>Strat. 1.5.1:</b> Implement 50% detection flights in counties in outbreak area, 25% in all traditional counties. Conduct flights every 4 weeks during beetle season							X		X																	
<b>Strat. 1.5.2:</b> Provide literature outlining recommended control techniques to landowners					X		X	X	X	X		X	X	X											X	
<b>Strat. 1.5.3:</b> Down load detection data directly from GPS to AFC and cooperators							X		X			X	X					X							X	
<b>Strat. 1.6.1:</b> Cooperate with University, State entomologists in other states and the USFS to develop and field test new approaches to control.							X		X			X	X		X									X	X	
<b>Objective 1.7:</b> Strengthen the monitoring and reporting of native insect pests which may outbreak periodically																										
<b>Strat. 1.7.1:</b> Send seasonal information to field personnel to increase awareness of native pest conditions							X	X	X			X													X	
<b>Strat. 1.7.2:</b> Follow up on general public, other agency and industry reports of insect activity							X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X								X	
<b>Strat. 1.7.3:</b> Report all insect activity of more than 40 acres to the USFS							X		X																X	
<b>Goal 2: Detect, monitor, prevent and control invasive, nonnative forest insects</b>																										
<b>Objective 2.1:</b> Monitor the presence of invasive, nonnative forest insect pests																										
<b>Strat. 2.1.1:</b> Increase public awareness for prevention and detection of invasive insect pests.					X		X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X									X	X	X
<b>Strat. 2.1.2:</b> Prepare and distribute information on the invasive insect pests				X	X		X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X				X					X	
<b>Strat. 2.1.3:</b> Increase collaboration among stakeholders involved with invasive insects				X	X		X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X					X	

Goals, Objectives, Strategies	AFC Program Areas										AFC Partners										Nat. Prior.				
	Reforestation	Fire Mgt.	Forest Legacy Program	U&CF	Forest Stewardship	Water Quality/BMP	Forest Health	Conservation Education	USDA Forest Service	NRCS	FSA	TNC	AFA, ATPA, Am Tree Farm System	AR Assoc of Conservation Districts	AR Urban Forestry Council	UofA Monticello	AR Natural Heritage Com.	ANRC	AG&FC	ADEQ	AR St Plant Board	Forest Certification Systems	Conserve	Protect	Enhance
<b>Objective 2.2:</b> Build cooperation with other agencies and organizations																									
<b>Strat. 2.2.1:</b> Contribute to preparedness plan invasive insects							X	X													X			X	
<b>Strat. 2.2.2:</b> Continue to represent the AFC on the CAPS Committee							X	X													X			X	
<b>Strat. 2.2.3:</b> Continue to cooperate in the Early Detection Rapid Response program and Gypsy Moth trapping program							X	X																X	
<b>Strat. 2.2.4:</b> Conduct field studies to increase knowledge of distribution, biology, and seasonal habits of invasive insect pests							X	X																X	
<b>Goal 3: Take a leadership role in the detection, prevention, and management of invasive plants affecting forests and woodlands in Arkansas.</b>																									
<b>Objective 3.1:</b> Monitor the presence of invasive, nonnative forest plant pests in Arkansas																									
<b>Strat. 3.1.1:</b> Increase public awareness of invasive plants affecting forests and woodlands				X	X		X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X		X			X		X	
<b>Strat. 3.1.2:</b> Prepare and publish articles on invasive plants; Make presentations to various agencies; (Arkansas Urban Forestry Council, etc.)				X			X	X	X			X		X	X										X
<b>Strat. 3.1.3:</b> Collaborate with other state agencies and organizations involved with invasive plants				X	X		X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X		X		X				X	
<b>Strat. 3.1.4:</b> Support the detection and reporting of invasive plant species				X	X		X	X	X			X	X		X						X				X
<b>Objective 3.2:</b> Contribute to efforts to eradicate invasive plants on public and private lands																									
<b>Strat. 3.2.1:</b> Continue to represent AFC on CAPS and other groups involved invasive species detection and control							X	X													X			X	
<b>Strat. 3.2.2:</b> Train AFC foresters and field resource specialists on recognizing, reporting, and managing invasive plants				X			X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X		X		X				X	



### **Issue 3. Forest Fragmentation/Parcelization/Changing Ownerships**

#### ***Description***

Large amounts of forestlands in Arkansas are affected by fragmentation. The greatest threats are in the growing areas of Central, North Central and Northwest Arkansas. Air quality, water quality, forestry-related jobs and biodiversity are the public benefits that are threatened when forestland is converted to nonforest uses. Properly managed forests ensure that all natural resources are managed in a sustainable manor to provide ecosystem services and benefits, while providing forest products.

#### ***Priority Areas***

##### **Central and Northwest**

Conversion to non-forest uses is a threat across the Arkansas landscape. Northwest is especially vulnerable to urban and exurban sprawl as land outside major communities is being developed. This area of the state is in the path of a planned interstate highway connecting New Orleans and Kansas City. Northwest and North Central Arkansas are also very attractive areas for retirement. By 2025, Arkansas is projected to have the 5th highest proportion of elderly. Nine out of 15 or the projected Retirement Destination Counties are in the Ozarks.

North Arkansas is also the poultry hub for the state with large processing facilities and a high density of poultry and egg production houses. Arkansas also ranks 17th among the beef producing states, and eight of the state's top ten beef cattle producing counties are also in this eco-region. Conversion of forestlands to pasture is a constant threat in North Arkansas. While available forest products markets can be viewed as having a positive benefit for improving the quality of these forests, many landowners are electing to utilize the markets to convert their forestlands into pastureland and poultry production.

##### **Gulf Coastal Plain**

In the Gulf Coastal Plain, landowners are selling forestland as it becomes more valuable for development. Industrial lands located near active real estate markets became especially vulnerable as companies took opportunities to maximize profits. Timber Investment Management Organizations (TIMOs) are buying and managing timberland for pension and investment funds with a high rate of turnover of property. Additionally, small private investors are purchasing industry lands in blocks of a few hundred to a few thousand acres, and reselling them in parcels of 10 to 20 acres to exurban owners. These parcels are then converted to pasture, small crop farms, and home-sites, which are all land use practices leading to sedimentation, runoff, and non-point source pollution.

##### **Ouachita**

Major threats in the Ouachita region forests are conversion to urban/suburban development especially around population centers and reservoir watersheds. Parcelization of industrial holdings through the sale of "higher and better use" properties breaks large tracts of forestland leading to suburban and exurban development. Water quality of many upland streams is also threatened by extensive development of formerly forested hillsides.

##### **Central**

Central Arkansas currently has the most potential for developmental risk. Fragmentation, parcelization, and changing ownerships are directly tied to development. As fragmented and parcelized properties become more valuable large contiguous blocks in these areas will cease to exist. In turn, natural resource managers will have a more difficult time utilizing all available management techniques when attempting to manage these areas. Fire risk, water quality and species diversity will become more problematic in these areas.

#### ***Goals, Objectives and Strategies***

**Goal: Protect forests from harm**

**Objective 1.1:** Conserve forests through active forest management

**Strategy 1.1.1:** Promote afforestation or reforestation

**Strategy 1.1.2:** Educate landowners about the financial benefits of active management

**Strategy 1.1.3:** Promote SPB program for first-time commercial thinning

**Strategy 1.1.4:** Provide incentive for landowners to actively manage forests, such as group certification through, SFI, FSC or other certifying entity.

