

GEORGIA FORESTRY
COMMISSION



News Release

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GaTrees.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

GEORGIA CELEBRATES FIRE PREVENTION WEEK AND FOREST PRODUCTS WEEK

The month of October reminds Georgians of the wonder of trees, as fall foliage puts on its annual display and the aroma of burning firewood laces the air. The Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC) marks October with two weeks that highlight the many benefits provided by forests - Forest Products Week and Fire Prevention Week.

Fire Prevention Week

October 6-13, 2013 is Fire Prevention Week, which is observed to raise awareness about the risk of wildfires and opportunities Georgia's landowners have to protect their homes and property. The GFC works with the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) to remind residents to take a proactive approach to fire safety.

"It always turns dry at the end of every wet spell," said David Duke, Georgia Forestry Commission Chief Ranger in the Liberty/South Bryan County Unit. "That means, despite the near record rainfall we've had, conditions will change. When forestlands dry out, wildfires will again be a concern."

Part of the GFC mission is to prepare the state for the threat of fire and protect its 24.4 million acres of forestland. One of the best ways to do so is keeping in mind that "Good Fires Prevent Bad Ones." By using the practice of prescribed burning in areas with an abundance of "fuel," including pine straw, leaves and fallen branches, the fuel load is reduced in a controlled manner. That reduces the risk of wildfire destroying valuable timber resources. It also plays a role in healthy ecosystems that rejuvenate plant species, establish forage for wildlife, and in some cases, release seeds from pinecones for the next generation's growth.

Programs such as Firewise, www.firewise.org, offer advice to homeowners about protecting their property from wildfire. Smart practices include landscaping with fire-resistant plants and creating defensible space surrounding structures. Debris burning, a good Firewise practice for managing excess fire fuels, can be a cause of wildfire in Georgia if not properly maintained. Never leave debris burns unattended, have water or hand tools such as shovels and rakes nearby, and call for assistance quickly if your burn becomes uncontrollable.

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The annual burn ban from May 1-Sept. 30 in 54 counties with high summer ozone levels will be lifted October 1, allowing citizens to burn vegetation throughout the state. Before burning, landowners are required to get a burn permit, free of charge, from the GFC. This allows for more accurate fire tracking and free suppression services from GFC should a burn get out of control. Property owners can get a permit by contacting their local GFC office or visiting GaTrees.org/online-permits/index.cfm, where weather and fire information calculate the best times for burns and smoke containment.

Forest Products Week

Forest Products Week also honors Georgia's forest resources from October 20-26. Georgia's recent forest inventory shows that the state's working forests provide more than 1.2 billion cubic feet of wood for the forest products industry annually, which is only 2.9% of the inventory on Georgia's timberland. Annual growth exceeds the harvest level by 20 million tons. Forest products have a \$25 billion annual economic impact on Georgia, generating \$487 million in state tax revenue. In addition, more than 118,000 jobs statewide are supported by forestry.

The GFC supports the forestry industry, one of the largest industries in the state, through multiple programs. The agency provides forest management advice to private non-industrial landowners, furnishes directories of product manufacturing companies, and pursues innovative forestry practices such as bioenergy and carbon sequestration.

The state's continued focus on forestry ensures the ready availability of products for Georgians' daily lives, including everything from paper and furniture to Christmas trees and fruit. October is a time to celebrate and protect Georgia's forest legacy and enjoy advantages of living in a state that leads the nation in forestland and the forestry industry.

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By Allison Segrest, Communications Specialist, GFC