Arkansas Forestry Commission

Annual Report, 2015

Protecting, Developing, and Conserving Arkansas Forests

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We are the Arkansas Forestry Commission ...

We protect and manage Arkansas forests.

We are the lead Arkansas agency in wildfire response and wildfire protection on private and state land, and partner with all forestry/wildfire agencies to protect over 19 million acres of Arkansas forests.

We educate and train Arkansans of all ages in forest management practices and strategies, and forest protection and wildfire prevention.

Protecting, Developing, and Conserving Arkansas's Forests

We are an agency of highly trained professionals - as foresters and wildland firefighters, emergency responders, forest technicians, stewards, forest law enforcement officers, and experts in forest health, pests and diseases, seedlings, urban forestry, and more.

We are public servants, proudly serving Arkansans in all 75 counties as protectors and managers of forests, and as community leaders in conservation/forestry programs, efforts, assistance, and advice.

We monitor and measure Arkansas forest growth and change, as well as forest pests and diseases. We use this data to help leaders and residents make valuable forest management decisions for the future.

We are partners in forest management and protection with an array of local, state, and federal organizations and agencies.

We administer programs and participate in events that represent and enhance forestry awareness, wildfire safety, and forest industry.

We fulfill our mission for our children and grandchildren, and the next generation of Arkansas residents and forest landowners. Arkansas's healthy forests must remain sustainable for our future.

Welcome from State Forester Joe Fox

Welcome to the Arkansas Forestry Commission's annual report for 2015. The Arkansas Forestry Commission is an agency within the Arkansas Agriculture Department, which has served Arkansans for 85 years. 2015 was another year of forest growth, equipping and training staff, and strengthening partnerships. And, it was the second year of implementation of our strategic plan.

Major 2015 accomplishments: FIA data tells us that Arkansas's forests are growing over 50% more volume of hardwood and pine trees than the volume that is being removed. AFC's communication system is strengthened with 40 new repeaters, taller towers and hundreds of new radios. AFC led the nation again with 154 certified Firewise communities. Our STOP program (Shade Trees on Playgrounds) planted trees in 8 school yards from Crossett to Cotter and from Mena to Newport. Landowner assistance work is improved with 120 new GPS units used to map and plan forest practices installed across our state. Almost 8 million seedlings were distributed to landowners. AFC's law enforcement team recovered more than $252,000 in restitution for Arkansas landowners. And, 325 partners and AFC foresters and rangers were trained at the two week River Valley Fire Academy.

In 2015 the Arkansas Forestry Commission increased its "reserve" in the State Forestry Trust to $2,328,738; which, included with our June 30 unrestricted cash, improved overall end of fiscal year cash to $5,683,843.

AFC continues to execute its strategic plan - buying environmental cab dozers, furnishing genetically improved seedlings, training loggers in Best Management Practices, reaching out to minority landowners, organizing Tree Cities, responding quickly to wildfires, leading prescribed fire training, and much more. We are proud of our work in 2015 and our plans beyond. With that said, we will strive to improve in the years to come.

Please enjoy our report to Governor Hutchinson and to you, the citizens that we proudly serve.

Sincerely,

State Forester Joe Fox

Retired Deputy State Forester Larry Nance, Executive Assistant Evette Browning, and State Forester Joe Fox

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Please note: All accomplishments reported in these pages are from Calendar Year, 2015, except for the Administration and Fiscal Reports - which are from Fiscal Year, 2015 (July, 2014 - June, 2015).

Mission Statement

The mission of the Arkansas Forestry Commission is to protect Arkansas's forests, and those who enjoy them, from wildland fire and natural hazards, while promoting rural and urban forest health, stewardship, development and conservation for all generations of Arkansans.

2015 AFC Board of Commissioners

Board Chair, Robert Parkes, D.D.S.
Aubra Anthony
Allen Bedell
Ray Dillon
Mary Elizabeth Eldridge
Bobby Johnson
Allen Morgan
Sam Snead
Frank Wilson

Protecting, Developing, and Conserving Arkansas's Forests

District 7 and Rural Fire Program personnel

2015 Accomplishments

Landowner Assists (of any kind)	2,229
Management Plans Prepared	879
Management Plan Acres	78,081
Prescribed Burn Acres (by AFC Crews)	11,706
New Fire Lanes Installed	148
School Programs	317
Residential Tree Assists	197
Arbor Day Activities	92
Community Meetings Attended	549
County Fairs/Festivals Attended	137
Contacts to AFC Law Enforcement	136
Referrals to Forestry Consultants	132

County Forester Trey Franks

Communications System Manager Steve Brown and Electronic Technician Stewart Norris

County Ranger Keith Breshears

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Forest Resource Protection

The AFC Forest Protection Program protects communities and forest resources by providing wildfire suppression and response, detection, enforcement, training, and prevention programs.