**Objective 1.2:** Identify and reduce threats to fragmentation and parcelization

**Strategy 1.2.1:** Identify forests in close proximity to the Wildland Urban Interface

**Strategy 1.2.2:** Reduce the threats to economic and environmental benefits

**Strategy 1.2.3:** Identify forests in close proximity to highways that cross state boundaries

**Strategy 1.2.4:** Educate the public about the affect of fragmentation/parcelization have on active forest management including environmental benefits

**Strategy 1.2.5:** Promote Forest Legacy Program within Forest Legacy Areas

### Resources to Address Issue 3 Forest Fragmentation/Parcelization/Changing Ownerships

Goals, Objectives, Strategies	AFC Program Areas										AFC Partners										Nat. Prior.					
	Reforestation	Fire Mgt.	Forest Legacy Program	U&CF	Forest Stewardship	Water Quality/BMP	Forest Health	Conservation Education	USDA Forest Service	NRCS	FSA	TNC	AFA, AITPA, Am Tree Farm System	AR Assoc of Conservation Districts	AR Urban Forestry Council	Utah Monticello	AR Natural Heritage Com.	ANRC	AG&FC	ADEQ	AR St Plant Board	Forest Certification Systems	Conserve	Protect	Enhance	
<b>Issue 3: Forest Fragmentation/Parcelization/Changing Ownerships</b>																										
<b>Goal 1: Protect forests from harm</b>																										
<b>Objective 1.1: Conserve forests through active forest management</b>																										
<b>Strat. 1.1.1:</b> Promote afforestation or reforestation	X				X		X	X	X	X			X	X										X		X
<b>Strat. 1.1.2:</b> Educate landowners about financial benefits of active management	X				X			X	X	X			X	X										X		X
<b>Strat. 1.1.3:</b> Promote SPB program for first time commercial thinning					X		X	X	X	X			X	X		X								X		X
<b>Strat. 1.1.4:</b> Provide incentive for landowners to actively manage forests, such as group certification through SFI, FSC or other certifying entity						X			X				X									X	X			X
<b>Objective 1.2: Identify and reduce threats to fragmentation and parcelization</b>																										
<b>Strat. 1.2.1:</b> Identify forests in close proximity to the Wildland Urban Interface			X				X	X				X	X											X		X
<b>Strat. 1.2.2:</b> Reduce the threats to economic and environmental benefits		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X							X	X	X
<b>Strat. 1.2.3:</b> Identify forests in close proximity to highways that cross state boundaries			X		X		X	X	X	X			X	X										X	X	X
<b>Strat. 1.2.4:</b> Educate the public about the affect of fragmentation/parcelization have on active forest management including environmental benefits		X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X									X	X	
<b>Strat. 1.2.5:</b> Promote Forest Legacy Program within Forest Legacy Areas			X	X	X			X	X	X		X	X			X								X	X	

## **Issue 4. Increase and Enhance the Benefits of Working Forests**

### ***Description***

Forestland ownerships are becoming smaller as a result of ownership changes and management objectives. It is possible that an increasing number of owners lack forest management knowledge. Increasing and enhancing working forests can be accomplished through education and outreach to forestland owners, continued funding of cost share programs, and developing new biomass/fiber markets.

### ***Priority Areas***

Priority areas include a portion of the Gulf Coastal Plain, Ouachita Mountains and Ozark Mountains.

### ***Goals, Objectives and Strategies***

#### ***Goal 1: Ensure that partners and the public view the Forest Stewardship Program as the go-to program for private forest management planning***

**Objective 1.1:** Engage each primary partner, at least once a year, in a substantive discussion about Forest Stewardship program implementation

**Strategy 1.1.1:** Hold annual meetings of the FSC, where issues and roles are discussed

**Objective 1.2:** Engage traditionally underserved groups and landowners

**Strategy 1.2.1:** Work closely with AFC communications and conservation education program to create marketing material that piques the interests of nontraditional NIPF

**Objective 1.3:** Build on existing partnerships and create new ones with stakeholder organizations

**Strategy 1.3.1:** Develop MOUs and Contribution Agreements or create new ones with partner agencies such as NRCS, Tree Farm Program, and AUFC

#### ***Goal 2: Ensure that the Forest Stewardship Program remains relevant and useful to nonindustrial private landowners and the forest resource***

**Objective 2.1:** Ensure that the Forest Stewardship Program is useful to NIPF landowners

**Strategy 2.1.1:** Forest Stewardship Plans are up to date and relevant to meet landowner needs statewide

**Strategy 2.1.2:** Work with partner agencies and programs such as NRCS and Tree Farm system to develop Forest Stewardship management plans that are useful to all partners

**Strategy 2.1.3:** Continue to recognize landowners as Certified Stewards when status is obtained

**Strategy 2.1.4:** Explore possibilities for expanding market opportunities for Certified Stewards, such as forest certification systems and biofuel and carbon markets

**Objective 2.2:** Ensure that landowners have access to AFC field staff and contractors

**Strategy 2.2.1:** Continue to work with county landowner associations and Arkansas Forestry Association to host workshops and field tours about forestry practices.

**Strategy 2.2.2:** Maintain a well-trained field staff statewide

**Strategy 2.2.3:** Continue to maintain an online, searchable database of forestry service providers

#### ***Goal 3: Ensure that the Forest Stewardship Program remains relevant and useful as a statewide program***

**Objective 3.1:** Continue to strive for a well-funded program

**Strategy 3.1.1:** Work with Region 8 (R8) and the Washington office of the USFS to ensure equitable funding formulas for Arkansas

**Strategy 3.1.2:** Continue to submit project proposals when competitive funding is available

**Strategy 3.1.5:** Build partner support for the Stewardship program locally and nationally by demonstrating results quantitatively and telling success stories qualitatively

**Objective 3.2:** Coordinate efforts between AFC, NRCS, and other state headquarter offices

**Strategy 3.2.1:** Within MOUs and Contribution Agreements, coordinate staff with other agency HQ offices to serve as liaisons for forestry programs

**Strategy 3.2.2:** AFC will continue as a member of the forest working group of the State Technical Committee

### Resources to Address Issue 4 Increase and Enhance the Benefits of Working Forests

Goals, Objectives, Strategies	AFC Program Areas										AFC Partners										Nat. Prior.				
	Reforestation	Fire Mgt.	Forest Legacy Program	U&CF	Forest Stewardship	Water Quality/BMP	Forest Health	Conservation Education	USDA Forest Service	NRCS	FSA	TNC	AFA, ATPA, Am Tree Farm System	AR Assoc of Conservation Districts	AR Urban Forestry Council	UofA Monticello	AR Natural Heritage Com.	ANRC	AG&FC	ADEQ	AR St Plant Board	Forest Certification Systems	Conserve	Protect	Enhance
<b>Issue 4: Increase and enhance the benefits of working forests</b>																									
<b>Goal 1: Ensure that partners and the public view the Forest Stewardship as the go-to program for private forest management planning</b>																									
<b>Objective 1.1:</b> Engage each primary partner, at least once a year, in a substantive discussion about Forest Stewardship program implementation																									
<b>Strat. 1.1.1:</b> Hold annual meetings of the FSC, where issues and roles are discussed			X		X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X				X	X	X
<b>Objective 1.2:</b> Engage traditionally underserved groups and landowners																									
<b>Strat. 1.2:1:</b> Work closely with AFC communications and conservation education program to create marketing material that piques the interests of nontraditional NIPF					X			X	X	X	X		X	X										X	X
<b>Objective 1.3:</b> Build on existing partnerships and create new ones with stakeholder organizations																									
<b>Strat. 1.3:1:</b> Develop MOUs and Contribution Agreements or create new ones with partner agencies such as NRCS, Tree Farm Program, and AUFC					X					X	X	X	X	X			X	X					X	X	X
<b>Goal 2: Ensure that the Forest Stewardship Program remains relevant and useful to nonindustrial private landowners and the forest resource</b>																									
<b>Objective 2.1:</b> Ensure that the Forest Stewardship Program is useful to NIPF landowners																									
<b>Strat. 2.1:1:</b> Forest Stewardship Plans are up to date and relevant to meet landowner needs statewide							X		X	X		X	X				X	X	X				X	X	X
<b>Strat. 2.1:2:</b> Work with partner agencies and programs such as NRCS and Tree Farm system to develop Forest Stewardship management plans that are useful to all partners					X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X				X	X	X
<b>Strat. 2.1:3:</b> Continue to recognize landowners as Certified Stewards when status is obtained					X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X				X	X	X
<b>Strat. 2.1:4:</b> Explore possibilities for expanding market opportunities for Certified Stewards, such as forest certification systems and biofuel and carbon markets					X	X	X		X			X	X	X			X	X	X				X	X	X

