



News Release

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TEMPORARY FORESTRY WORK COMING THROUGH A.R.R.A. GRANTS

The Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC) will assist in the creation of more than 300 temporary jobs statewide as part of the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). The federal program will subsidize five grants totaling \$9.7 million in forestry-related work to help stimulate the economy and benefit Georgia's environment. The funds will not replace or supplant state mandated GFC budget reductions, but can only be used for the creation of new, temporary positions in the forestry industry.

"These proposals will enhance GFC initiatives beyond what was possible under current austere budget conditions," said Robert Farris, Director of the Georgia Forestry Commission. "The work will have multiple benefits, including reducing the risk of catastrophic wildfire, restoring longleaf pine ecosystems, fighting invasive weed species and reaching out to thousands of landowners who need updated forest management plans."

Farris said forestry professionals who are interested in the work these grants have created should go to the GFC website for information and application materials. The GFC website can be found at GaTrees.org. A link to ARRA grant opportunities is located on the Homepage.

The five grants received have different purposes and are operated by different business units of the GFC. Each grant has specific qualification guidelines, application windows, and managers. The grants include:

- **Enhanced Fuels Management and Community Wildfire Protection Plans-** This \$3.59 million grant will help create a wildfire-resistant forest buffer surrounding the fire prone Okefenokee Wildlife Refuge. It will also help with wildfire mitigation planning for several communities that were affected by the catastrophic wildfires of 2007. More than 60% of this grant will be used to reimburse landowners who complete forest management options, outlined in the grant, for reducing wildfire fuels and creating defensible space around the Okefenokee. Forestry technicians will be hired to supervise the procedures and a community fire mitigation specialist will be hired to promote Firewise practices and Community Wildfire Protection Planning.

- Stewardship Revisit for Prescribed Fire - Some 6,400 Georgia landowners have received Forest Stewardship Plans via a program that began in 1991. As part of a \$2.24 million prescribed burning initiative, these forests will be revisited to measure progress on recommended forest management practices and to evaluate the use of prescribed fire. Twenty foresters/forestry technicians will be hired to make site evaluations. Prescribed burning of 50,000 acres will follow, based on evaluations.
- Dixon State Forest Wildfire Recovery & Habitat Restoration - \$377,000 will be administered for the rehabilitation of 19,000 acres in Dixon Memorial Forest, which were burned in the 2007 wildfires. Bids will be accepted for site preparation, tree planting, and the purchase of longleaf pine seedlings.
- Congongrass and Invasive Plant Eradication - Cogongrass is considered the seventh worst weed in the world and has taken over vast ecosystems in some southern states. Cogongrass greatly increases the risk of damaging wildfire in the forest. GFC professionals have identified other invasive plant species as threats to forested ecosystems within Georgia, as well. To expand detection, eradication and education efforts toward these invasive plants, \$1.8 million will be administered. Incentive payments will be available to landowners who perform treatments within forested areas. To perform these tasks, GFC will hire six temporary personnel and an estimated 20 or more contractors; multiple crews will be hired by landowners. Jobs will be created throughout the state as these invasive plant surveys and treatments take place.
- Regional Longleaf Pine Restoration Initiative and Fuel Reduction - 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 of land to other 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 scenic beauty. As part of a regional project involving Georgia, Alabama, Florida, South Carolina and North Carolina to reestablish this native, highly valued longleaf pine species, \$1.7 million will be administered. This work helps restore a great American ecosystem while creating jobs for contractors and laborers involved in tree planting and forest improvement work, including nursery workers, conservation planners and coordinators, media specialists, and educators.

Funding for these five projects was provided by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (Recovery Act). The U.S Department of Agriculture (USDA) is working to implement provisions of the Recovery Act to put Americans back to work and rejuvenate the nation's economy. The Recovery Act provided USDA with nearly \$28 billion in funding; of that, \$1.15 billion has been allocated to the Forest Service for project work in forest restoration, hazardous fuels reduction, construction and maintenance of facilities, trails and roads, green energy projects, and grants to states, tribes, and private landowners.

For more information about GFC-administered A.R.R.A. grants, visit GaTrees.org or call 1-800-GA-TREES.