

Georgia Forestry Commission Stimulus Action Plan

The Georgia Forestry Commission has applied for several grants through three different fund sources authorized by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act: Rural Business-Cooperative Services, Wildfire Management and Hazardous Fuels Reductions. Of these, five grants, totaling over \$9.7 million, have been approved in the first round of grant applications for Wildfire Management activities. Additional grant applications will be submitted by GFC if additional funding opportunities become available.

The following is a more detailed description of the grants awarded to GFC through the ARRA Wildfire Management grant, CFDA# 10.688. For more information please contact:

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Cogongrass & Invasive Plant Eradication

Grant Award Amount:

SFY 2010-	\$1,196,667
SFY 2011-	<u>598,333</u>
Total-	1,795,000

Program Description:

Cogongrass, *Imperata cylindrica* (L.), is considered the 7th worst weed in the world and has taken over vast ecosystems in southern Alabama and Mississippi as well as Florida. In 2004, there were 12 known cogongrass sites in Georgia the number of sites has now expanded to almost 250 in 29 Georgia counties. This project will expand the current cogongrass education, detection, and eradication efforts.

Incentive payments will be available to landowners who perform treatments within forested areas. The removal of these invasive plants will allow native flora to recapture the site, which will provide ecosystem benefits. GFC professional foresters will work with these private landowners.

The University of Georgia, 17 Department of Natural Resources State Parks and Historical sites, and Forestry Commission State Forest will be surveyed and treated for high-priority invasive plant species.

This funding was a part of a competitive process within the southeast region, the amount of 1,795,000 was the result of the competitive process. Funding restrictions include no purchase of IT equipment and no funding is to be used to supplement existing commission personnel positions.

Dixon Memorial State Forest Wildland Recover and Habitat Restoration

Grant Award Amount:

SFY 2010-	\$251,333
SFY 2011-	<u>125,667</u>
Total-	377,000

Program Description:

The Georgia Forestry Commission is committed to reestablishing longleaf pine where it naturally occurred on the forest. In Georgia, less than one-half a million acres of the longleaf pine community remains. This is an 80 percent decline since 1955. Virtually all of the remaining longleaf pine is on private land. By reestablishing longleaf pine on the DMSF, the GFC is insuring the protection of the longleaf pine ecosystem from commercial and residential development.

These plantings will provide an educational opportunity to landowners, professional natural resource managers, and the general public about the benefits of longleaf pine and its importance in the ecosystem. There will also be an educational opportunity about wildfires and the destructive characteristics along with the importance of using prescribed fire and its benefits.

The DMSF is also adjacent to the Okefenokee Wildlife Refuge and Wilderness Area. This project will enhance the management objectives of the Refuge.

The Forest is also used as a Wildlife Management Area by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources. This planting will enhance wildlife benefits as prescribed fire is reintroduced into these areas.

This funding was a part of a competitive process within the southeast region, the amount of \$377,000 was the result of the competitive process. Funding restrictions include no purchase of IT Equipment and no funding is to be used to supplement existing commission personnel positions.

Regional Longleaf Pine Restoration Initiative and Fuel Reduction

Grant Award Amount:

SFY 2010-	\$1,161,333
SFY 2011-	<u>580,667</u>
Total-	1,742,000

Program Description:

Longleaf Pine Forests once covered a vast range from Texas to Virginia, but have been reduced to three percent of historical acreage due to conversion to other land uses and forest types. Longleaf pine forests are highly valued for their resistance to damage by insects, diseases, wildfire, and storms, and for their yield of high quality wood products, biological diversity, and beauty. Under this program, state forestry agencies in Alabama, Georgia, Florida, South Carolina, and North Carolina are putting Americans to work restoring these valuable forests. Activities include restoring longleaf pine on state-owned and private lands; increasing production capacity of longleaf pine seed, seedlings, and native understory plants; coordinating efforts across broad partnerships; and providing educational materials and training to the public and staff. This work is helping to restore a great American ecosystem while creating jobs for

contractors and laborers involved in tree planting and forest improvement work, nursery workers, conservation planners and coordinators, media specialists, and educators.

Public Lands Management—Stimulus funding will restore and reforest longleaf pine on 3462 acres of state forest land to set the example for the public. All work will be accomplished using contract vendors, creating and retaining jobs for forest laborers, foremen, and small business owners.

