

GEORGIA FORESTRY  
COMMISSION



# News Release

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## **HELP AT HAND FOR MICHAEL-STRUCK GA LANDOWNERS**

Emergency assistance for landowners impacted by Hurricane Michael is being rolled out by the Georgia Forestry Commission. Aid approved by the Georgia Legislature in November includes \$20 million for debris cleanup in areas where the storm decimated millions of acres of forestland and tree orchards. Two programs are available to help landowners with specific needs: the Forest Debris Management Program and the Forest Access Road & Firebreak Restoration Project. Separate application procedures are required for each program.

"Relief is at hand for landowners who need help with bulldozing downed trees and debris," said Georgia Forestry Commission Director Chuck Williams. "Applications are being taken now, and we are optimistic about the effects this program will have on reducing insect infestations, as well as catastrophic wildfires."

Landowners who have 10 or more acres of forestland or a commercial orchard of any size with trees damaged by Hurricane Michael are eligible for the Forest Debris Management Program (FDMP). The sign-up period runs from January 14, 2019 to February 11, 2019, and applications can be downloaded on the GFC website here: <http://gatrees.org/forest-management/storm-damage/FDMP.cfm>. Landowners may apply for debris management funds retroactively. Approved applicants will be notified in writing beginning February 25, 2019, and funding levels and guidelines will be included. Upon completion of the work, participants will be required to submit official cost documentation and a detailed map showing boundaries and debris management routes. Cost share payments are based on 80% of the documented cost. The average cost of clearing debris from forestland across the Southeast is about \$500 per acre. Cost share may be limited per taxpayer identification number and a per-acre cap may be set, depending on the demand for funds. The Georgia Development Authority is responsible for payments.

Another program to assist more specifically with fire prevention activities is available to landowners in the designated 28-county disaster area\* impacted by Hurricane Michael. The Forest Access Road and Firebreak Restoration Project provides for the clearing of forest debris from



existing firebreaks and roads at no cost to the landowner. The project is designed to create a more manageable situation should wildfires become prevalent in the region. Eligible tracts must have had existing tree cover containing forest roads and established firebreaks immediately prior to the storm's arrival. Written applications will be accepted from January 15 to February 28, 2019 and are available at <http://gatrees.org/forest-management/storm-damage/FARFRP.cfm>, along with detailed project requirements.

"The intent of these programs is to protect forest health, reduce wildfire risk, and increase timber and orchard production," said Williams. "The GFC stands ready with the tools and the expertise to help landowners get through this important phase of recovery."

For more information about hurricane relief programs and services of the Georgia Forestry Commission, visit [GaTrees.org](http://GaTrees.org).

*\* Baker, Bleckley, Brooks, Calhoun, Clay, Colquitt, Crisp, Decatur, Dodge, Dooley, Dougherty, Early, Grady, Laurens, Lee, Lowndes, Miller, Mitchell, Pulaski, Randolph, Seminole, Sumter, Terrell, Thomas, Tift, Turner, Wilcox and Worth.*

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