Hurricane Michael slammed into the Florida Panhandle October 10, 2018, leaving a path of destruction through the heart of the state’s forestland. The estimated value of timber damage in Florida is $1.3 billion, impacting nearly three million acres of forestland.

“This is a catastrophic loss to the forest industry in the Florida Panhandle,” said Commissioner Adam H. Putnam. “We are committed to helping Florida recover from this devastating storm and will continue to work closely with the agriculture industry on hurricane-related damage assessments.”

The eleven counties impacted are some of the top timber-producing in the state: Bay, Calhoun, Franklin, Gadsden, Gulf, Holmes, Jackson, Leon, Liberty, Wakulla and Washington. Forest products manufacturing facilities, such as pulp mills, saw mills, and pellet and Oriented Strand Board manufacturers also sustained damage.

“As the downed forest debris dries, the potential for wildfire conditions increase,” said Jim Karels, State Forester and Director of the Florida Forest Service (FFS). “It is critical for the Florida Forest Service to continue clearing trees and hurricane debris from roadways to reestablish fire lines and accessibility to timberlands.”

A burn ban was instituted in Bay, Franklin, Gadsden, Gulf and Liberty Counties. Truck weights for salvage timber, hurricane supplies and storm debris have been lifted.

The Association is diligently gathering all available information regarding disaster assistance and other aids. As we find relevant materials, we are posting them to our website. Current offerings include the full text of the FFS initial hurricane damage estimate package; a list of Florida’s Master Loggers, consulting foresters and timber dealers; information about the burn ban; information about timber casualty loss; a post-hurricane guide to managing pests; the expedited regulatory process for building a wet deck for staging timber; and more.

We are immensely grateful that, despite the tremendous scope of Michael’s damage, to our best knowledge all of our members survived the storm with no major injuries and/or loss of life. We are committed to doing everything we can to help those in the affected areas recover to the fullest extent possible.

2018 ANNUAL MEETING & TRADE SHOW

With many thanks to our registrants, sponsors, exhibitors, speakers, auction donors and bidders, another successful Annual Meeting is in the history books!

Hundreds of Association members and supporters gathered in Amelia Island, FL, August 28-30, 2018, to enjoy tremendous networking opportunities and topnotch speakers addressing current topics of interest to the forest industry.

Leadership Changes

Incoming president Edward Cole received the symbolic presidential gavel from outgoing president Michael Dooner at the President’s Dinner.

Also elected to lead the Association as officers for the next two years are:

Vice President/President Elect: Carlton Jones – Cochran Forest Products

Secretary-Treasurer: Ann Hutchinson Duff – WestRock
Executive Vice President: Alan Shelby – Florida Forestry Association

In addition, the Association’s Board of Directors added several new members to its roster:

Jamie Boland – Boland Timber Company
Robert P. Cook, Jr. – Callahan Timber Company
Matt Donovan – Weyerhaeuser
John Dooner – Southern Forestry Consultants, Inc.
Christian Ernst – Klausner Lumber One
Eric Handley – Usher Land and Timber
John Holzaepfel – Natural Resource Planning Services, Inc.
Mike Lamonica – Deseret Cattle & Timber
Cindy Roe Littlejohn – Roe Sisters Tree Farms
Dwight O’Neal – International Paper
Austen Roberts – Swift Creek Companies
Jason Rountree – Forest Investment Associates

Award Winners

Award-winning forestry was also celebrated:

Above and Beyond: John Alter, Alter-Bevis Farms

John Alter joined the Florida Forestry Association in 1993. He quickly became active in advocacy and education efforts and never looked back in the next twenty-five years. He has served as a Master Logger instructor, president of the Jackson County Landowners Association and has been named as the Conservationist and Tree Farmer of the Year in his home county.

Alter is an appointee to the Northwest Florida Water Management District’s governing board. He is a master communicator and a staunch legislative advocate for the forest industry. He is also an inveterate writer of Letters to The Editor. Alter currently serves on the Association’s Board of Directors as well as its Communications Committee.
Audubon Florida Sustainable Forestry: Jeff Vowell

Audubon Florida honored retiring Florida Forest Service assistant director Jeff Vowell for his work to improve the management of Florida’s working forests to benefit wetlands and wildlife. His dedication helped lead to the establishment and implementation of silvicultural best management practices (BMPs) for water quality.

With Vowell’s leadership, Florida now enjoys comprehensive water quality BMPs with impressive implementation rates. Vowell partnered with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection to test the effectiveness of the water quality BMPs—demonstrating their effectiveness when implemented properly.

Florida is also the first state in the nation to develop silvicultural BMPs for wildlife—a process led successfully by Vowell. To date, more than 3.5 million acres of forestland have been enrolled in Florida’s wildlife BMP program.