<b>Goals, Objectives, Strategies</b>	Reforestation	Fire Mgt.	Forest Legacy Program	U&CF	Forest Stewardship	Water Quality/BMP	Forest Health	Conservation Education	USDA Forest Service	NRCS	FSA	TNC	AFA, ATPA, Am Tree Farm System	AR Assoc of Conservation Districts	AR Urban Forestry Council	UofA Monticello	AR Natural Heritage Com.	ANRC	AG&FC	ADEQ	AR St Plant Board	Forest Certification Systems	Conserve	Protect	Enhance	
<b>Objective 2.2:</b> Ensure that landowners have access to AFC field staff and contractors																										
<b>Strat. 2.2.1:</b> Continue to work with county landowner associations and Arkansas Forestry Association to host workshops and field tours about forestry practices.			X		X		X		X					X	X									X		X
<b>Strat. 2.2.2:</b> Maintain a well-trained field staff statewide			X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X			X								X		X
<b>Strat. 2.2.3:</b> Continue to maintain an online, searchable database of forestry service providers					X					X													X	X	X	
<b>Goal 3: Ensure that the Forest Stewardship Program remains relevant and useful as a Statewide program</b>																										
<b>Objective 3.1:</b> Continue to strive for a well-funded program																										
<b>Strat. 3.1.1:</b> Work with Region 8 (R8) and the Washington office of the USFS to ensure equitable funding formulas for Arkansas					X				X															X		X
<b>Strat. 3.1.2:</b> Continue to submit project proposals when competitive funding is available					X				X															X		X
<b>Strat. 3.1.5:</b> Build partner support for the Stewardship program locally and nationally by demonstrating results quantitatively and telling success stories qualitatively			X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X		X	
<b>Objective 3.2:</b> Coordinate efforts between AFC, NRCS, and other state headquarter offices																										
<b>Strat. 3.2.1:</b> Within MOUs and Contribution Agreements, coordinate staff with other agency HQ offices to serve as liaisons for forestry programs			X		X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X					X		X
<b>Strat. 3.2.2:</b> AFC will continue as a member of the forest working group of the State Technical Committee					X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X					X		X

## **Issue 5. Climate Change**

### ***Description***

All forests in the state are potentially affected by climate change. Potential impacts to forest resources include the ability of forests to adapt to change, species distribution, forest regeneration and forest loss from catastrophic wildfires. Public benefits from forest that could be impacted include drinking water quality and quantity, forest product availability and production, energy costs, air quality, recreation and wildlife habitat.

### ***Priority Areas***

### ***Goals, Objectives and Strategies***

The potential impacts to forest by climate change are enough to prompt the employment of mitigation techniques. The best mitigation techniques natural resource managers can employ are to promote reforestation, afforestation and forest management.

Cost-share programs will ensure more non-industrial private landowners will consider actively managing their forest. Other opportunities for increasing the number of landowners engaged in active management include creating or expanding incentives and markets for alternative markets such as carbon sequestration and biofuels.

### ***Goal 1: Identify, manage, and reduce threats from climate change***

#### **Objective 1.1: Improve air quality**

**Strategy 1.1.1:** manage and restore forests to mitigate and adapt to climate change

**Strategy 1.1.2:** Strategically plant urban trees to create cooling effect

**Strategy 1.1.3:** Engage public in environmental stewardship activities

**Strategy 1.1.4:** Promote policies to address mitigation of tree/canopy loss

**Strategy 1.1.5:** Encourage analysis of existing forests to help determine management needs

**Strategy 1.1.6:** Promote canopy goals in communities

**Strategy 1.1.7:** Assist communities with tree assessments and analysis

#### **Objective 1.2: Restore and manage open spaces in urban and urbanizing areas**

**Strategy 1.2.1:** Encourage green infrastructure planning and implementation

**Strategy 1.2.2:** Promote regional planning between communities

**Strategy 1.2.3:** Promote Forest Legacy Program in WUI

**Strategy 1.2.4:** Provide guidelines for green space development and management to communities and nonprofits

### Resources to Address Issue 5 Climate Change

Goals, Objectives, Strategies	AFC Program Areas							AFC Partners														Nat. Prior.				
	Reforestation	Fire Mgt.	Forest Legacy Program	U&CF	Forest Stewardship	Water Quality/BMP	Forest Health	Conservation Education	USDA Forest Service	NRCS	FSA	TNC	AFA, ATPA, Am Tree Farm System	AR Assoc of Conservation Districts	AR Urban Forestry Council	UofA Monticello	AR Natural Heritage Com.	ANRC	AG&FC	ADEQ	AR St Plant Board	Forest Certification Systems	Conserve	Protect	Enhance	
<b>Issue 5: Climate Change</b>																										
<b>Goal 1: Identify, manage, and reduce threats from climate change</b>																										
<b>Objective 1.1: Improve air quality</b>																										
<b>Strat. 1.1.1:</b> manage and restore forests to mitigate and adapt to climate change	X		X		X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X				X	X	X	X
<b>Strat. 1.1.2:</b> Strategically plant urban trees to create cooling effect	X			X		X		X	X					X	X	X								X	X	X
<b>Strat. 1.1.3:</b> Engage public in environmental stewardship activities				X	X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X		X		X				X	X	X
<b>Strat. 1.1.4:</b> Promote policies to address mitigation of tree/canopy loss				X					X						X	X								X	X	X
<b>Strat. 1.1.5:</b> Encourage analysis of existing forests to help determine management needs			X	X			X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X								X	X	X
<b>Strat. 1.1.6:</b> Promote canopy goals in communities				X			X	X				X		X	X	X								X		X
<b>Strat. 1.1.7:</b> Assist communities with tree assessments and analysis				X				X				X			X	X										
<b>Objective 1.2: Restore and manage open spaces in urban and urbanizing areas</b>																										
<b>Strat. 1.2.1:</b> Encourage green infrastructure planning and implementation				X				X	X						X	X								X		X
<b>Strat. 1.2.2:</b> Promote regional planning between communities				X				X	X					X	X									X		X
<b>Strat. 1.2.3:</b> Promote Forest Legacy Program in WUI			X	X	X			X	X			X	X	X	X	X								X		X
<b>Strat. 1.2.4:</b> Provide guidelines for green space development and management to communities and nonprofits			X	X	X		X	X	X						X	X								X		X

## Issue 6. Fire Management

### **Description**

All forests in the state are subject to the impacts of wildfire. Forests in the Wildland Urban Interface are more prone to the impacts of wildfire than rural forests. Well-managed fire is a factor in growing a diverse, healthy forest that provides a multitude of public benefits.

