

@MSFORESTRYCOMM



Mississippi Forestry Commission  
State Forester's Office  
(601) 359-1386  
660 North Street, Suite 300  
Jackson, Mississippi 39202  
[www.mfc.ms.gov](http://www.mfc.ms.gov)

# Mississippi Forestry Commission

*Protection - Management - Information*



# 2020

# Annual Report



The mission of the Mississippi Forestry Commission is to provide active leadership in forest protection, forest management, forest inventory, and effective forest information distribution necessary for Mississippi's sustainable forest-based economy.



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The Mississippi Forestry Commission provides equal employment opportunity and services to all individuals regardless of disability, race, age, religion, color, gender, creed, national origin or political affiliation.

The Mississippi Forestry Commission is an equal opportunity provider.

# 2020 – Annual Report

The Mississippi Forestry Commission (MFC) has been a leader in the protection, management and sustainability of the state’s forests for more than 90 years. The MFC provides expertise, information and support to keep Mississippi’s approximately 19.2 million acres of forestland healthy, productive and profitable.

Forests make important, positive contributions to the quality of life for Mississippians by providing almost 62,000 jobs, a wealth of forest products, improved water quality, livestock forage areas, open spaces, abundant wildlife habitat, recreational experiences and economic benefits. In Mississippi, the forestry and forest products industry has a \$12.79 billion economic impact every year.

The MFC protects Mississippi’s forestland from wild-fire, sustainably manages approximately 485,000 acres of forested non-federal public land and delivers quality forest management services and assistance to both rural and urban private landowners.



2020 was an interesting year. With the COVID-19 pandemic hitting the U.S. in March, the way we conducted business shifted dramatically. While many businesses and industries shut down due to the pandemic, the MFC continued to serve the people of Mississippi. Our Lead Team put procedures in place that allowed us to continue to provide vital forest protection and forest management services. Like every other business and government agency, we had our own set of challenges to contend with, but I am proud of how our agency responded and continued to move forward.

I want to give a special word of thanks to the MFC’s partners who provide support, collaboration and implementation of many of our programs and services. We work hard to maintain and develop our relationships with natural resource agencies, organizations and individuals. These partnerships ensure the citizens of Mississippi receive the best assistance and service possible.

I would also like to thank our state leaders, commissioners, staff and citizens for their continued support and assistance in making 2020 a productive year.

The MFC is proud of our service to the public and our protection of the state’s valuable forest resources. The MFC looks forward to the continued privilege of caring for Mississippi’s trees, forests and natural resources.

Please feel free to contact our office anytime. We look forward to continuing to serve Mississippians.

Sincerely,

Russell Bozeman  
State Forester

## Board of Commissioners

Ken Martin, Chairman  
951 Cato Road  
Mendenhall, MS 39114  
Phone: (601) 942-7513  
Email: kmartin951@aol.com  
\*Term Expires: June 30, 2020  
Representing: 3rd Congressional District

Jim Lockett, Vice-Chairman  
72 Lawler Cove  
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Phone: (662) 902-7348  
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\*Term Expires: June 30, 2024  
Representing: At-large

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Grenada, MS 38902  
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Email: petigru@aol.com  
\*Term Expires: June 30, 2023  
Representing: 4th Congressional District

Patricia Thomasson  
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Philadelphia, MS 39350  
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Representing: 2nd Congressional District

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Email: lwb6@msstate.edu  
\*Term Expires: Non-expiring  
Representing: Ex-Officio

*\* Members, by statute, may serve after their expiration date until they are replaced.*

# MFC Office Contact Information

## Mississippi Forestry Commission State Office

Phone: (601) 359-1386  
 Fax: (601) 359-1349  
 Address:  
 660 North Street, Suite 300  
 Jackson, MS 39202

### Region 1 Office

1711 McCullough Blvd  
 Tupelo, MS 38801

Phone: (662) 842-5312

Serving the counties of:  
 Alcorn, Benton, Calhoun,  
 Chickasaw, Coahoma, DeSoto,  
 Itawamba, Lafayette, Lee,  
 Marshall, Monroe, Panola,  
 Pontotoc, Prentiss, Quitman,  
 Tallahatchie, Tate, Tippah,  
 Tishomingo, Tunica, Union, Yalobusha

### Region 3 Office

3139 Highway 468 W  
 Pearl, MS 39208

Phone: (769) 218-6830  
 Fax: (601) 420-6027

Serving the counties of:  
 Claiborne, Clarke, Copiah,  
 Covington, Hinds, Issaquena,  
 Jasper, Jefferson, Jones,  
 Lauderdale, Madison, Newton,  
 Rankin, Scott, Sharkey,  
 Simpson, Smith, Warren,  
 Wayne, Yazoo

