Mississippi Forestry Commission 451-00 5-year Strategic Plan

Fiscal Years 2019 - 2023

7/17/2017

MISSISSIPPI FORESTRY COMMISSION
5-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN
FISCAL YEARS 2019 - 2023

MISSION STATEMENT

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.

PHILOSOPHY

The Commission is committed to the continual management and protection of the state's forestlands and natural resources from wildfires. The philosophy of the Commission is to adhere to the highest professional standards in the management of the forests of the state, on both private and public lands, in a sustainable manner and to provide expertise, information, and support to keep Mississippi's 19.8 million acres of forestland healthy, productive, and profitable.

RELEVANT STATEWIDE GOALS AND BENCHMARKS – Natural Resources

(1) to manage public timberlands efficiently and effectively to provide resources to school districts;
(2) to protect the public's safety, including providing timely and appropriate responses to wildfire emergencies and disasters
(3) to ensure that current and future generations have access to the state's abundant natural resources through reforestation, protection, and conservation. All three of which are incorporated within the Commission's related program goals, objectives, and strategies as appropriate.

OVERVIEW OF THE COMMISSION'S 5-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

The Commission is responsible for several programs that are essential in protecting and managing Mississippi's valuable forest resources. In an effort to streamline main program areas, while improving the efficiency of the Commission's management of primary functions and associated budgets, the Commission developed a new direction for program delivery. The Commission uses a tracking system for monitoring accomplishments and expenditures based on our three primary program areas: Forest Protection and Information, Forest Management, and the Mississippi Forest Inventory (MFI).

As the state's primary wildfire suppression and prevention agency, the Commission will continue to be dedicated to reducing the impact of unchecked, wildland fire. Since most wildland fire is human caused, the Commission will continue to look for innovative and relevant ways to communicate the dangers of wildfire to the public.

The information and outreach department supports all of the Commission's program areas, providing information not only on wildfire but on forest management, forest health and other forestry and natural resource related issues. Using tools funded through federal grants, such as mass media, social media, related expositions/events, and school/library programs, the Commission will continue to bring forestry's message to the public.

Mississippians have a strong connection to trees and forests. With the growth of urban sprawl and the continued fragmentation of forestland, the Commission's urban forestry program continues to grow. Through activities such as outreach, training, and site visits, the urban forestry program will continue to reach as much of the appropriate public audience as funding permits.

The Mississippi Forest Inventory (MFI) Program has been continually inventorying the state's timberland, with the intention of completing the entire state over a five-year cycle (accomplishing twenty percent of the state per year).

In FY 2017, the Commission began the process of updating these forest management plans for the School Trust (16th Section) Lands. These plans are 5 year management plans, with 20% of the plans being updated on an annual basis. These forest management plans are created within the ArcGIS system which allows for increased reporting capability and consistency among plans. The Geographic Information System (GIS) based plans aid in the development of annual harvest schedules, which can be used to create five-year projections on timber sale revenue. Over the next five years, the Commission's goal is to maximize timber sale revenue in a sustainable manner on School Trust Lands. This process will require the development of annual harvest schedules and timber value assessments.

The Commission also administers the Forest Resource Development Program (FRDP).   The Commission is responsible for coordinating the technical assistance components and financial elements of this cost-share program. Approximately two million dollars each year is distributed to private forest landowners in Mississippi to assist them in reforesting and managing their forest land. Since 1975, the FRDP has assisted land owners in forest regeneration, supporting Mississippi's forest industry, which has a $12.8 billion dollar economic impact on our state.

Employee training is a key element in improving the overall efficiency and employee retention of the agency. We have successfully deployed and implemented the report-writer, as well as completed its integration with our enterprise databases. The data-entry portion of the system is currently under development. We are actively working to integrate the training system with an on-line, on-demand training system that will enable training to be employee driven.

INTERNAL/EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT

- Any significant change(s) in market conditions affecting the demand for forest products would impact our ability to accomplish many of our key planned forest management activities.
- Many of our planned accomplishments rely on federal grant funding for support. Any significant reduction of these funds or changes in procedures could negatively impact our ability to carry out our stated goals.
- Environmental factors and responses to emergencies and disasters such as hurricanes, tornadoes, extreme droughts, and elevated wildfire occurrence could all have significant impacts on achieving our goals.
- Reductions in training opportunities and federal classes offered.
- Insufficient General Funds, including funds to provide a sustainable funding source for the replacement of aging dozer/transport units essential to wildfire protection.

Using a dashboard created by the commission to show performance results, the commission has the ability to assess our accomplishments in real time. Through monthly agency leadership meetings and quarterly board of commissioners' meetings the agency adjusts its processes as needed to accomplish our established goals and responsibilities.

SUMMARY OF STRUCTURE

PROGRAM 1: Protection and Information

GOAL A: Protect life, property, and natural resources of the state by taking action to prevent, control, and extinguish wildland fires.

> **OBJECTIVE A.1.** Maintain a trained and skilled workforce, supplied with proper and effective equipment, for the control and suppression of wildland fires statewide.