Wildfires at a Glance 2010-2015

The total count of wildfires recorded across the state in 2015 was 1,178; total acres burned was 14,652.

Year	Number	Total Acres Burned	Average Fire Size
2010	2,222	35,197	15.84 acres
2011	2,435	41,783	17.16 acres
2012	2,148	34,434	16.00 acres
2013	787	11,261	14.30 acres
2014	1,240	16,687	13.5 acres
2015	1,178	14,652	12.4 acres

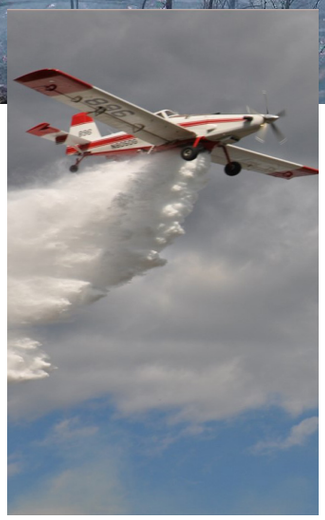
Fire Protection

The AFC is responsible for the protection of 15.85 million acres of non-federal forestland in Arkansas. Foresters and rangers in the eight districts are involved daily in one or more of the four key activities of fire protection: prevention, pre-suppression, detection, and suppression.

Improvement in fire protection is often hard to measure, considering the many variables that influence yearly fire occurrence and behavior. The standard measurement of fire protection is the total number of fires suppressed and total acreage burned.

In 2015, the Commission had a total of 105 firefighting units, each comprised of a bulldozer and transport truck. Bulldozers are used to create firebreaks that stop an ongoing fire. Of those units, 78 are equipped with environmental cabs that provide added protection for the operator. Five new bulldozers were purchased in 2015 as follows: three JD550K dozers (Johnson, Izard and Boone Counties) and two JD650K dozers (Bradley and Hot Spring Counties).

Protecting, Developing, and Conserving Arkansas's Forests



Ranger II
Wesley Morgan

Wildfire Statistics By Cause, 2015

Cause of Fire	Number of Fires	Acres Burned
Debris Burning	549	6,551
Incendiary Burning (Arson)	268	4,990
Miscellaneous Burns	166	1,370
Equipment Use	131	1,098
Lightning	16	83
Children	14	348
Smokers	16	151
Campfire	13	57
Railroad	5	5

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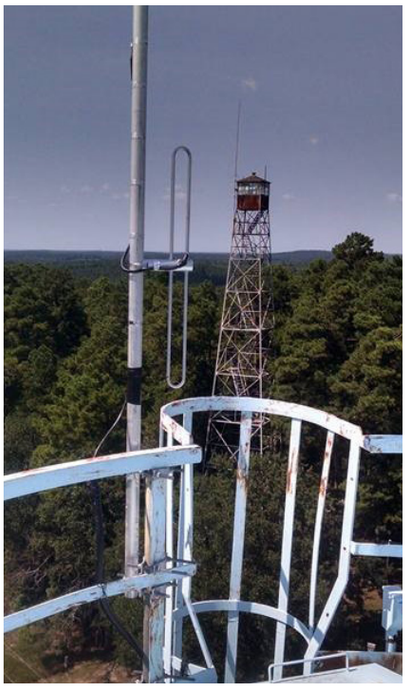