Outstanding Tree Farmer of the Year: Doug Moore, South Prong Plantation

Doug Moore is a fifth generation Floridian whose family history includes timber buyers and loggers in Alachua County. In 2002, Moore bought 2400 acres of timberland in Baker County and fulfilled his own dream of owning a large tract of timberland. After many years of learning how to best manage forestry, he started a small business, Flatwoods Management LLC, to assist other land owners in forest and wildlife management and prescribed burning. Doug has used his Tree Farm for many tours such as the Forest Stewardship Program, UF Extension Program, Fire Wise Community, political, and other events.

Southern Regional Outstanding Tree Farmer of the Year: Jon and Carol Gould

Jon and Carol Gould of Vernon own four Tree Farm properties totaling 655 acres in the panhandle of Florida. They have dedicated themselves to actively managing these tracts for timber and wildlife habitat objectives. The Goulds do most of their management and maintenance. Jon is a Florida Certified Prescribed Burner, and they do much of the prescribed burning on their property. They have identified, researched, and documented several historical sites on their property. They protect unique natural and ecologically sensitive sites. The Goulds have also hosted outreach and educational events for many professional and non-professional groups.

Silvicultural Contractor: Greg’s Dragline and Bulldozer

Greg Chapman began to build and maintain the roads in the Ocala National Forest for the United States Department of Agriculture in the mid 1980s, which he still does today. He also started offering site prep services for small companies and private landowners, doing jobs from five acres to 5,000 acres. This led to work in reforestation for corporate and private landowners. Greg is a Master Mechanic, a dump truck driver and a transport driver as needed. He is also a river logger, has a sawmill and has appeared in the History Channel’s television series “Ax Men.”

LEGISLATORS OF THE YEAR:

Senator Keith Perry

During his time in the House and now in the Senate, Senator Keith Perry has developed a sterling reputation as “the property rights guy.” From sponsoring legislation to strengthen and clarify the Bert Harris Private Property Rights law, to tackling duplicative local government regulation, Senator Perry is one of our strongest common-sense pro-business legislators. Serving on the Senate Agriculture Committee, he continues to provide an industry perspective to every discussion. Particularly of note during the 2018 session, Senator Perry secured funding for the UF/IFAS Geomatics program within the School of Forest Resources and Conservation.

Representative Paul Renner

During his three years in the Florida House, Representative Paul Renner has quickly become a go-to leader on issues impacting the forest industry. A staunch advocate and defender of property rights and of getting government out of the way of business, Representative Renner has worked on transportation issues, has become a student of water policy and has been at the forefront of reducing sales taxes – a benefit to all Association members. During the 2018 session, Representative Renner served as Chair of the Ways and Means Committee and sponsored the significant sales tax package which included relief for forest and agricultural producers impacted by Hurricane Irma.

Southern Pine Beetle

Southern pine beetle (Dendroctonus frontalis, or SPB) is regarded as the most destructive pest of pine trees in the Southeastern United States. When its population builds up to outbreak levels, the SPB can quickly spread and kill many acres of healthy pine forest. The last period of major outbreaks in Florida peaked in 2001, when 2,892 infestations killed pines on over 17,000 acres, resulting in a loss of timber volume worth an estimated $38.7 million.

Florida’s SPB activity has been relatively moderate in 2018 with 172 infestations affecting 401 acres identified in 10 counties, including Alachua, Calhoun, Columbia, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Hernando, Levy, Marion, Nassau and Suwannee. It’s unlikely that new, large-scale infestations will occur as we enter the cooler weather. However, it is common for SPB to start small, scattered infestations in the fall, which can serve as the source for further activity the following spring.

The Florida Forest Service conducts two annual surveys to monitor for SPB: a pheromone trapping survey in early spring to determine locations in the state with potential activity and aerial survey flights during warmer weather to detect actual SPB infestations. A total of 52 flights have been conducted this year, logging over 14,800 linear miles and surveying an estimated 35 million acres. When southern pine beetle infestations are caught early, it’s possible to prevent further losses with a suppression harvest.

If you suspect a southern pine beetle infestation, contact your local Florida Forest Service County Forester by visiting www.FreshFromFlorida.com/CountyForester.
**FFS LONG RANGE WEATHER OUTLOOK**

**Long Range Weather Outlook:**

Long-range models show El Niño developing in the Pacific Ocean. As a result, the Climate Prediction Center (CPC) has issued an El Niño Watch. There is a moderate chance (~55%) for El Niño to develop through November, increasing to a high chance (close to 70%) from December onwards. On average, an El Niño in the Pacific means a cooler and wetter winter for the Southeastern United States. The CPC’s temperature and precipitation forecast agree with the average weather patterns associated with an El Niño. The CPC is forecasting an equal chance for above, average, or below average temperatures through the end of the year, and a slight chance (40%) for above average precipitation through the end of the year.