> > *Outcome:* Change in Suppression Time

> > **A.1.1. STRATEGY:** Operating centralized dispatch center to facilitate efficient resource logistics when responding to wildfires.

> > > *Output: Average suppression time*
> > > *Efficiency: Number of minutes from dispatch to arrival*
> > > *Explanatory: Environmental factors and/or reduction in funding*

A.1.2. STRATEGY: Maintain capable and productive wildfire suppression equipment/fleet through regular maintenance and a sustainable, efficient replacement schedule.

Output: Number of dozer/transport units replaced every year.
Efficiency: Reduction in breakdown occurrence and repair costs
Explanatory: Insufficient funds for purchase and/or elevated wildfire occurrences

OBJECTIVE A.2. Support wildland firefighting partners at the local, state, and federal level.

Outcome: Fires Suppressed at 100 Acres or Less

A.2.1. STRATEGY: Provide wildland firefighting equipment to local fire departments through federal excess property programs.

Output: Pieces of equipment/vehicles provided to wildland firefighting partners annually
Efficiency: Annual total dollar amount of equipment sent to Volunteer Fire Departments
Explanatory: Reduction of federal funding, changes in acquisition procedures, availability of federal equipment.

OBJECTIVE A.3. Conduct wildfire mitigation and prevention practices to help reduce the occurrence of wildfires.

Outcome: Educate the general public through wildfire prevention programs.
Outcome: Protect forestland and property in the wildland urban interface, and enhance wildlife and forest habitat, through wildfire mitigation programs.

A.3.1. STRATEGY: Provide information to the public through various outlets, such as mass media, public outreach events, and outreach and education programs.

Output: Number of programs/events conducted annually
Efficiency: Average number of attendees per program/event
Explanatory: Reduction in federal funding of wildfire outreach and education programs

A.3.2. STRATEGY: Provide prescribed fire assistance to landowners through wildfire hazard mitigation programs and forest improvement programs.

> *Output: Number of acres enrolled in a prescribed burn program*
> *Efficiency: Number of acres burned under a prescribed burn program*
> *Explanatory: Environmental factors that reduce the number of available burn days*

PROGRAM 2: Forest Management

GOAL A: To effectively promote sound forest management practices, which are essential to ensuring the sustainability of the state's natural resource productivity. To provide private forest landowners (with relatively small acreage) forest management services and assistance. To assist Mississippi timber owners with forest pest management by conducting forest pest surveys and evaluations.

OBJECTIVE A.1. Provide cost-share funding for tree planting and forest improvement practices for the purpose of long-term timber production.

> *Outcome:* Provide approximately 35,000 acres of forest stand improvement on an annual basis.

A.2.1. STRATEGY: Administer the state's Forest Resource Development Program (FRDP) by providing forest management/technical assistance to qualified forest landowners.

> *Output: Allocate available FRDP funding to qualified landowners*
> *Output: Number of acres of stand improvement per fiscal year*
> *Efficiency: Percentage of state's FRDP funds allocated*
> *Explanatory: Availability of FRDP funds based on Severance Tax*

OBJECTIVE A.2. Provide effective technical assistance to nonindustrial private forest landowners (NIPF) in Mississippi.

> *Outcome:* Provide forest technical assistance to approximately 8,000 private forest landowners.

A.3.1. STRATEGY: Provide effective forest management assistance to private forest landowners.

> *Output: Number of forest landowners that the Commission is providing with technical assistance*
> *Efficiency: Number of landowners assisted per forester*
> *Explanatory: Competing management priorities; such as wildfires*

OBJECTIVE A.3. To assist Mississippi timber owners in forest pest management by conducting forest pest surveys and evaluations.

> *Outcome:* Monitor approximately 19,800,000 forested acres for insect, storm, or disease damage

A.3.1. STRATEGY: Provide aerial detection for insect, storm, or disease damage using GPS technology to map occurrences.

> *Output: Number of forested acres monitored by aerial or ground methods*
> *Efficiency: Cost of aerial flights per year*
> *Explanatory: Competing management priorities; such as wildfires or natural events such as weather.*

PROGRAM 3: Mississippi Forest Inventory (MFI)

GOAL A: To provide timely and accurate forest resource assessments to aid in promoting sound forest management practices which maintain the consistency of the environment and provide for our state's natural resource needs. Continually inventory the state's timberland, with the intention of completing the entire state over a five-year cycle (accomplishing twenty percent of the state per year).

> **OBJECTIVE A.1.** Promote economic development regarding the state's forest resources, to aid in formulating sound forest policies, and stimulate the forest resource economic sector.

> > *Outcome:* Supply forest resource data to MDA, private investors, and Forest Industry partners

> **A.1.1. STRATEGY:** Complete forest inventory on twenty percent of Mississippi's forest resources on an annual basis.

Output: Inventory twenty percent of the state on annual basis
Efficiency: Cost of completing each inventory
Explanatory: Lack of funding