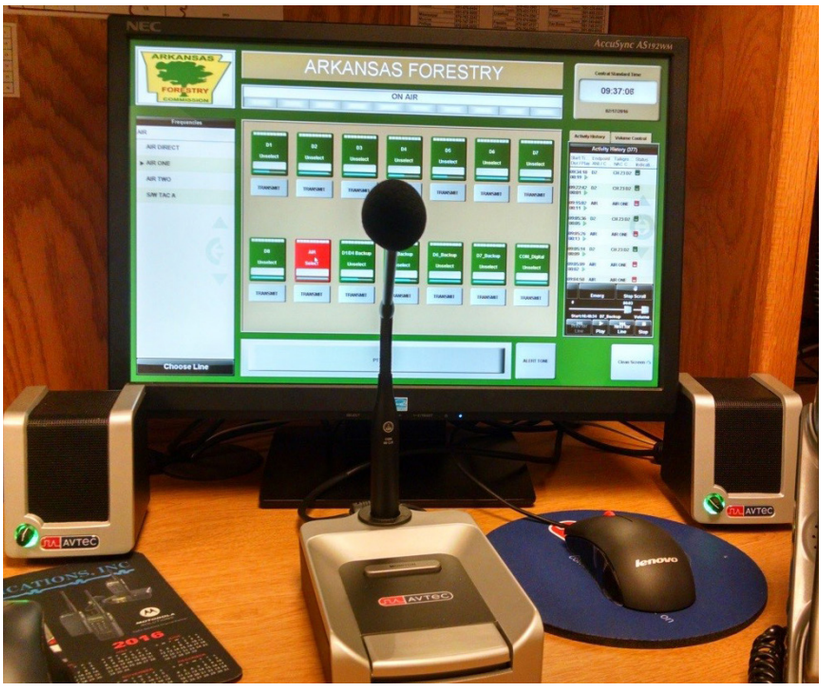

Radio Communications

In order to dispatch fire crews, the AFC operates 52 communications towers and 12 base stations. Additionally, the AFC has access to the Arkansas Wireless Information Network (AWIN), which includes an AWIN base station located in each district office and two additional units in the Central Dispatch Center at Malvern. Not only do dispatchers have statewide communications ability with AFC crews, but also with the Arkansas Department of Emergency Management Communications Center, County Office of Emergency Management (OEM) officials, volunteer fire departments, and the U.S. Forest Service Hot Springs Dispatch Center. As an alternative back up, Mobile Satellite Telephone Service (MSAT) & Military Affiliate Radio System (MARS) radios are installed. There are currently 145 AWIN Mobile radios installed in AFC Vehicles.

Over the last year, we have worked to meet the future FCC Mandate of Extreme Narrowbanding, P25 Digital Technology. **All 325 handheld radios and 350 mobile radios have been replaced with new technology equipment.** Of the 52 analog VHF Repeaters, technicians have replaced 40 of them with new VHF P25 Digital Repeaters. The remaining 12 will be replaced later in 2016.

In 2015, technicians relocated 4 VHF repeaters from unsafe and decaying fire towers. In cooperation with Arkansas Highway & Transportation Department (AHTD), they were moved to safer AHTD towers, fully equipped with generator backup and climate controlled buildings. In addition, AHTD is building two new 190' towers, one at the AFC site in Almond, and the other one in McGehee. Once these towers are completed (estimated timeline of 3rd quarter 2016), the AFC will relocate the Almond Repeater in District 8 to the new tower, increasing the antenna height from 100' to 190' and thereby improving radio coverage in the area significantly. Also in District 8, the Matney Knob repeater in Baxter County was relocated from an old Arkansas Game and Fish Commission 90' tower to a new 190' tower owned by the Baxter County OEM, improving radio coverage to the wildland firefighters in that area. Finally, a new repeater will be installed on the McGehee tower located in District 1. This additional repeater will increase coverage in the southeast corner of Arkansas, which is currently a "dead zone."

County Rangers Mike Curtis & Gary Hutson, and Investigator Russell Lancaster

Case Type	Total Completed
Fire Cases	83
Timber Theft	69
Dumping Cases	43
Vandalism	11
Total Cases	**206**

Law Enforcement Training, District 3

Law Enforcement

The AFC has three statewide investigators and 12 district Law Enforcement Officers (LEOs). The district LEOs are rangers and foresters that also have law enforcement responsibilities as additional duties. The AFC has the authority to enforce all state laws, but focuses primarily on unlawful dumping, timber theft, forest fires, and logging equipment theft/vandalism. LEOs aggressively seek prosecution of violators to deter such crimes. Rangers with law enforcement responsibility are required to take 16 hours of law enforcement training each year; district LEOs and investigators are asked to attend 40 hours of training. All LEOs attended firearms training.