### Region 2 Office

1801 Highway 51 S  
 Grenada, MS 38901

Phone: (662) 226-3321  
 Fax: (662) 226-0170

Serving the counties of:  
 Attala, Bolivar, Carroll,  
 Choctaw, Clay, Grenada,  
 Holmes, Humphreys, Kemper,  
 Leake, Leflore, Lowndes,  
 Montgomery, Neshoba, Noxubee,  
 Oktibbeha, Sunflower, Washington,  
 Webster, Winston

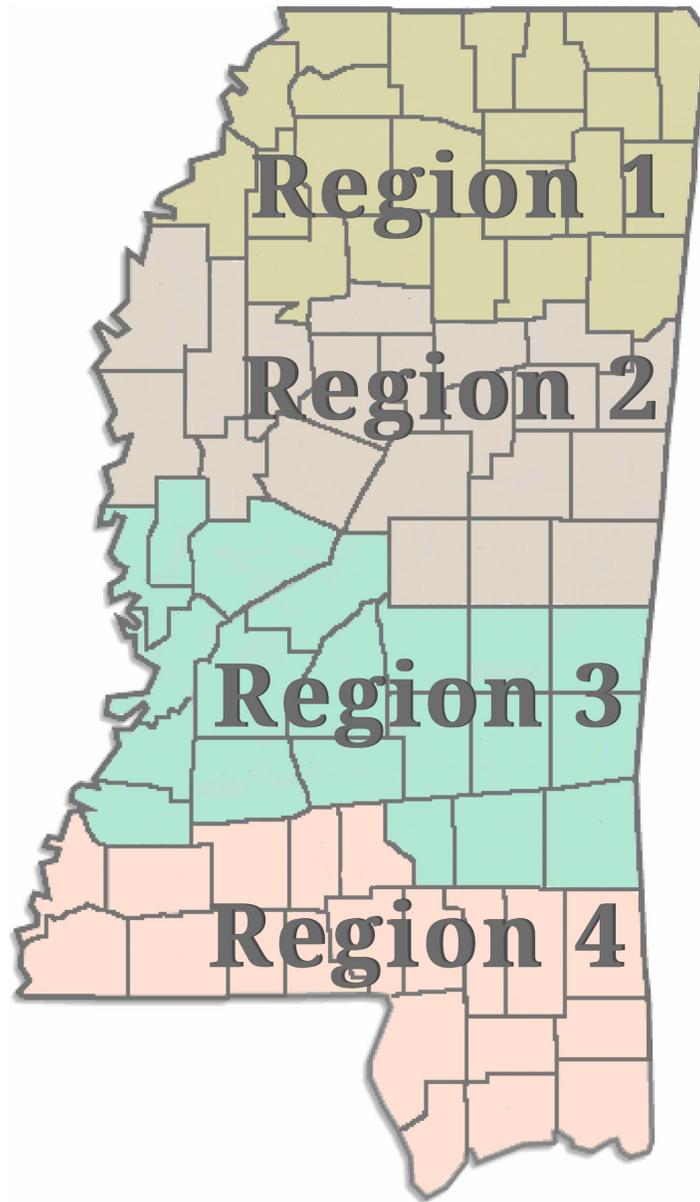
### Region 4 Office

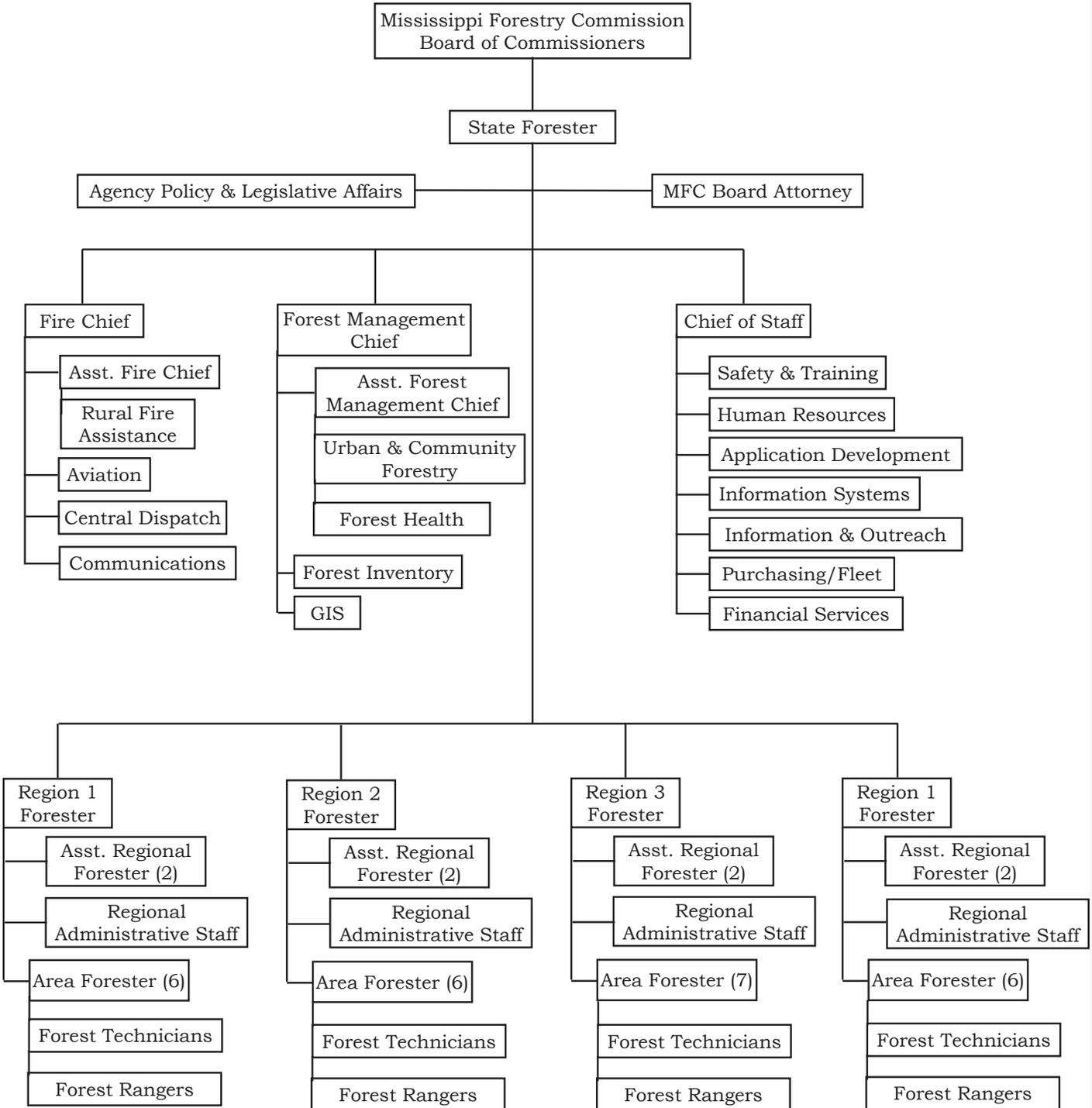
477 South Gate Rd  
 Hattiesburg, MS 39401

Phone: (601) 540-5239  
 Fax: (601) 544-0839

Serving the counties of:  
 Adams, Amite, Forrest,  
 Franklin, George, Greene,  
 Hancock, Harrison, Jackson,  
 Jefferson Davis, Lamar, Lawrence,  
 Lincoln, Marion, Pearl River,  
 Perry, Pike, Stone,  
 Walthall, Wilkinson

# Mississippi Forestry Commission





## FOREST MANAGEMENT

The Mississippi Forestry Commission (MFC) is charged with promoting sound forest management practices, which help maintain the integrity of the environment and provide for our state's future natural resource needs. The MFC offers a variety of forest management programs and services to assist private landowners. The MFC also provides forest management assistance on School Trust forestland in Mississippi.

The Forest Management Department provides private forest landowners with limited on-the-ground services, technical assistance, cost-share assistance and advice to increase timber production and provide for the sustainable management of forest resources.

### PRIVATE LAND ACTIVITIES

In FY20, the MFC continued to provide technical and financial assistance to non-industrial private forest landowners in Mississippi. This assistance is provided through programs designed to enhance and protect Mississippi's natural resources.

\$1.93 million in FRDP funding was distributed to private forest landowners.

### PRIVATE LANDOWNER SERVICES

The MFC offers a variety of services, programs and resources to private forest landowners of relatively small acreages. Landowners with large tracts of forestland are routinely referred to private consulting foresters. Most technical assistance and forestry advice is free to the landowner. Direct services are available for a fee. Prices and available services may vary by job type and area. Some of these services may be obtained from private vendors. The MFC also helps private landowners enroll in state and federal cost-share programs to offset the expense of certain forestry practices. Contact your local MFC office for more information about available services.

