

# Mississippi Forestry Commission

## 5-Year Strategic Plan

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Fiscal Years 2028-2032

LBO Agency Number: 451-00

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**MISSISSIPPI FORESTRY COMMISSION  
5-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN  
FISCAL YEARS 2028 - 2032**

**MISSION STATEMENT**

The mission of the Mississippi Forestry Commission (MFC) is to provide active leadership in forest protection, forest management, forest inventory, and effective forest information distribution, which is necessary for Mississippi's sustainable forest-based economy.

**PHILOSOPHY**

The Mississippi Forestry Commission is committed to protecting and enhancing Mississippi's 19.2 million acres of forestland through sound stewardship, effective wildfire protection, sustainable forest management, and science-based decision making. The Commission strives to provide professional leadership, innovative technology, and responsive public service while supporting one of Mississippi's most important economic sectors.

**RELEVANT STATEWIDE GOALS AND BENCHMARKS – Natural Resources**

- (1) To manage public timberlands efficiently and effectively to provide resources for Mississippi school districts.
- (2) To protect the public's safety through timely response to wildfire emergencies and natural disasters.
- (3) To ensure the long-term sustainability of Mississippi's natural resources through protection, conservation, and reforestation.

These three objectives are incorporated within the Commission's related program goals, objectives, and strategies.

**OVERVIEW OF THE COMMISSION'S 5-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN**

During Fiscal Years 2028-2032, the Mississippi Forestry Commission will focus on five strategic priorities:

- Wildfire Protection and Emergency Response
- Workforce Development and Organizational Sustainability
- Equipment, Fleet, and Infrastructure Modernization
- Data-Driven Forest Resource Management

- Sustainable Forest Stewardship and Economic Development

The Commission will continue leveraging technology, performance measurement systems, GIS-based management tools, and workforce development initiatives to improve efficiency and accountability while ensuring Mississippi's forests remain healthy, productive, and protected.

## **INTERNAL / EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT**

The Mississippi Forestry Commission operates within an environment influenced by economic conditions, weather patterns, invasive species, demographic changes, forest product markets, funding availability, and emerging technology. These factors create both opportunities and challenges that may affect the agency's ability to achieve its strategic goals.

## **STRATEGIC RISKS AND MITIGATION STRATEGIES**

The Mississippi Forestry Commission has identified the following strategic risks that could significantly impact the agency's ability to achieve its mission and strategic objectives during Fiscal Years 2028-2032.

### **STRATEGIC RISK 1: Increasing Wildfire Complexity and Frequency**

#### ***Risk:***

Population growth within the wildland-urban interface, prolonged drought conditions, ice-storm damage, and increased fuel loading may contribute to larger and more complex wildfire incidents.

#### ***Potential Impact:***

- Increased suppression costs
- Greater threats to life and property
- Increased demand for agency personnel and equipment
- Extended response and recovery operations

#### ***Mitigation Strategies:***

- Maintain statewide wildfire readiness
- Expand wildfire prevention and education programs
- Maximize prescribed burning and fuel reduction efforts
- Maintain effective mutual aid partnerships
- Sustain investment in suppression equipment and technology

## **STRATEGIC RISK 2: Workforce Recruitment, Retention, and Succession**

### ***Risk:***

Competition for skilled personnel, workforce retirements, and labor market challenges may affect staffing levels and operational readiness.

### ***Potential Impact:***

- Increased vacancy rates
- Loss of institutional knowledge
- Reduced service capacity
- Increased training requirements

### ***Mitigation Strategies:***

- Expand workforce development initiatives
- Enhance employee training opportunities
- Implement succession planning efforts
- Utilize technology to improve operational efficiency
- Promote leadership development programs

## **STRATEGIC RISK 3: Aging Fleet and Infrastructure**

### ***Risk:***

The Commission relies upon specialized wildfire suppression equipment and infrastructure that require ongoing replacement and maintenance.

### ***Potential Impact:***

- Increased maintenance costs
- Reduced equipment availability
- Operational delays during emergency incidents
- Reduced wildfire response capability

### ***Mitigation Strategies:***

- Maintain a sustainable replacement schedule
- Prioritize capital investments
- Utilize preventive maintenance programs
- Monitor fleet performance metrics
- Seek supplemental funding opportunities when available

#### **STRATEGIC RISK 4: Reduction in Federal and State Funding Resources**

***Risk:***

Changes in federal grant programs, state appropriations, or dedicated funding sources could impact agency operations and program delivery.

***Potential Impact:***

- Reduced program capacity in both forest protection and forest management
- Delayed equipment replacement
- Reduced outreach and education efforts
- Reduced forest management assistance

***Mitigation Strategies:***

- Prioritize mission-critical programs
- Maximize grant opportunities
- Improve operational efficiency
- Utilize performance measures to demonstrate program effectiveness
- Strengthen stakeholder and partner engagements

#### **STRATEGIC RISK 5: Natural Disasters, Forest Health Threats, and Environmental Events**

***Risk:***

Hurricanes, tornadoes, droughts, floods, invasive species, insects, and forest diseases may create significant demands on agency resources.

***Potential Impact:***

- Large-scale forest damage
- Increased wildfire activity
- Economic losses to landowners
- Diversion of personnel and resources

***Mitigation Strategies:***

- Maintain statewide emergency response capabilities
- Conduct continuous forest health monitoring
- Utilize GIS and aerial detection technologies
- Coordinate with state and federal partners
- Maintain flexible operational response capabilities

## STRATEGIC RISK 6: Forest Industry and Market Conditions

### ***Risk:***

Significant fluctuations in forest product markets may influence landowner management decisions and affect forest resource investments.

### ***Potential Impact:***

- Reduced participation in management programs
- Delayed reforestation activities
- Reduced timber harvest activity
- Economic impacts to forest-dependent communities and school boards

### ***Mitigation Strategies:***

- Provide timely market and resource information
- Continue technical assistance programs
- Support sustainable forest management practices
- Maintain strong relationships with industry partners
- Promote long-term forest productivity and stewardship

The following goals, objectives, and strategies have been developed to address the strategic risks identified above while advancing the Commission's mission and statewide priorities.

## SUMMARY OF PROGRAM STRUCTURE

### PROGRAM 1: Forest Protection and Information

**GOAL A:** Protect the 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 Response Time

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

***Output:*** Average response time

***Efficiency:*** Number of minutes from detection 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 levels.

***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 to landowners 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.1.1. 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.2.1. 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 or natural events, such as weather.***

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

***Outcome:*** Monitor approximately 19,200,000 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.***

**GOAL B:** 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 timber land, with the goal of completing the entire state over a five-year cycle (accomplishing twenty percent of the state per year).

**OBJECTIVE B.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 Mississippi Development Authority (MDA), private investors, and Forest Industry partners

**B.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 an annual basis***

***Efficiency: Cost of completing each inventory***

***Explanatory: Lack of funding***