During 2015, LEOs conducted arrests on felony and misdemeanor cases and recovered $252,741.72 in restitution to landowners. **Efforts of LEOs, through citations and suppression costs, resulted in the collection of $5,576.50 in fines and $9,141.74 in suppression costs. In all, $267,459.96 was recovered.** LEOs also patrolled state forest land (at Poison Springs State Forest) during modern gun (deer) season.

Officers assisted in several search and rescue efforts, emergency response incidents, and assisted other agencies throughout the state, when requested. Notable partnerships and incidents include those listed:

- Attended Complex Incident Management Course (CIMC) as Type 1 Incident Commander in Clemmons, North Carolina.
- Assisted Lincoln County Office of Emergency Management in Disaster Scenario.
- Provided AFC Law Enforcement presentation to partners/classes across Arkansas.
- Provided security at the In Woods Expo.
- Presented search and rescue strategy for missing pilot search in 2013 to Georgia Forestry Aviation in Brunswick, Georgia.
- AFC LEOs are members of the Southeast Arson Task Force (which combines LEO's from all Southeast compact states); LEOs attended 40 hours of training in Georgia for the annual Task Force training.
- Involved in numerous community events, including fishing derbies and Shop-with-a-Cop events.

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Rural Fire Protection

The AFC Rural Fire Protection (RFP) Program serves the needs of rural Arkansas fire departments, as well as the repair needs of AFC firefighting vehicles and tractors. Communities need prepared, well-equipped fire crews, as they are our primary partner in wildfire suppression and prevention across Arkansas. RFP provides accredited Wildland Training Courses for volunteer fire departments (VFDs) and administers federal grant programs to assist VFDs with the acquisition of firefighting equipment.

Firefighting equipment and vehicles are provided through the Federal Excess Property Program. Vehicles destined for VFDs are evaluated and repaired for initial service at the RFP maintenance facility. Additionally, VFDs may apply to receive interest-free loans or Wild Fire Volunteer Fire (WFVF) Grants.

Rural Fire Protection Highlights, 2015:

- **Assisted 70 communities with Wildland Fire Suppression Kits, totaling $210,000 in the value of provided wildland fire equipment.**

- **Conducted 79 Wildland Fire Suppression Training Classes. Classes reached 653 VFDs and provided certification for 1,683 firefighters.**

- **Provided 106 firefighting vehicles to VFDs; total equipment value was $7,928,668.18.**

- **Financed 20 interest-free loans to communities for firefighting equipment, totaling $256,640.29 in loans.**

- **Hosted annual Firefighter Appreciation Fire Show; 466 firefighters attended, representing 177 volunteer fire departments, and 63 representatives attended, from 29 fire services vendors/partners.**

- **The AFC provides funding, support and personnel, and is heavily involved with the planning and hosting of the annual Arkansas Fire Boat School Training Event. Coordinated by the Arkansas Fire Boat School Committee, the 2015 event included 33 fire boats from 17 fire departments and over 300 firefighters and emergency responders. This is the only inland marine fire boat training in the Southern Region, and includes partners from an array of local and state agencies.**

Rural Fire Program Administrator John Blackburn and recipient fire department

Auto/Diesel Mechanic Supervisor Adam Bartelt and recipient fire department

Arkansas Fire Boat School Training at DeGray Lake

Arkansas Firewise

Arkansas Firewise works with individuals, communities and fire departments to provide training, events, and an array of wildfire prevention, safety, and mitigation resources. Through fire department training and education, the Arkansas Firewise team helps communities become safer from wildfires through mitigation projects, preparedness and planning, and general awareness.

The Arkansas Firewise Program had 154 Firewise-recognized communities in 2015. Arkansas has 10% of the total Firewise communities in the nation, and more than any other participating state program. Overall, 279 communities have worked to become Firewise and many more have received program presentations and/or resources and assistance. Firewise personnel provided Risk Assessment Training to 28 fire departments in 2015, which is hands-on training for assessing wildfire risk on a house-by-house basis in rural fire districts. Arkansas Firewise partners with the Arkansas Fire Training Academy to provide accreditation for Risk Assessment Training, which counts toward the 16-hour annual training requirement for statewide firefighters. This program has overseen 272 Community Wildfire Preparedness Plans, which remain updated and on file in the Little Rock office.