Services provided free-of-charge:

- Preparing forest management plans (up to 250 acres)
- Conducting compliance checks for state and federal forest improvement cost-share programs
- Providing forest management advice regarding: forest-damaging insects, diseases, invasive species and Best Management Practices (BMPs) to improve forest productivity and water quality

Direct services (for a fee):

- Hazard mitigation/prescribed burning
- Firelane/firebreak establishment and maintenance
- Logging road/skid trail/loading deck maintenance
- Southern Pine Beetle suppression activities (ground location, flagging, marking, coordination of harvest)

Direct services (for a fee) - provider of last resort, only if the landowner is unable to find another available source:

- Tree planting/seeding (landowner must provide seeds or seedlings)
- Vegetation management (control of competition, wildlife habitat enhancement, and invasive species control - landowner must provide herbicide and surfactant)



## Forest Management Accomplishments

### Private Land Activities

Landowners Assisted	7,216
*Total Forest Management Plans	383
Acres under Management Plans	108,476
Prescribed Burning (Acres)	8,950.75

### Public Land Activities

Timber Sale Receipts	\$10,440,587
Number of Sales	204
Acres Regenerated	4,214
Boundary Line Maintenance (Miles)	403
Firebreak Maintenance (Miles)	1,562
Prescribed Burning (Acres)	6,174

### Prescribed Burning

Private & Public Land Total (Acres)	15,124.75
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### Forest Resource Development Program

Acres Regenerated or Improved	82,815
Funds Distributed	\$1,931,920

\*Certified Stewardship & other Forest Management plans

## FOREST RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

The Forest Resource Development Program (FRDP) was established in 1974 by the Mississippi Legislature to aid in the development of Mississippi's forest economy.

In FY20, the FRDP distributed \$1.93 million to private forest landowners and 82,815 acres were regenerated or improved. This program helps offset landowner's expenses by reimbursing a portion of the costs associated with implementing specific forestry practices.

Cost-share funding provides reimbursement for tree planting and forest improvement practices designed for the purpose of long-term timber production and enhanced wildlife development.

Payments cover approximately 50-75 percent (depending on the practice) of the total cost of implementing these forestry practices, with a maximum limit set for each individual practice.

Eligible landowners may receive up to \$7,000 of FRDP assistance per year. In return, the landowner agrees to manage and protect the area receiving FRDP assistance from fire and grazing for a minimum of 10 years, using the proper practices. To learn more about the FRDP the MFC website or contact your local MFC office. Please note: submission of an application does not guarantee participation in the FRDP or that cost-share funds will be available. The local MFC office will confirm funding amounts and participation in the FRDP when the application is finalized.



## FOREST STEWARDSHIP

The Forest Stewardship Program promotes natural resource planning on privately owned forestland. Landowners not classified under other forest management programs are encouraged to utilize stewardship management to care for their natural resources through the development and implementation of a Forest Stewardship Management Plan.

Forest Stewardship Management Plans are based on sound management principles designed to restore and protect forest resources, while improving fish and wildlife habitats. Forest Stewardship Management Plans share the same format as those required by the American Tree Farm System (ATFS) for their certification program. 108,476 acres were reported under a Certified Stewardship plan or other type of forest management plan in FY20.

The Forest Stewardship Program is funded by the USDA Forest Service and administered by the MFC. The MFC provides technical assistance for the Forest Stewardship Management Program in conjunction with federal, state and private natural resource agencies and organizations. For more information, please visit: [www.mfc.ms.gov/Forest-Stewardship](http://www.mfc.ms.gov/Forest-Stewardship)

Revenue from timber sales on non-federal public forestland totaled \$10.44 million.

## PUBLIC LAND ACTIVITIES

The MFC provides forest management assistance on approximately 485,000 acres of non-federal public forestland in Mississippi. In FY20, the MFC managed four state forests (Three Rivers, Kurtz, Camden, and Jamie L. Whitten) and assisted school boards with forest management on Mississippi School Trust (16th Section) Lands. The MFC also rendered assistance to other agencies, boards, departments or entities that have jurisdiction over state and other public forestland statewide.

## SCHOOL TRUST LANDS

The MFC is charged by state law to manage forested 16th Section Public School Trust lands located in 67 counties throughout the state.

The MFC sustainably manages approximately 480,000 acres of forested 16th Section Public School Trust lands. Timber sale revenue from school trust lands directly benefits students attending nearby schools. Funds are reinvested into the school districts where they are earned at the discretion of the local school board.

In addition to timber production, management considerations also include wildlife, soil and water quality, aesthetics and other appropriate benefits of forestlands.

The MFC ensures that proper care is taken to manage forested 16th Section Public School Trust lands sustainably and Best Management Practices (BMPs) are employed during the management process.

The combined revenue from timber sales on Mississippi school trust lands and other public lands totaled \$10.44 million in FY20.

The MFC converted its collective management data into a GIS system to prepare the first comprehensive 16th Section Public School Trust lands assessment. This assessment, together with more intensive forest management practices, allowed the MFC to meet its goal for timber-generated revenue. Mississippi's forested 16th Section Public School Trust lands are certified by the American Tree Farm System (ATFS), the first-ever large-scale certification of non-federal public forestland in the nation. ATFS certification ensures that School Trust Lands will continue to be managed sustainably, for the benefit of future generations.

Timber sale revenue from School Trust Lands directly benefits children attending nearby schools.