For comparison, the last two winters (2016-17 and 2017-18) have both been La Niña winters, which on average means a warmer and drier winter. Overall, the last two winters have followed that trend, even with the occasional cold snap. The latter winter saw Tallahassee receive its first measurable snowfall in nearly 30 years.

**Summary & Fire Potential Outlook:**

As the chance for El Niño increases as we go closer to the end of the year, and with recent trends staying around average, expect a cooler and wetter winter season this year. The CPC is forecasting above-average rainfall through December, and an equal chance for above, average, or below average temperatures through the end of the year. The remainder of hurricane season should be relatively quiet, as both the forecast and actual numbers are almost identical as of September 21st.

The National Interagency Fire Center’s (NIFC) Predictive Services is forecasting normal Wildland Fire Potential through November, and below normal Wildland Fire Potential for the Panhandle and Big Bend, which follows the forecast that an El Niño will form later this year.

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**ALBURY, SABO TAKE NEW POSITIONS**

Erin Albury has been named as the new Assistant Director of the Florida Forest Service (FFS). Erin began his career with FFS in 1997 at the Withlacoochee Forestry Center, serving as the Citrus County Forester. In 2000, he was promoted to the Forest Area Supervisor position for Citrus and Hernando Counties. In 2008, Erin was promoted to the Perry District Manager position before moving to Field Operations Bureau Chief in 2015.

Johnny Sabo has been named as the new FFS Chief of Field Operations. Johnny began his career with FFS in 2004 in the Chipola Forestry Center, serving as the Calhoun/Liberty County Forester. In 2008, he was promoted to the Operations Administrator position, overseeing Bay and Walton Counties including Pine Log and Point Washington State Forests. In 2013, he was promoted to the Chipola Center Manager position where he served until July of last year when he moved into the Forest Management Bureau Chief position.

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**MATT CALDWELL FOR AG COMMISSIONER**

The Association hosted a fundraiser for Commissioner of Agriculture candidate Matt Caldwell at its office in September. “Matt was honored as the Association’s Legislator of the Year in 2014,” said Executive Vice President Alan Shelby. “He has a proven record of both understanding and supporting Florida’s forest industry. We are proud to show our support of him for Ag Commissioner.”

**GRINER NAMED FARMER OF THE YEAR**

Association Past President Lynetta Usher Griner was recently named the 2018 Florida Farmer of the Year for her work as a community and state leader. A team of judges at the Swisher Sweets/Sunbelt Ag Expo will choose a Southeast regional winner among Griner and nine farmers from 10 states in October. Previous honors include Woman of the Year in Agriculture and National Logger of the Year, among others.

**SAW PALMETTO ADDED TO COMMERCIALY EXPLOITED PLANT LIST**

After receiving input from public and private landowners, conservation interests, and other interested parties, the Endangered Plant Advisory Council unanimously recommended adding saw palmetto to the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services’ commercially exploited plant list. The recommendation was adopted by Department rule, which resulted in new requirements now in effect for the harvesting of saw palmetto berries. More information about the new requirements can be found online at [https://bit.ly/2IK1P08](https://bit.ly/2IK1P08).

**FLORIDA NATIVE TAKES HELM AT SAF**

Florida native Terry Baker has assumed the role of CEO for the Society of American Foresters (SAF). Terry has worked for the USDA Forest Service as a forester, supervisory forester, District Ranger, and Deputy Forest Supervisor, in Florida, Oregon, Nebraska, Arizona, and Colorado, respectively. He has a Master of Forestry from Yale University (2007), a Bachelor of Science in Forest Resources and Conservation from the University of Florida (2004), and a Bachelor of Arts in Agricultural Sciences from Florida A&M University (2004).

**GOPHER TORTOISE UPDATE**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has changed the gopher tortoise determination date from FY 2023 to FY 2022. This administrative change is said to be related to work planning and not an indication of a change in degree of concern about the species. The agency will be publishing information in the Annual Candidate Notice of Review later this year that will update information on all candidate species, including the gopher tortoise.

**HUNTING FOR WAYS TO SAVE?**

Partnering with Outdoor Underwriters, Inc., the Association offers our members special reduced rates for liability insurance for hunting leases and timberland. For more information, please contact Mike Branch (850.222.5646 or Mike@ForestFla.org).

**PLANNED GIVING, BEQUESTS & CHARITABLE CONTRIBUTIONS**

Consider making a gift of a lifetime to support the future of Florida’s working forests by naming the Florida Forestry Association or Florida Forestry Foundation as a beneficiary in your will, charitable trust, life insurance policy, estate plan or retirement plan. Please contact Alan Shelby at 850.222.5646 for more information.
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