District 8 personnel and NE Arkansas Firewise Communities

County Ranger Bart Batchelor presents Firewise Grant

Ashley County personnel and
Firewise Coordinator Kevin Kilcrease

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Aviation

Aviation Manager Mike Sellers (right)

Single Engine Air Tanker Plane

The aviation department supports each of the eight AFC districts through aerial wildfire detection, timber damage surveys, insect and disease surveys, and through cooperation and partnerships with other state and federal agencies. Aviation operated 15 aircraft statewide with four full-time pilots. Extra-help pilots are used to supplement during periods of high fire danger. All AFC pilots hold at least a commercial pilot's certificate with instrument privileges obtained through the Federal Aviation Administration.

Six of the aircraft are state owned and nine are federally owned. Two Aero Commander twin-engine planes are utilized in an air attack role, coordinating air tanker suppression aircraft. The 13 single-engine aircraft are used for wildfire detection, timber damage surveys and other forestry related needs.

All AFC aircraft are maintained to FAA standards. Upgrades to avionics are completed as technology advances. Logbooks, maintenance records, general condition, and appearance of all aircraft are thoroughly and routinely examined to maintain a high standard of safety. **During 2015, the aviation crew recorded 1,437 flight hours while detecting wildfires, timber damage, and other forestry-related purposes.**

During 2015, the Aviation Department began installing Automatic Dependent Surveillance – Broadcast (ADS-B) equipment in AFC aircraft. The Federal Aviation Administration has mandated that all aircraft operating in controlled airspace have ADS-B installed by 2020. ADS-B is part of the next generation air traffic control system in the United States. The current "radar based" system is being phased out to the satellite based ADS-B.

Aviation staff also travelled around the state to conduct 13 AFC Walk Tests.

Each year, the AFC also brings in Single Engine Air Tanker (SEAT) planes by contract during Arkansas's highest months of wildfire frequency (based on historic records) from February - April and August - October. SEATs assist dozer crews with wildfire suppression via aerial water drops. SEATs are dispatched through AFC Central Dispatch and are stationed at the Hot Springs Airport Tanker Base.

AFC Single-Engine Aircraft

Prescribed Fire

Prescribed (also called controlled) burns are strategically planned, carefully managed fires that accomplish a variety of forest management goals, including added wildfire safety through debris removal. Prescribed fires are used by the AFC and other conservation, forestry, and wildfire agencies at the local, state, and federal level as a forest management tool. These type of slow-moving, low intensity fires are a leading management method for forest pest and disease control, and improved wildlife and native plant species habitat. The AFC Fire Weather Supervisor records and organizes prescribed burn information to comply with voluntary Smoke Management Guidelines. Furthermore, the Fire Weather Supervisor provides the latest weather information to AFC fire crews to help better plan and manage statewide prescribed burns. Prescribed burns reported to the AFC Dispatch Center by AFC crews and all partners are listed on the AFC website for reference and added safety/awareness of burn locations.

Arkansas Prescribed Fire by Category

Landowner	Total Burns	Acres Burned
Private	260	16,131
Industrial	319	27,696
State Government	279	22,556
Federal Government	240	92,544
Total	**1,098**	**158,927**