108,476 acres were reported under a Certified Stewardship plan or other type of forest management plan in FY20.

## MISSISSIPPI FOREST INVENTORY

The Mississippi Forest Inventory (MFI) Program is responsible for developing and implementing the statewide forest resource inventory, necessary for Mississippi's sustainable forest-based economy.

The forest inventory also effectively compiles forest inventory-based information for economic development and policy purposes. In order to present an accurate picture of Mississippi's forest resources, the statewide forest inventory operates on a continuous five-year cycle.

The MFC uses the information compiled during the inventory to respond to resource requests for forest product, ethanol conversion and wood pellet facilities. The MFC's Resource Analysis Program oversees the development, implementation and management of the MFC's Geographic Information System.

In an effort to promote the economic development of Mississippi's forest resources, the MFC, in conjunction with the Mississippi Development Authority (MDA), provides forest resource maps and information to businesses investigating the possibility of locating in Mississippi.

Maintaining an up-to-date analysis of the state's forest resources is critical information for both existing and potential forest-industry investors. The MFI Program continues to provide the necessary data to keep Mississippi's \$12.79 billion forest-based economy competitive. Companies wishing to locate in Mississippi often consult MFI Program data during their decision-making process.



The American Tree Farm Certification group certification on School Trust Lands ensures that Mississippi will remain a strong competitor in the growing global need for certified wood.



## FOREST HEALTH

The MFC provides forest pest detection, evaluation and control recommendations on private, urban and non-federal public forestland in Mississippi. The MFC conducts at least one statewide aerial survey each year and additional surveys if necessary. Insect and disease spots identified during the aerial survey are then mapped on the Southern Pine Beetle Activity Map, which makes the data available to the public, allowing private landowners the opportunity to determine if any SPB activity was located near their property. Visit [www.mfc.ms.gov/southern-pine-beetle-activity-map](http://www.mfc.ms.gov/southern-pine-beetle-activity-map) to view the map.

The MFC also provides technical assistance and special incentive programs to private landowners to combat threats from invasive plants, such as cogongrass, kudzu and Chinese tallow tree. Visit the MFC website for more information.

In FY20, the southern pine beetle continued to threaten more timber in the southern region of the United States than any other forest insect. In response to this ongoing risk, the MFC continued to partner with the USDA Forest Service's Forest Health Protection Program (Southern Region) to administer a Southern Pine Beetle (SPB) Prevention/Education Program. This program aims to teach landowners about the benefits of thinning, in order to reduce the risk of SPB hazards. The associated SPB cost-share program was designed to provide a financial incentive for landowners who applied approved first thinning management practices to their pine stands, to reduce their risk of southern pine beetle infestation. Financial incentives were also available to loggers working on SPB tracts in order to offset associated costs.



The second leading insect to threaten pine timber in the South continued to be the Ips Engraver Beetle. Drought conditions and stress from severe winds can cause Ips Engraver Beetle populations to increase dramatically.

**Cogongrass is an aggressive invasive species that chokes out native vegetation and devastates ecosystems.**

The Exotic Invasive Species Plan addresses the detection, identification, information, control and abatement of six species of concern that impact the forest resources of Mississippi.

These species are cogongrass (*Imperata cylindrica*), kudzu (*Pueraria montana*), Chinese tallowtree (*Sapium sebifera*), Chinese/European privet (*Ligustrum sinense*), Japanese/glossy privet (*Ligustrum japonicum*) and Japanese climbing fern (*Lygodium japonicum*). The plan also addresses the need to develop partnerships with other agencies and organizations to achieve shared goals regarding invasive species.

Cogongrass is an aggressive invasive species that chokes out native vegetation, creates fuel for wildfires by burning at extremely hot temperatures and devastates ecosystems.

Infested areas of cogongrass are found on more than 1 million acres throughout the southeastern United States.

In FY20, the MFC's cogongrass program assisted 30 landowners. The program treated 487 cogongrass spots, which were comprised of over 377 acres.

### **Invasive Plant Control Program for Cogongrass Suppression**

Landowners Inspected	30
Total Infested Spots Treated	487
Total Infested Acres Treated	377

## URBAN AND COMMUNITY FORESTRY PROGRAM

The Urban and Community Forestry (U&CF) Program provides assistance and training to urban areas in the development of community forestry programs. Support is offered for counties and municipalities regarding the development of tree ordinances, street tree inventories and urban forest management plans. The Urban Forestry Program also provides technical advice to builders regarding tree preservation during construction and assists homeowners with advice regarding insects, diseases and other urban forestry issues. The program also supports outreach, training and continuing education opportunities for certified arborists and tree care professionals, as well as U&CF volunteers across the state.

