



# Working Forests Work: Florida Forestry

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Good morning/afternoon/evening! I am excited to be here with you today to talk about Working Forests! October 20-26 is Working Forests Week in Florida, so this is the perfect time to talk about an industry that is so important to us, our area/state, our environment and our future.

To begin, I'd like to tell you a little about myself to help you understand how important working forests are to me personally ...(insert appropriate info).

Now let's talk a little about Florida's forests.

There are 17.1 million acres of forests in Florida. Most of those are in the north and central parts of the state. Forest ownership breaks down into 64% private and 36% government, including federal, state and local levels.

Earlier I referred to Working Forests Week. A lot of people outside the industry are not familiar with the term -- What is a working forest? Why should a forest have to work? Why can't it just lie around and look pretty? Some days I admit I would like to try that, but neither the forest nor I can do that if we're going to live up to our best potential.

Living up to its best potential requires proper management, and proper management requires money. Few landowners have the financial resources to manage their land properly without it producing income in some way.

In short, forests, like us, have to earn their keep if they're going to survive.

How do forests work? The same way that people do – they produce something that has economic value. **So the short definition of a working forest is a forest that produces something of economic value.**

I am proud to be part of an industry that helps provide jobs for 124,000 people. Forestry contributes more than \$25 billion to our state's economy. Forestry and forest products are Florida's top agricultural commodity, running neck and neck with the horticultural industry, and our top ag export.

I am also proud to be part of an industry that takes such good care of our environment. A few of the environmental benefits working forests provide are...

- **Green space/natural beauty.**
- **Habitat for wildlife.** Florida has an amazing array of wildlife, many of which make their homes in our forests.
- **Clean air.** As you probably remember from elementary school science, trees and plants absorb carbon dioxide from the air and replace it with oxygen.
- **Clean water.** Forests provide natural filtering and storage for water. As I'm sure everyone in this room is aware, sound water management is a big need for Florida today, and it's going to get bigger. Florida's forests can play an important part in the solution to our water quantity and water quality struggles.

A study by the University of Florida estimates the collective value of these natural ecosystem services is at least \$25 billion each year.

Sustainability is also an important keystone for our industry. We take trees out of the ground; we put more trees back in the ground. According to the Florida Forest Service, more than 450 million seedlings were planted between 2010-2015. It's important to find ways to incentivize landowners to continue planting trees instead of other crops or houses.

Healthy markets are big incentives to replant. It's easier to help create healthy markets than you think, just by using things you use every day without thinking about it. More than 5000 products made from Goods from the Woods.

Making calls or answering emails from a cell phone? Forest products are used to make cell phone, computer and tv screens.

Having a good hair day? Forest products are used in shampoo, conditioner, styling products and hairspray.

Recovering from a cold, headache or other ailment? Forest products are used in the coatings of pills and other pharmaceuticals, as well as in some medicines, including cancer treatments.

Feel like playing sports? Baseball bats, football helmets, and skateboards all include goods from the woods.

The list goes on ... toilet tissue ... cosmetics... food (ice cream!) ... bandages.... diapers... crayons ... paints ... laundry detergent ... car tires ... root beer! You would be amazed if you realized how many times in your day you come in contact with some form of forest products.

Forestry is important to Florida in a multitude of ways. I'm proud to be part of Florida's forest community.

Thank you.