Benton County personnel and prescribed burn

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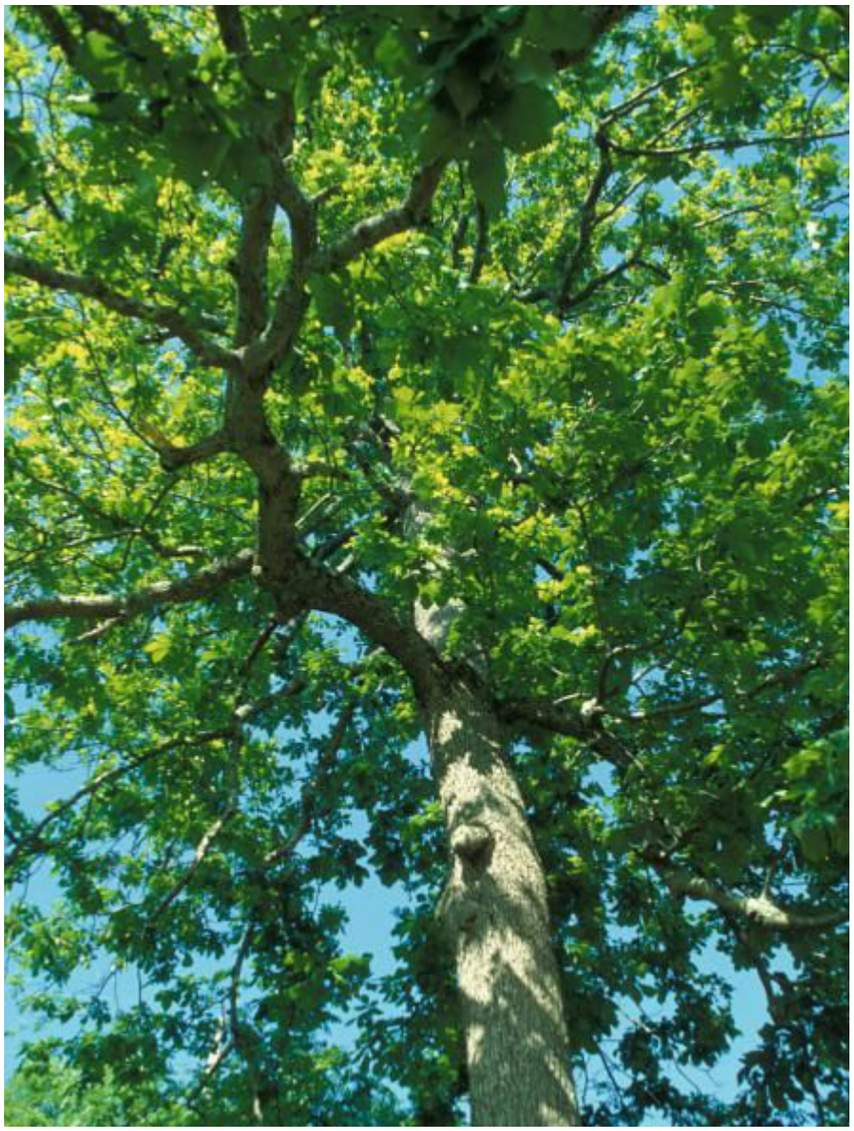
Forest Resource Management

The AFC forest management division implements innovative forest management programs and practices to establish, conserve, and utilize forests and related natural resources that will enhance social, environmental, and economic benefits.



County Ranger Dean Steelman provides seedling care & planting tips to students

Ranger II Chris Pfeifer plants trees

Ashley County personnel pot tree seedlings

2015 Tree Farmers of the Year: Coley Tree Farm

Lincoln County personnel plant trees

Forest Stewardship Program

The AFC works with a diverse group of partners and professionals to conserve and enhance Arkansas forests through the Forest Stewardship Program. The Program provides assistance to owners of forest land where good stewardship will enhance and sustain the long term productivity of multiple forest resources and produce healthy, resilient forest landscapes. The program provides landowners with professional planning and technical assistance they need to keep their land in a productive and healthy condition. The primary delivery mechanism is development and implementation of a comprehensive Forest Stewardship Management Plan prepared by AFC foresters, consulting foresters, AGFC private lands biologists, as well as soil and water professionals.

As of 2015, Arkansas had 4,806 landowners who own 882,614 acres enrolled in the Forest Stewardship Program. There are 1,260 Certified Forest Stewards with 280,531 acres, maintained under the Forest Stewardship Program guidelines. In 2015, 184 Stewardship Plans were written or revised, encompassing 27,592 acres. Consulting foresters wrote 40% of the plans, accounting for 49% of the acreage.

Landowners certified as Forest Stewards:	**12 landowners, 1,473 acres**
Re-certification of Forest Steward properties:	**98 properties, 20,721 acres**
Landowner Assists:	**230 landowners, 39,623 acres**

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Urban and Community Forestry

2015 Program Highlights

Number of people living in communities provided educational, technical, and/or financial assistance:	1,303,302
Percent of population living in communities managing programs to plant, protect and maintain their urban and community trees and forests:	37%
Volunteer hours accumulated through tree planting projects, tree board participation, organizing workshops, and training program hours:	20,573 Hours