### **Goals, Objectives and Strategies**

#### **Goal 1: Improve public and inter-agency cooperation in wildfire awareness, prevention and mitigation**

**Objective 1.1:** Increase community awareness at a basic level for the threat of a wildfire event

**Strategy 1.1.1:** Promote the development and application of the FireWise Program and FireWise strategies to fire departments

**Objective 1.2:** Reaffirm and expand partnerships with mutually invested agencies

**Strategy 1.2.1:** Continue to work with the agencies and other cooperators to reduce wildfire risk, educate and train the public, and provide safety, counsel and support

**Objective 1.3:** Promote wildfire awareness, ownership and training to Arkansas homeowners

**Strategy 1.3.1:** Create homeowner investment in Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs) through participating FireWise fire crews, AFC personnel and other civic and community organizations

**Strategy 1.3.2:** Provide essential fire training per Arkansas state legislation to fire departments through FireWise training and training sponsored by AFC (the 8-hour Arkansas Wildland Fire Suppression Course)

#### **Goal 2: Increase Fire Protection Capacity**

**Objective 2.1:** Provide increased preparedness and wildfire suppression capacity to combat wildfires in areas with heavy fuel loading

**Strategy 2.1.1:** Utilize Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment, CARS list and other resources to identify fire departments in high-risk areas to target through FireWise training, application and Risk Assessment completion

**Strategy 2.1.2:** Maintain and enhance initial attack capabilities through the Single Engine Air Tankers (SEAT), VFDs, upgraded fire suppression equipment, and communication system

**Objective 2.2:** Train, equip, and support volunteer fire departments in essential wildfire suppression, strategies and mitigation practices. Additionally, provide fire crews with wildland fire suppression equipment (including trucks, hoses, Personal Protective Equipment, shovels, rakes, etc.)

**Strategy 2.2.1:** Provide cooperators and fire departments training in wildfire suppression through the 8-hour wildland fire suppression training, including additional pertinent training

**Strategy 2.2.2:** Administer Federal Excess Personal Property (FEPP), Department of Defense Firefighter Program (DOD/FFP), and Volunteer Fire Assistance (VFA) programs to train, equip, and support fire departments

**Objective 2.3:** Continue development and presentation of long-term wildfire prevention and preparedness messages.

**Strategy 2.3.1:** Provide public messaging about safety practices including those that focus on burning debris, landscaping and construction checklists, appropriate fire scene mop up, agency notification process, homeowner mitigation strategies, etc.

**Strategy 2.3.2:** Alongside gaining interest and investment, provide for the safety of emergency responders and members of the general public during wildfire events by implementing strategies from NIMS, ICS, NWCG, and other relevant safety systems in community and emergency training

***Goal 3: Continue improving, implementing and funding technology for agency resources that enhance wildfire detection and suppression***

**Objective 3.1:** Determine current and predicted weather conditions throughout the year

**Strategy 3.1.1:** Maintain and update Remote Automated Weather Stations (RAWS)

**Objective 3.2:** Continue the maintenance and development of a computer-aided dispatch program

**Strategy 3.2.1:** Continue training and updating personnel in programming and operation for the AFC 24-hour computer-aided dispatch center

**Objective 3.3:** Continue the maintenance and development of a computer-aided fire-reporting program

**Strategy 3.3.1:** Track fire occurrence and cause to create a long-term understanding of fire hazards and potential across the state. As a part of this understanding, wildfire personnel can pinpoint high-occurrence fire areas to provide focus toward greater area training, awareness and preparedness

**Objective 3.4:** Staff and improve the 24-hour central dispatch site

**Strategy 3.4.1:** Inform the public of the 24-hour point of contact for wildfire reporting and retain a trained and prepared response staff within the dispatch center

**Objective 3.5:** Maintain and improve the aviation program

**Strategy 3.5.1:** Ensure training and checkpoints to keep all agency aircraft in air-worthiness condition

**Strategy 3.5.2:** Continue training qualified pilots for the aerial detection of wildfires in all AFC aircraft

***Goal 4: Enhance and improve the wildfire law enforcement program***

**Objective 4.1:** Provide increased fire investigation and law enforcement training for AFC investigators

**Strategy 4.1.1:** Offer FI-110 and FI-210 fire investigation courses as part of agency-wide opportunities

**Strategy 4.1.2:** Send selected investigators to enhanced training through the Arkansas Law Enforcement Training Academy









## **State Forestry Programs**

The Strategic Issues section provides an integrated and strategic approach to addressing big and often crosscutting issues within the state. Many critical program functions, however, were not addressed in that section. This section assesses these functions more comprehensively.

### **Rural Forestry Assistance and Forest Stewardship Program**

Rural Forestry Assistance establishes a cooperative program between USDA and States to provide technical information, advice, and related assistance to private landowners and other entities within the forest management community to encourage conservation and management of non-Federal forests. A primary focus of the Forest Stewardship Program is to work with NIPF landowners to develop comprehensive, multi-resource management plans that provide landowners with the information they need to manage their forests for products and services. Grant funds are made available to Arkansas Forestry Commission (AFC) under the legislative authority of the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978 (as amended) and various appropriation acts.

The 2008 Farm Bill explicitly allows participation by non-industrial private forest landowners (NIPFLOs) in many USDA conservation programs, administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and/or Farm Service Agency (FSA). Through Arkansas Forestry Commission coordination, their Forest Stewardship Management Plans (FSMPs) will provide other required USDA information. NRCS and FSA staff at the USDA Service Center will assist landowners with this process. Eligible NIPF landowners will be able to apply for a wide range of cost-share assistance to implement their FSMP through these USDA conservation program agencies.

The purpose of the Forest Stewardship Program is to encourage forest owners to more actively manage their forests for multiple uses and values based on a Forest Stewardship Plan and using available expertise and assistance for long-term multiple resource management enhancing its productivity of water quality, fish and wildlife, wetlands, recreational opportunities, timber, agro-forestry, biomass and carbon sequestration, and aesthetics. This program differs from other forest management programs by requiring a landowner to use their land, or at least part of it, for purposes other than timber production. This program requires both greater and closer cooperation with other natural resource agencies and forestry consultants. Program emphasis is on Forest Stewardship education and developing detailed multiple resource stewardship plans for private non-industrial forest landowners. Efforts will be made to reach landowners that never managed, or are not currently managing, their forestlands according to a written plan. Media educational efforts and landowner forest stewardship plans shall identify and describe those actions to be taken by landowners to meet management objectives while protecting natural resources on their property.

#### **NIPFLO Landowner Assistance Activities:**

Activities funded under this program include: 1) preparing multiple-use Forest Stewardship plans for nonindustrial private landowners, 2) assisting landowners to implement forest management activities, including use of existing cost share programs where appropriate, 3) providing seedlings for reforestation and restoration activities, 4) developing genetically-improved tree seeds and seedlings, 5) educating landowners about forest management practices and issues, 6) coordinating with partners to improve program delivery, including regularly convening a State Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committee, 7) providing recognition to exemplary Forest Stewardship landowners as Forest Stewards, 8) training state and partner staffs on topics relevant to program delivery, 9) practicing sustainable forestry on state-owned lands, and 10) monitoring and reporting program implementation and effectiveness.

While the goal of the Stewardship Program has remained the same, new and innovative ways of reaching landowners and delivering services have been developed to meet the needs of both traditional landowners and new types of landowners.