The Urban and Community Forestry Challenge Grant Program is funded by a grant from the USDA Forest Service for administration, demonstration projects and educational programs. The purpose of the Urban and Community Forestry Challenge Grant Program is to aid in the development of long-term, self-sustaining urban and community forestry programs. The goal of the Urban and Community Forestry Challenge Grant Program is to inspire or enhance local or statewide urban and community forestry programs.

The Urban Forestry Division also promoted and administered the Arbor Day Foundation's Tree City USA®, Tree Campus USA® and Tree Line USA® programs in Mississippi. The Urban and Community Forestry Program promotes HelpStopThePop.com for reporting Chinese tallow tree locations, provides technical assistance to homeowners, and administers the delivery of Chinese tallow tree control assistance to municipalities in the state.

**\$30,775 was distributed to state and local governments, non-profit groups, and educational institutions through the Urban and Community Forestry Challenge Grant Program.**

Chinese tallow tree is another rapidly spreading invasive species that can invade almost all habitats from wet to dry and from sun to shade. It crowds out native tree species once it becomes established, and its leaves and fruit are toxic to cattle and known to cause nausea and other sicknesses in humans. In an effort to identify and stop the spread of Chinese Tallow Tree throughout the state, the MFC developed and launched the HelpStopThePop web-based app, designed for crowd-sourcing the mapping of this invasive species in Mississippi. The website has been widely used and received much publicity through a variety of media outlets. As a result, the agency (and the public) is beginning to get a better understanding of the distribution of this invasive tree in the state. The agency has also made herbicide available to municipalities interested in treating and controlling Chinese tallow tree on public property.

## FOREST LEGACY PROGRAM

The Forest Legacy Program was authorized by the 1990 Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act to identify and protect environmentally important private forestland threatened by conversion to non-forest uses.

The MFC administers the Forest Legacy Program through an agreement with the USDA Forest Service. Private forestland is protected through fee-simple or conservation easement acquisition from interested landowners. The program is implemented in states that have completed an Assessment of Need or have incorporated the assessment information into their State Forest Action Plans. States in the Southern Region that have completed Assessments of Need are Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia.

There are three Forest Legacy Areas (FLAs) in Mississippi - Southeast, Central and Northeast. FLAs were identified based on many factors including the habitat diversity, types of natural forest communities in each area, significant past and projected increases in human population and recent conversion of forestland to other uses.

## FOREST PROTECTION

MFC Wildland Firefighters work long hours in demanding and dangerous conditions to protect lives, homes and natural resources. The MFC suppresses, monitors and detects wildfire activity occurring day and night on approximately 19.2 million acres of forestland statewide.

The MFC responded to and suppressed 798 wildfires that burned 21,326 acres in FY20. MFC Wildland Firefighters saved 2,467 structures threatened by wildfire activity. Wildfire damaged or destroyed 37 structures. The average wildfire size was 26 acres. The MFC dispatches wildland firefighting personnel and equipment to the location of reported wildfire activity 24/7. To report a wildfire, call 1-833-MFC-FIRE or dial 911.

MFC Wildland Firefighters responded to and suppressed 798 wildfires that burned 21,326 acres.

Nationwide, nearly nine out of 10 wildfires are human-caused and could have been prevented with proper care. In FY20, debris burns that escaped control were the leading cause of wildfires in Mississippi. In an effort to reduce the number of human-caused wildfires in Mississippi, burn bans are issued by each County Board of Supervisors and approved by the MFC.

Burn ban notifications are posted and updated on the MFC's website and social media pages. Visit [www.mfc.ms.gov/burn-bans](http://www.mfc.ms.gov/burn-bans) for an up-to-date list of burn bans statewide. Any person who knowingly and willfully violates a burn ban is guilty of a misdemeanor and may be fined. Burn bans are enforced by the local Sheriff's Department.

In addition, any individual who starts an outdoor fire will be held responsible for their fire and the smoke generated as a result. If a fire escapes their control and becomes a wildfire, which burns or damages the forestland/property of another person, the individual who started the fire will be held liable for any damages and suppression charges incurred.

**2,467 structures were threatened by wildfire activity & saved by MFC wildland firefighters. Is your home Firewise?**

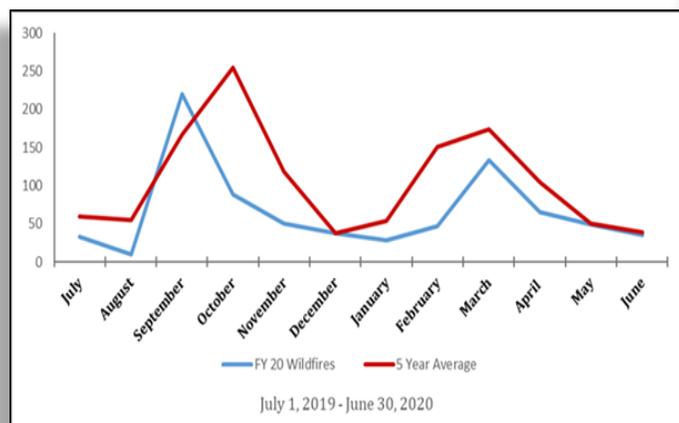


The MFC coordinates the management of wildland firefighting resources within the state and deploys MFC employees to assist with federal wildland firefighting detail in times of need (as long as wildfire conditions permit in MS). The MFC collects the necessary data to make sound decisions and long-range plans to ensure the adequate allocation of resources needed for pre-suppression and suppression of wildfires. Burning permits are issued by MFC dispatch (upon request) when weather conditions are favorable for controlled burning,