Private Lands Management—The private land to be planted will be identified with a focus on those lands damaged by tornadoes in 2008 and 2009. The private landowner will be paid a flat rate of \$200/ac for establishment. This incentive payment will generate jobs for forestry services contractors and their foremen and crews who will be hired by landowners to conduct site prep and planting.

Plant Materials Capacity— Stimulus funds made available to contract the fumigation and cone collection for the additional capacity needed. One crew of 5 people can collect approximately 1000 bushels of seed. Private contractors will be utilized to accomplish this task.

Education and Outreach— The Longleaf Alliance, a private nonprofit organization that works to conserve, restore, and manage functioning longleaf pine ecosystems, will be used to deliver training to forestry professionals and private landowners. Training professionals will ensure they have the knowledge needed to perform their jobs to the best of their ability and thus positively impact job retention. Training and outreach to private landowners will create a demand for the services of forest contractors and small business owners

This funding was a part of a competitive process within the southeast region, the amount of 1,742,000.00 was the result of the competitive process. Funding restrictions include no purchase of IT equipment and no funding is to be used to supplement existing commission personnel positions.

Enhanced Fuels Management and Community Wildfire Protection Plans

Grant Award Amount:

SFY 2010-	\$2,392,667
SFY 2011-	<u>1,196,333</u>
Total-	3,589,000

Program Description:

This project will continue efforts by landowners adjacent to the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge to create a wildfire resilient buffer surrounding the Okefenokee Swamp. Efforts will include forest fuel reduction techniques and forest management practices that contribute to effective wildfire management. Communities in the vicinity at risk from wildfire will be granted limited funding for wildfire mitigation projects. Community Wildfire Protection Plans will be written for Charlton, Ware, and Clinch Counties. In 2007 Georgia and Florida suffered their worst wildfires in history burning some 560,000 acres in and around the Okefenokee. This project is a collaborative effort to mitigate future fires that burn in the Okefenokee.

We have a strategy to complete CWPPs for 90% of Georgia. We plan to support the Greater Okefenokee Association of Landowners with a strategy to reduce acres of forests burned by wildfires and a goal to have more Firewise Communities.

A project manager appointed to this ARRA grant will hire a mitigation specialist to work with the local communities and up to 3 forest management specialists who will work with landowners to approve and verify on the ground practices. Per acre payments will be established for allowable

practices. The largest portion of the grant funding will go toward payment to landowners for completion of approved practices. Funding in the grant allows for a mapping project for updated road maps and project progress maps.

This funding was a part of a competitive process within the southeast region, the amount of 3,589,000.00 was the result of the competitive process. Funding restrictions include no purchase of IT equipment and no funding is to be used to supplement existing commission personnel positions.

Georgia Stewardship Revisit Prescribe Burn

Grant Award Amount:

SFY 2010-	\$1,495,333
SFY 2011-	<u>747,667</u>
Total-	2,243,000

Program Description:

Georgia has participated heavily in the national Forest Stewardship Program with about 6,400 Georgia landowners possessing forest management plans via the program. The Georgia Forestry Commission's 2008-2020 Strategic Plan for Prescribed Fire in Georgia includes encouraging the use of prescribed fire. Forest Stewardship farms need revisiting to ascertain each land owner's progress implementing prescribed fire and other forest management recommendations. Georgia currently issues burn permits on paper and needs to computerize this process for the sake of smoke management and air quality. Fire departments and law enforcement agencies are important stakeholders in the strategic plan for support of prescribed burning. An education campaign for this audience will effectively support prescribed fire from those who ultimately respond to false alarm calls to prescribed fires.

Hiring of 20 foresters and forestry technicians will facilitate visitation to some 5,000 Stewardship farms over the 18 month span of the grant. Each farm will be surveyed for prescribed fire use and needs with a prescribed fire plan written for one timber stand on each farm. Prescribed fire teams will follow up with actual burning on as many as possible. Farms will be evaluated for Stewardship certification as they are visited. The project manager will develop or contract to be developed a computer system for documentation of burn permits and management of air quality on a regional scale across Georgia. Education programs will be delivered to fire departments and law enforcement agencies.

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