The Arkansas Forest Stewardship Program can contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation through consideration of forecasted climate change, considering in forest stewardship plans the potential for increased fire risk, invasive species migration, and species range/habitat shifts, along with adaptive actions to mitigate adverse impacts and define a more dynamic desired future forest function, and, where feasible and consistent with landowner objectives, maintenance and enhancement of carbon sequestering capacity.

**Other Program Assistance Activities:** The Arkansas Forest Stewardship Program will continue to be aggressive and innovative in meeting the reforestation needs of Arkansas' private non-industrial landowner by providing seed of the highest possible genetic gain and quality. Our breeding and testing program and orchard management practices continually improve the genetic gain offered from our program.

We will continue producing trees for promotion of the Arkansas Famous and Historic Tree Program and for native champion trees of Arkansas.

The Arkansas Forestry Commission continues to produce, store and distribute pine and hardwood seedlings. These seedlings are sold primarily to private non-industrial landowners for afforestation and reforestation purposes.

The Arkansas State Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committee (chaired by the AFC State Forester) meets annually to review program status and delivery. The Arkansas State Stewardship Coordinating Committee is composed of state and federal agency representatives, timber industry, private consultants, and private landowners.

**Outreach of special emphasis:** Arkansas continues to conduct outreach meetings to reach underserved and minority landowners. Traditionally this group of landowners has not been participating in conservation programs and efforts are being made to educate and improve landowner knowledge of Federal and State conservation assistance programs and how rural forestry programs can assist in guiding them for participation in these forest management programs.

#### **Program Priority Areas**

The Arkansas Forest Resources Assessment defines priority areas for Forest Stewardship (page 101).

The Arkansas Forest Stewardship Program provides technical assistance to loggers, wood processors, public agencies, schools and landowners concerning harvesting, processing, marketing of forest products and application of Best Management Practices (BMPs).

The AFC will continue to work closely with Federal and other State agencies to emphasize and promote BMPs, place emphasis on the Endangered Species Act and other special projects that require our input. The AFC will conduct 2010 BMP monitoring and assist with logger education & BMP training.

The Arkansas Forest Stewardship Program allows contribution to development of biomass energy facilities and markets and continues to work with any potential facilities that have shown or will show interest in biomass energy by assisting landowners in identifying opportunities to participate in biomass energy markets, certification, USDA cost-share programs, and ecosystem services markets by:

- a. continuing to make Forest Stewardship Plans the "on-ramp" to biomass energy markets, carbon markets and forest certification schemes,

- b. streamlining processes for participation in cost-share programs through collaboration with USDA agencies,

**Arkansas will address regional program priorities through the following projects, initiatives, emphasis areas, or actions:**

Arkansas Forestry Commission will emphasize program delivery in High Priority Areas for landscape-scale Forest Stewardship planning by:

- Identifying priority landscapes in the Arkansas Forest Resources Assessment, developing strategies for landscape-scale and multi-landowner planning within priority landscapes, and utilizing social marketing and peer-to-peer networking to effectively target program efforts in priority landscape areas;

Arkansas Forestry Commission continues improving Spatial Analysis and Reporting Capability by utilizing spatial analysis and reporting to meet the national and regional goals and standards.

The AFC utilizes spatial tools by deploying and using spatial accomplishment tracking tools and databases. Related regional standards are to develop a minimum capacity to:

- a. Conduct analysis using high priority areas as defined by the State,
- b. Conduct analysis using point coverage of all current Forest Stewardship Plans approved prior to 2009,
- c. Conduct analysis using polygon coverage of all current Forest Stewardship Plans approved in 2008, 2009, and thereafter, and
- d. Compile coverage of all polygons for new Forest Stewardship Plans for the preceding federal fiscal year by October 31 of each year.

Forest Stewardship Management Plan Implementation monitoring will be initiated according to FY2010 national and regional standards.

Arkansas Forestry Commission will coordinate with NRCS on Farm Bill Delivery by coordinating training sessions for District Conservationists and County Foresters on a statewide level.

Work with landowners encourages sound forest management practices on their forestland. Sound forest management practices ensure the sustainability of Arkansas forest for future generations. These practices enhance economic returns, recreational opportunities, wildlife habitat, soil and water conservation, and aesthetic values.

Coordinate with NRCS to ensure favorable implementation of relevant forestry provisions of the 2008 Farm Bill, and review performance measures for outreach to traditionally underserved constituents.

**AFC Forest Resource Management responsibilities include the implementation, with partners, of the following programs on the local level:**

- Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)
- Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)
- Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)
- Forest Stewardship Program (FSP)
- Southern Pine Beetle Prevention and Restoration Program (SPBPRP)
- Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)
- Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)
- Biomass Crop Assistance Program (BCAP)
- Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)

**Performance Measures**

In the field, reporting requirements such as number of acres under FSP management and number of landowners served, are listed under the Arkansas Forestry Commission

Accomplishment Program, and are used to gauge performance. At a higher level, the effectiveness of the Stewardship Program is reflected in the USFS funding formula and consequential allocations to Arkansas. Arkansas's ability to receive substantial funding from the USFS reflects the effectiveness of the program:

- Number of new or revised Forest Stewardship Management Plans completed
- Number of new or revised Forest Stewardship Management Plans completed in important forest resource areas
- Number of acres covered by current Forest Stewardship Management Plans (cumulative)
- Number of acres in important forest resource areas covered by current Forest Stewardship Management Plans (cumulative)
- Number of landowners receiving Forest Stewardship Program technical assistance
- Number of landowners participating in the Forest Stewardship Program educational programs
- Total number of acres in important forest resource areas being managed sustainably, as defined by a current Forest Stewardship Management Plan through a monitoring program
- Number of new Certified Forest Steward awards

## **Water Quality Program**

The Arkansas Forestry Commission (AFC) is the leading agency in Arkansas in establishing, interpreting, monitoring, and updating forestry Best Management Practices (BMPs). The AFC guidelines meet voluntary non-point source pollution prevention measures for silvicultural operations set by the Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) and the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA).

The AFC is the designated Management Agency for the Silvicultural (Forestry) Section of the Arkansas Water Quality Plan. Present AFC responsibilities for the Plan involve six major areas of concern: 1) BMP training and education for landowners, loggers, and foresters; 2) Biennial monitoring of BMP implementation on forested sites throughout the state; 3) Resolution of timber harvesting/water quality complaints; 4) Cooperation, coordination, and participation with other state and federal agencies concerning water quality in silviculture; 5) Participation in the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) non point source pollution 319 Grant program; and 6) Effectiveness Monitoring.

The BMPs for Water Quality Protection Program is designed to implement provisions of the federal non-point source (NPS) pollution control program as outlined in the Clean Water Act of 1972 and its subsequent amendments, most notably the 1987 Water Protection Act. The program consists of one full time lead BMP forester (since 1997) with primary responsibilities of implementing Arkansas Silvicultural BMPs through:

### **BMP Education and Training**

The education and training program is the backbone of the BMP program in Arkansas. Training efforts are targeted toward varied woodland practitioners including loggers, foresters, and various classes of forest landowners.

### **Complaint/Conflict Resolution**

Investigation of complaints includes a process of steps which consists of obtaining site entry permission; making a determination if a water quality impairment, or potential water quality impairment, exists; then making a recommendation of BMPs to correct the impairment.

### **Cooperation in NPS Program with State and Federal Agencies**

The BMP forester participates and represents the AFC with State, Federal Agencies, and the Arkansas Watershed Advisory Group (AWAG) for the NPS silvicultural portion of the Clean Water Act (CWA) delegated to the AFC.