To request a burning permit, call  
1-833-MFC-FIRE.



Help the MFC prevent human-caused wildfire activity by checking burn bans and weather conditions before doing any outdoor burning. The wind can carry embers long distances, causing new spot fires one-half mile away from the original burning area. Check the local weather forecast - do not engage in any outdoor burning on dry, windy days. Everyday activities can cause wildfires. Sparks from dragging vehicle chains, hot equipment parts, cigarette ash and exhaust particles can cause unintended wildfires when vegetation is dry. One less spark, one less wildfire.



Five-Year Wildfire Average

1,263 fires  
21,681 acres

The MFC manages 12 Remote Area Weather Stations (RAWS) strategically located across the state as part of a national grid. The MFC also provides assistance to Mississippi and other states with natural disaster clean-up and recovery from weather-related events (hurricanes, ice-storms, and large-scale wildfires).

Before engaging in any outdoor burning visit [www.mfc.ms.gov/fire-weather](http://www.mfc.ms.gov/fire-weather) for the following predictive services information:

- Fire Danger Rating (USDA Forest Service Wildland Fire Assessment System)
- Current Weather
- Forecast
- Fire Danger Rating and Color Code
- Keetch-Byram Drought Index (KBDI)
- Southern Area Coordination Center (SACC)
- National Weather Service (NWS) Enhanced Radar Image Loop for the United States
- NWS Enhanced Radar Image Loop for Lower Mississippi Valley Sector
- NWS Fire Weather Report

### FY20 Wildfires by Cause

Cause	Wildfires	Acres Burned
Debris Burning	279	3,622
Incendiary	253	10,182
Miscellaneous	225	7,139
Equipment Use	24	135
Lightning	1	10
Smoking	10	30
Campfire	3	60
Children	2	113
Undetermined	1	35
<b>Total</b>	<b>798</b>	<b>21,326</b>

## RURAL FIRE ASSISTANCE

The MFC offers several grant programs designed to help Mississippi's volunteer fire departments (VFDs) obtain equipment and supplies needed to fight wildland fires. The MFC provides assistance to VFDs through the Federal Excess Personal Property Program (FEPP) and the Firefighter Program (FFP). The MFC administers these programs through an agreement with the USDA Forest Service. In FY20, the MFC's FEPP/FFP programs issued 31 vehicles and 20 other pieces of wildland firefighting equipment with an estimated value (or acquisition cost) of \$3.21million.

Since 1956, the FEPP Program has allowed the USDA Forest Service to loan property to state forestry agencies for the purpose of fighting wildland and rural fires. The MFC delivered the first FFP equipment in FY10. The use of the equipment is reserved for wildland/rural firefighting and emergency response situations.

Visit [www.mfc.ms.gov/rural-fire-assistance](http://www.mfc.ms.gov/rural-fire-assistance) for more information on VFD grant programs.

\$3.21 million in wildland firefighting vehicles & equipment were issued to Mississippi VFDs through the FEPP/FFP programs.

## Volunteer Fire Assistance Program (VFA)

Formerly known as the Rural Community Fire Protection Program, the Volunteer Fire Assistance Program (VFA) provided grants to eligible rural VFDs for the purchase of wildland firefighting and personal protection equipment in FY20. The MFC administers this program through an agreement with the USDA Forest Service. In FY20, the MFC awarded 50 grants with a total value of \$204,980 to volunteer fire departments through the VFA Program.

The MFC awarded 50 grants with a total value of \$204,980 to Volunteer Fire Departments.

## AVIATION

In FY20, aerial surveillance was used to manage wildfire activity. On large fires, planes fly above the wildfire, delivering real-time information to wildland firefighting units on the ground to help them manage the current fire situation.

The MFC's Aviation Department also provides service and support to Forest Health and other Forest Management program areas.



## COMMUNICATIONS

Dependable radio communication is an essential element of the MFC's ability to deploy firefighting resources and maintain situational awareness of wildfire activity. The Communications Department is responsible for maintaining and upgrading the MFC's radio network which spans the state.