### **Arkansas BMP Implementation Surveys**

Arkansas has performed four BMP implementation surveys, since 1996, as per guidelines outlined in the Southeast Regional protocol "Silvicultural Best Management Practices Implementation Monitoring, a Framework for State Forest Agencies."

### **Effectiveness Monitoring**

When necessary, a scientific study may be developed to either address a particular issue regarding the effectiveness of a BMP at protecting water quality, or to determine the potential need for a new BMP standard for a particular situation. These studies would be conducted as per protocol recommended by the Southeastern Regional BMP Group.

### **Funding**

The BMP program received a three-year EPA 319 grant in 1997. One primary accomplishment of the grant was to develop, print, and distribute new silvicultural BMP guidelines for Arkansas.

### **Performance Measures**

#### Goal 1

- Conduct at least six (6) logger trainings in regions deemed to be deficient in BMP implementation per year.

- Conduct at least six (6) landowner workshops in regions deemed to be deficient in BMP implementation per year.
- Conduct at least six (6) courtesy exams for foresters / loggers per year.
- Print and disseminate brochures, fact sheets and Arkansas BMP Guidebooks.
- Construct a new webpage on the AFC site dedicated to BMPs and water quality.

**Goal 2**

- The number of complaints both valid and invalid will be recorded and all actions documented.
- The number of complaints unable to be resolved through the BMPs for Water Quality Protection Program should be minimized.

**Goal 3**

- Attend 12 conferences and meetings per year.

**Goal 4**

- Complete the “Voluntary Forestry Best Management Practices For Water Quality Protection in Arkansas – Results of the 2010-2011 BMP Implementation Survey.”
- All deliverables for the EPA 319 Grant will be completed and turned in within the designated timeframe.

**Goal 5**

- If necessary, identify any concerns of BMP effectiveness.

**Goal 6**

- Complete the proposal for the 2011-2014 EPA 319 Grant Program.

## **Arkansas Fire Protection Program**

The primary mission of the Arkansas Fire Protection Program is the prevention, detection and suppression of wildfires in Arkansas. Emphasis is placed on fire prevention, planning and preparedness, mitigation and reducing wildfire risk, capacity building and rapid initial response. Through these efforts, the program will continue to protect the state's communities and timberland from significant loss of economic, ecological, or aesthetic value due to wildfire.

With the charge to our state's residents, interests are varied. Public and interagency cooperation in wildfire awareness, prevention and mitigation is a large concern because of the increased caliber of fire protection with a fully invested public. Through appropriate training, support and development of investment from local fire agencies and the public, messaging about wildfires will become more personally relevant, thereby increasing involvement toward our mission. The FireWise program, creation of Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs), and other presence with civic and community events begins our process of earning public interaction with program goals.

With education in place, fire capacity levels are also of importance. In preventing, detecting and suppressing wildfires, equipment and training are necessary to ensure the safety of fire response crews involved. Programs are in place to provide low-cost equipment. Trained personnel work in the field alongside fire crews to ensure safe and deliberate use of wildfire tools and application of mitigation strategy.

Evaluating the technology used to track and understand wildfire behavior through computer programming, central dispatch centers and aviation abilities is another challenge. The expertise of personnel is vital to maintaining these tools, as data directly leads to knowledge concerning high fire hazard areas, future wildfire suppression needs, resource needs that are site specific, as well as long-term growth opportunities for statewide homeowners. As the science of wildfire becomes more modernized by the computer age, personnel and equipment will face more stringent demands to provide the field with the most advanced software available.

A final emerging challenge is that of an efficient law enforcement program. The seriousness of violating Arkansas Fire Laws is at times not understood by the public at large. By increasing personnel with law enforcement training, the program also guards property vital to the state's livelihood – forests.

During the last 10 years, the AFC has suppressed an average of **1,756** wildfires annually, which burned an average of **24,418** acres. During years of high fire danger, Arkansas has experienced as many as 6,128 fires, which burned 154,246 acres of valuable timberland. Many areas in Arkansas are experiencing rapid wildland urban interface growth (WUI). This WUI creates many unique challenges and issues for fire suppression crews. With the wildfire threat and population growth as undeniable future issues to face Arkansas, the Protection Program will continue leading efforts to increase wildfire capacity through preparedness measures and decrease damage caused by the possibility of a catastrophic wildfire event through proactive planning and support.

### **Performance Measures**

#### **Goal 1**

- Raise yearly total of newly developed CWPPs from 41 (total from 2009) by 30%
- Raise current total of 166 completed (statewide) CWPPs by 40% in 5-year period

- Raise total number of 105 certified FireWise communities (total from 2009) by 40% in 5-year period
- Raise total number of 88 communities (number taken from presentations in the last 6 months) at a reduced wildfire risk by way of education and/or training efforts by 20% per 6-month period over the next 5 years

Goal 2

- Suppression equipment upgrades and enhancements completed
- Number of Fire departments and personnel trained (FireWise, 8-hour wildland, etc.)
- Equipment received through FEPP and DODFFP

Goal 3

- Weather stations maintained through yearly updates
- AFC 24-hour dispatch maintained and operational
- Number of fires reported and suppressed

Goal 4

- Number of AFC investigators trained
- Number of fire investigation training conducted

## **Urban & Community Forestry Program**

The purpose of the Arkansas Urban & Community Forestry Program is to conserve working forest landscapes and enhance the benefits associated with trees by helping build local capacity within communities so they will actively manage their urban forests.

The Urban Forestry Program Coordinator and Partnership Coordinator administer the AFC Urban and Community Forestry program. In the nine Districts there are District Arborists and Urban Representatives who assist at the local level. The GIS/Forestry Legacy Manager provides expertise with tree assessment mapping and GIS training. The Arkansas Urban Forestry Council assists with educational programs; as well as, the many partnerships with city and county governments, local and national non-profit organizations, educational institutions, the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture, Watershed groups, International Society of Arboriculture, Society of Municipal Arborists, Municipal League, Arbor Day Foundation, and other federal, state, and local government agencies.

The rapidly increasing population is placing an unprecedented demand on our forests and is resulting in reduced canopy, fragmented forests and loss of buffers in our watersheds. Economic demands are impacting the amount of tree care occurring in our communities thus tools and expertise need to be provided to demonstrate the implementation of green infrastructure and best management practices. Communities continually need tools to make informed decisions about which landscapes should be conserved as working forests to optimize public benefits for future generations.

### **Program Priority Areas**

The Urban Forestry Program will focus on:

- Areas where conversion of forested landscapes has the potential to occur or is being impacted.
- Forests that are impacted or threatened by pests, invasives and natural disasters.
- Educational components that promote or enhance the benefits associated with trees and forests.

### **Performance Measures**

The Federal guidelines for the U&CF Program detail activities and measurements. These are reported each year at the national level.

- Percent of population living in communities managing programs to plant, protect, and maintain their urban and community trees and forests.
- Percent of population living in communities developing programs and/or activities to plant, protect, and maintain their urban and community trees and forests.
- Number of people living in communities provided educational, technical, and/or financial assistance.
- Number of people living in communities that are developing programs/activities for their urban and community trees and forests.
- Number of people living in communities managing their urban and community trees and forests.
- Number of communities with active urban and community tree and forest management plans developed from professionally-based resource assessments/inventories.
- Number of communities that employ or retain through written agreement the services of professional forestry staff.
- Number of communities that have ordinances or policies that focus on planting, protecting, and maintaining their community trees.
- Number of communities with local advocacy/ advisory organizations, to advise and/or advocate for urban and community trees and forests.
- Number of hours of volunteer service logged.
- Expenditure per capita in communities assisted.

## **Conservation Education and Outreach**

Conservation Education and Outreach Programs within the agency focus on underserved populations and forest landowners and develop youth outreach programs.

### **Program Priority Areas**

Project Learning Tree (PLT) is an environmental education curriculum that is sponsored nationally by the American Forest Foundation and in Arkansas by the Arkansas Forestry Association Education Foundation and AFC. A major goal of PLT is to provide students with the awareness, appreciation, understanding, skills, and commitment to address environmental issues. PLT achieves this goal by training educators and facilitators to lead workshops for teachers across the state.

Arkansas Arbor Day Poster Contest (ADPC) is a program of the National Arbor Day Foundation (NADF) for fifth grade students. The goals of the program are to encourage youth to be aware of and appreciate trees and Arbor Day. The Arkansas ADPC is funded by donations from companies and non-profit professional organizations.

### **Goals, Objectives, and Strategies**

In order to maximize and leverage the effectiveness of conservation education within Arkansas, AFC and Arkansas Forestry Association work with partner agencies and non-profit organizations to support Project Learning Tree, as well as Project WILD (administered by Arkansas Game and Fish Commission) and Project WET (administered by Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality.)

### **Performance Measures**

Performance measures in 2010 reflecting accomplishments in Conservation Education efforts include:

- Track the number of trained Project Learning Tree educators
- Track Arbor Day Poster Contest entries

## Forest Health Program

### Program Description

The forest health program for the State of Arkansas is administered by the Arkansas Forestry Commission. The Forest Health (FH) section received its major impetus in response to a severe outbreak of the southern pine beetle (SPB) in the early 1960s. The program has been expanded in recent decades to address all forest pests throughout the state.

FH is charged with organizing and delivering a forest health program for the forested areas of Arkansas. Traditionally, the SPB was the major pest. In recent years, the pest management program has been expanded to include other insect pests, as well as invasive insects, diseases, and plants. The forest health specialist is charged with training AFC field personnel on pest identification and management as well as responding to public inquiries on pests of trees and forests in both residential and rural areas. Typical activities include monitoring forest pest activity on nonfederal forest lands throughout the state, organizing and delivering prevention and suppression programs on major pests, including federal costs shares, documenting losses to forest pests, and increasing public awareness of forest health issues. Federal pest suppression and prevention projects (southern pine beetle) are administered by the FH specialist, but delivered in the field by AFC foresters and rangers throughout the state.

### Priority Areas

Priority areas for forest health in Arkansas, as identified in the state assessment, are a) southern pine beetle (SPB) **and other native forest pests**, b) invasive nonnative insects, and c) invasive nonnative plants.

### Performance Measures

#### ***Performance Measures for SPB:***

- Track acres of SPB high hazard stands treated per year with federal cost shares. Prevention practices will focus on high hazard areas, as identified by SPB hazard maps.
- Detect increasing SPB populations with pheromone traps.
- Detect percentage of SPB spots on private lands that are ground checked within 3 weeks of detection.
- Reduce losses from active infestations on non-federal lands by recognizing and treating expanding SPB infestations soon after detection.

#### ***Invasive Insect Performance Measures:***

- Complete one preparedness plan per year for an invasive pest not yet in Arkansas, if deemed worthy.
- Track number of news articles prepared and published on invasive pests per year.

#### ***Invasive Plant Performance Measures:***

- Prepare the Arkansas Emergency Response Plan
- Prevent cogongrass from becoming established in Arkansas.
- Track the number of informational fliers prepared and distributed per year on invasive plants affecting forests and woodlands.
- Track the number of AFC field staff trained per year on invasive plants.

## Forest Legacy Program

### Program Description

The Forest Legacy Program (FLP), a Federal program in partnership with States, supports State efforts to protect environmentally sensitive forestlands. Designed to encourage the protection of privately owned forestlands, FLP is an entirely voluntary program. To maximize the public benefits it achieves, the program allows for acquisition of partial interests in privately owned forestlands as well as fee simple acquisition. The Program helps the States develop and carry out their forest conservation plans.

FLP encourages and supports acquisition of conservation easements, legally binding agreements transferring a negotiated set of property rights from one party to another, without removing the property from private ownership. Most FLP conservation easements restrict development, require sustainable forestry practices, and protect other values. The Forest Legacy Program complements private, Federal, and State programs focusing on conservation.

In Arkansas, the FLP supports efforts to acquire both working forest conservation easements and fee simple acquisitions. The acquisitions are held by a state agency or local government, as approved by the State Forester and the State Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committee.

FLP-funded acquisitions serve tangible public purposes agreed to by the landowner such as recreational use as well other public benefits such as ecosystem services as identified in the Issues Sections.

Participation in Forest Legacy is limited to private forest landowners. To qualify, landowners are required to prepare a multiple resource management plan as part of the conservation easement acquisition. The federal government may fund up to 75% of project costs, with at least 25% coming from private, State, or local sources.

The US Forest Service administers the Forest Legacy Program in cooperation with the Arkansas Forestry Commission and its partners. FLP also encourages partnerships with local governments and land trusts, recognizing the important contributions of landowners, communities, and private organizations. Governor Mike Huckabee designated Arkansas Forestry Commission as the lead agency for the FLP in Arkansas. Arkansas completed its first FLP Assessment of Need (AON) in 2005. The required five-year update to the AON, due in 2010, has been incorporated into the Arkansas State Assessment and this Statewide Resource Strategy. The State Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committee, provides input, governance and program guidance, reviews and selects projects for submission, and provides support for the program locally and nationally. The State Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committee includes a diverse set of stakeholders that represents conservation organizations, land trusts, other state natural resource agencies, USFS, and non-industrial private landowners. The Forest Legacy Program in Arkansas follows the National Forest Legacy Program guidelines. This includes the annual monitoring of conservation easement projects, spatial reporting of accomplishments, and public involvement in the process of developing program priorities and project criteria.

### Program Priority Areas (Figure 15, page 103, in the Assessment)

The Forest Legacy Areas intersect 42 Arkansas counties; roughly 8.24 million acres. As State & Private Forestry programs are concentrating on focusing and prioritizing resources and demonstrating outcomes, the Arkansas Forest Legacy Program Areas are aligned with the Arkansas Statewide Resource Assessment issues.

The primary issues identified that relate to Forest Legacy are Water Quality/Quantity and the Forest Fragmentation/Parcelization/Changing Ownerships. The Forest Legacy Areas will

remain the same from 2010-2015. However, when multiple projects are submitted in one year, priority will be given to a project located in one of the 26 counties with a high priority value.