Components of the network include: mobile radios in the agency's fleet of vehicles and lightweight hand-held radios for field personnel, which provide statewide communication between dispatch centers and field personnel.

In FY11, the first set of radios was purchased for the Mississippi Wireless Integrated Network (MSWIN) system as required by the Mississippi Wireless Communications Committee (WCC). During FY20, the MFC continued to implement and use the new radios. The MSWIN system provides interoperable emergency radio communication across the state with all levels of government agencies and partner organizations.

**9 OUT OF 10 WILDFIRES  
ARE HUMAN-CAUSED.**

**Take care when you burn outdoors.**

**To report a wildfire, call  
833-MFC-FIRE**



**mfc.ms.gov**



## FOREST INFORMATION

The MFC distributes relevant information to the public regarding all MFC program areas. The Forest Information Department supports MFC program areas by providing information dissemination, educational presentations and public relations support. This Department oversees media relations, internal and external communications, agency publications and management of the MFC’s digital presence.

The Forest Information Department utilizes traditional media (radio, television, newspaper, web, print) and social media outlets (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube) to reach the public.



## PUBLIC OUTREACH

During FY20, the Public Outreach Division of the Forest Information Department continued to provide public information, outreach programs and area communication support for the MFC. The MFC maintains an active Public Outreach Program designed to heighten the public’s awareness of wildfire prevention, the MFC’s mission, services and the importance of forest resources. Local outreach activities include civic club presentations, sporting events, information booths at community events, forestry field days and visits to school groups, which are carried out across the state to reach individuals at the community level.

Two topic-specific outreach programs were housed within the Public Outreach Division in FY20, the Firewise Program and the Underserved Landowner Outreach Program.

Public Outreach Officers provide customized presentations and displays for schools, community organizations, and events based on the following topics:

- Wildfire Prevention
- Smokey Bear Appearances
- Firewise
- Forest Health
- Forest Stewardship
- General MFC Information
- Best Management Practices
- Underserved Landowner Outreach Program
- Urban and Community Forestry



## MFC Outreach Programs

Programs	<b>115</b>
Participants	<b>32,168* ^</b>

*\*Data does not include participants from the MS State Fair or the MS Garden and Patio Show.  
^Due to COVID-19, no outreach events were conducted from March 2020-June 2020.*

## UNDERSERVED LANDOWNER OUTREACH PROGRAM

The Underserved Landowner Outreach Program is a collaborative project between the MFC, Alcorn State University, and the USDA Forest Service. This program offers assistance to underserved landowners in Mississippi and has three primary goals:

- To provide outreach support and technical assistance to underserved landowners.
- To encourage young people to seek careers in forestry.
- To work with Alcorn State University to develop and/or enhance projects of mutual forestry interest.



## FIREWISE

Firewise is an educational program for homeowners and community leaders. This program is for anyone connected to the wildland/urban interface. Information is available on how to protect homes or communities until wildland firefighters arrive on the scene.

Factors addressed include design, construction and landscaping techniques to help structures better withstand wildfires.

Firewise workshops were conducted statewide in FY20. Workshops were provided free of charge to the public and brought citizens together to learn about protecting their communities in the wildland-urban interface

Firewise literature can be found by visiting [www.mfc.ms.gov](http://www.mfc.ms.gov).



## BUSINESS SUPPORT

The Business Support Department consists of five (5) service-oriented divisions: Financial Services, Information Systems, Geographic Information Systems (GIS), Human Resources and Safety and Training. These divisions provide services to support the MFC's program areas statewide.

## FINANCIAL SERVICES

Financial records are maintained in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) and conform to state and federal laws defined by the Comptroller, Examiners of Public Accounts, and the USDA Forest Service. A component of Financial Services, the Purchasing Division, ensures that the MFC follows purchasing laws and fulfills necessary requirements.

## INFORMATION SYSTEMS

The Information Systems Division continued to provide technical support and assistance to the MFC's computer network of servers and workstations. The transition to cloud based services started in early FY20. By leveraging SaaS (Software as a Service), IaaS (Infrastructure as a Service), and PaaS (Platform as a Service), additional flexibility and efficiency will be introduced, as well as cost-savings in providing consistent service delivery.



## MFC Employees FY20\*

Filled Positions

Full-time 280

*\*Data does not include federally funded, time-limited positions.*

## HUMAN RESOURCES

The MFC's Human Resources Division maintained personnel administration for all MFC employees. In FY20, the MFC filled 280 full-time PINs.

## SAFETY AND TRAINING

The Safety and Training Division offers tools, techniques, and training opportunities to teach employees safe and effective workplace habits. The importance of a safe workplace environment is paramount in all program areas of the MFC. Continuing education and training opportunities were made available to all MFC employees in FY20. Training opportunities are essential to enhancing job skills as well as fostering personal development and growth.