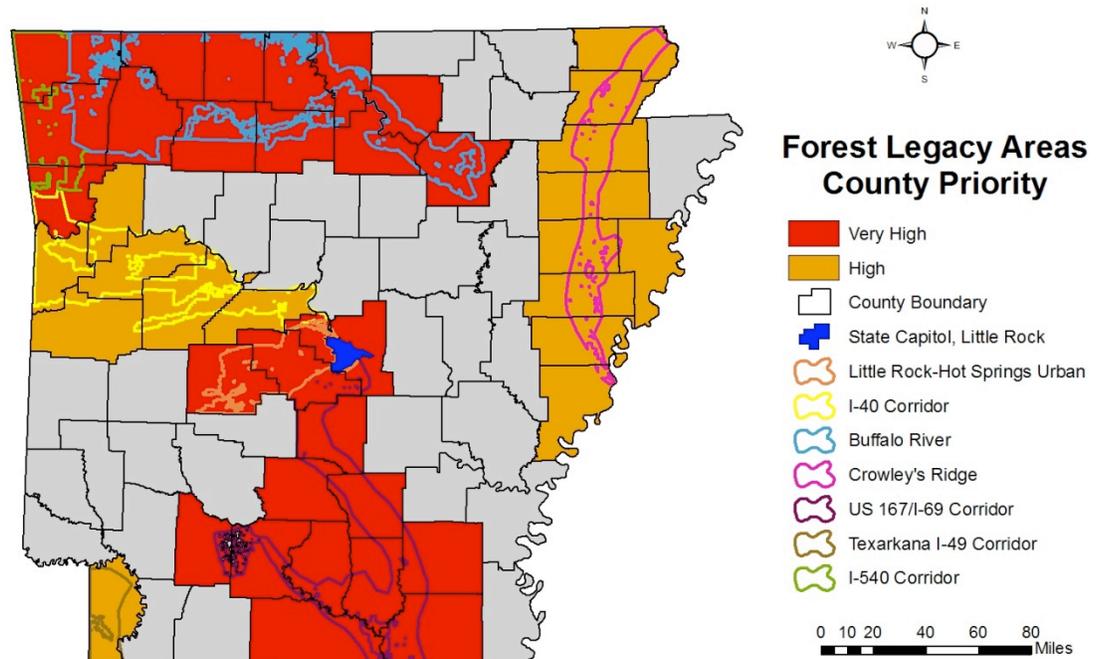


Figure 15.

The Forest Legacy Areas are consistent with the goals of the program in Arkansas. The FLP in Arkansas focuses on protecting large blocks of forestland from parcelization and fragmentation in areas that are important for forest products industry, promote ecological benefits, provide watershed protection, and offer open space for public value. Smaller properties that are either connective or contain key features associated with larger land protection projects will also be a priority. After determining the goals of the Arkansas FLP based on the benefits the program would strive to protect as well as the trends it would attempt to prevent, the SFSCC then established the area of Arkansas that would be most able to achieve those goals. While forests in other areas of Arkansas possess attributes and threats, no other area provides all of the benefits or faces all of the threats as do these 26 counties in the Buffalo River, I-540 Corridor, Little Rock-Hot Springs Urban Expansion, and US 167/I-69 Corridor Forest Legacy Areas. Most notably, when compared to the rest of the state, the counties that intersect the Little Rock-Hot Springs Urban Expansion and US 167 I-69 Corridor Forest Legacy Areas are most reliant on the timber industry and face the gravest threat of fragmentation/parcelization - driving forces behind the FLP.

According to National FLP Guidelines, criteria for a FLA should be based upon the FLP purpose to protect environmentally important forest areas that are threatened by conversion to non-forest.

FLA boundaries must encompass forestlands with significant environmental and other resource based values. Areas may also include non-forested areas such as farms and villages if they are an integral part of the landscape and are within logical boundaries. Since FLA boundaries may not correspond to property boundaries, tracts located partially within the geographically defined FLAs are eligible for the FLP upon approval of a boundary adjustment by the USFS Region.

Eligible projects include the following:

- Water quality and watershed protection - Give priority to properties that are likely to have significant water quality and watershed protection benefits.
- Degree of threat - Give priority to projects on properties that have proof of a high degree of threat of development, fragmentation, or parcelization.
- Proof of Readiness – Give priority to projects that have community support, identified matching funds and partnership involvement.
- Forest resource economic benefits - Give priority to properties that are likely to have significant forest resource economic benefits.
- Public benefits - Give priority to properties that are likely to have direct and indirect scenic and/or outdoor recreation benefits.
- Ecological/Cultural benefits - Give priority to properties that are likely to have significant ecological, cultural, and environmental education benefits.
- Give priority to projects that are in counties with “very high” priority ratings as identified in the Statewide Forest Resources Assessment.
- Give priority to projects that fit within a larger conservation plan, strategy, or initiative, and connect to or lead to additional conservation investments in the region.

The SFSCC is responsible for evaluating and prioritizing projects. All lands and interests in lands are secured in accordance with Federal appraisal and acquisition standards and procedures. The acquired interests in lands entered into the FLP are adequate for FL purposes and are perpetual.

Projects are selected and funded on a voluntary and competitive basis. Interested landowners submit a non-binding application that gives pertinent information on the property's resources and expected value. Landowners who wish to participate in the program may be asked to provide the following information:

1. Name, address and phone number of applicant landowner.
2. All other owners of record for this tract, and their addresses.
3. Name, address and phone number of authorized agent representing landowner(s), if applicable.
4. Location of property.
5. State-approved landowner Forest Management Stewardship Plan or multi-resource management plan.
6. List of the significant scenic, natural, recreational, wildlife, timber and other resource values contained on the property.
7. Identification of all dams, dumps or waste disposal sites on the property.
8. Signed statement giving the FS and State lead agency permission to enter the property for review and appraisal purposes.
9. Legal description.
10. List any encumbrances or liens existing on the property including, but not limited to contracts, leases, or outstanding rights not of record.
11. Copy of plat or survey map of the property, if existing. If only a portion of the property is being offered, identify it on a plat showing the portion offered in the context of the entire tract.

12. Tract acreage and total number of acres of forests and cleared/open land.
13. List of existing permanent improvements on the tract, including houses, barns, lakes, ponds, dams, wells, roads, and other structures, and total number of acres occupied by improvements.

Projects meeting third party certification, projects with limited or full public access, projects that build upon already invested federal funds, projects that have already been appraised, and projects exceeding the 25% minimum private cost-share match will more likely rank higher in the project selection process at both the state and national levels as this certification shows the landowner's commitment to sustainable forest management.

Under Federal land acquisition requirements, an independent appraisal of the real property or interests in real property in the form of conservation easement must be completed and reviewed. The landowner must be informed of the outcome of that process.

At this time, project proposals are accepted from August 1 to July 31. Projects submitted after July 31 will be considered for the next Forest Legacy proposal cycle federal fiscal year. The proposal cycle federal fiscal year is determined by adding 2 years to the year the July 31<sup>st</sup> cutoff. Once a year in around September, the AFC will review applications and the SFSCC will rank projects based on their ability to satisfy the objectives of the program. Arkansas' proposed projects would then be evaluated against other projects in the USFS Southern Region and then nationally. Should the national process timeline change, the lead agency will adjust the timeline for submission accordingly.

#### **Performance Measures**

- Evaluate administration of the State's Forest Legacy Program
- Accept, review, and prioritize Forest Legacy applications
- Coordinate easement acquisitions or interests in land which include but are not limited to gathering the baseline documentation report, Forest Stewardship Management
- Plan, survey, appraise, review and finalize easement language
- Coordinate acquisition process within State Government
- Coordinate State Forest Stewardship Coordination Committee
- Annual monitoring of completed conservation easement Legacy Projects

USDA approved the first Forest Legacy Program Assessment of Need (AON) in 2005. At that time, states were directed to update their AONs every 5 years. States may include the Forest Legacy Program in their State Assessments and State Strategies in lieu of completing new or revised AONs. This section is intended to meet the requirements and be approved as Arkansas's five-year update to the 2005 AON.

The primary change from the 2005 AON to this updated program description is the prioritization of the counties in the Forest Legacy Areas. However, with the analysis from the SFLA, and program the Forest Legacy Area counties have been ranked "high" and "very high." Projects submitted from "very high" priority counties receive additional consideration by the Forest Legacy Committee when ranking equal projects. No other significant changes were made to the 2005 AON.