Urban Forestry Coordinator Alison Litchy

The Urban and Community Forestry Program assists communities, non-profit organizations and educational institutions by providing tools and information to promote forest stewardship in communities. AFC provides the assistance through district arborists and urban forestry representatives from the eight districts. These individuals work closely with communities, schools, and non-profit staff and volunteers to increase public awareness about the value of community trees. AFC also partners with the Arkansas Urban Forestry Council (AUFC), a non-profit with members across the state, to implement educational programs. An annual conference and various workshops were held in 2015 including the Northwest Arkansas Urban Tree Symposium, Building with Trees, and the International Society of Arboriculture Arborist's Certification Workshop. More than 165 professionals attended, including: mayors, city planners, park staff, engineers, , urban and county foresters, as well as government representatives and landscape architects. Additionally, Tree Care Workshops were held for grounds crews at the University of Arkansas, John Brown University, and Arkansas Tech University.

Faulkner County Urban Tree Committee

The Arkansas Urban Forestry Strike Team now has a Mission Ready Package registered with the Arkansas Department of Emergency Management. This makes community tree assessments from Strike Team Members available to residents affected by natural disasters. The assessments can assist with determining debris amounts for the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and can help inform residents about which trees to save versus those that have become hazardous and should be removed. Strike Team members have taken a training course through the U. S. Forest Service to become Strike Team Specialists. More information about the Strike Team is available at *www.ufst.org*.

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The Arkansas Community Tree Recovery Campaign is a partnership between the Arbor Day Foundation and the Arkansas Forestry Commission whose purpose is to replace tree canopy lost due to natural disasters in Arkansas communities. The campaign was started in 2015 and will continue in 2016 for the communities of Vilonia and Mayflower. **Ten thousand trees were provided to Arkansas residents free of charge to replace trees damaged and destroyed by the April 2013 tornadoes.** Tree species for the program included a mixture of: redbud, white oak, pecan, hickory, white oak, crabapple, red mulberry, pin oak, cherrybark oak, and willow oak. Memorial trees were planted at each site to initiate the giveaway. Financial support for this campaign was provided by FedEx and Canon.

Ranger II Orbin Barnes distributes seedlings

Trees have been proven to dramatically reduce the exposure of damaging sunrays - therefore, shade trees increase the amount of time one can spend outside without being sunburned. Many playgrounds around the state are in sunny locations with little-to-no shade. Sun damage to the skin during childhood is the leading cause of skin cancer in adults. "STOP" is the acronym for Shade Trees on Playgrounds, an Arkansas program established thirteen years ago to address the concern of skin cancer development in children.

School STOP Programs

Over 2,000 students at eight schools participated in the STOP program in 2015. From October - November, tree planting ceremonies were held at the following schools: Crossett, Mena, Des Arc, Newport, Hot Springs Village, Van Buren, Clinton and Cotter. Participating students and teachers learned how shade can help prevent skin cancer, and how forests provide clean air and water, wood for homes, wildlife habitat, buffering for wind and noise, and places to enjoy the outdoors. **AFC provides five hardwood shade trees such as oak, blackgum, tulip poplar and maple for the children to plant at the end of the ceremony. Forty-seven shade trees were planted at participating schools.**

County Forester Kenny Smothers

County Ranger John Pressgrove

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Forest Legacy

Hazel Creek tract of Pine Flatwoods Recovery Initiative, Bradley County

The Forest Stewardship Committee met October 9, 2015 and approved three Forest Legacy projects. The projects approved were as follows:
1) Hazel Creek tract of the Pine Flatwoods Recovery Initiative (PFRI) project in Bradley County,
2) Reece Creek tract of the Wye Mountain Headwaters (WMH) project in Pulaski County, and
3) Fox Pass North and South tracts of the Hot Springs Recharge (HSR) project in Garland County. The projects were submitted to national partners in November, 2015 for consideration in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 budget cycle. If the WMH project is funded, Central Arkansas Water will purchase the 138 acre tract fee simple for $3.1 million. If the HSR project is funded, the AFC will purchase two tracts (totaling 312 acres) for $640,000.

The PFRI project ranked 13th in the FY 2016 President's List and was funded by Congress in December, 2015. The Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission will purchase the 937 acre tract fee simple for $1.535 million. 75% of the total cost for the tract will be reimbursed with a Forest Legacy Grant. AFC will be the pass-through agency for the grant.

GIS

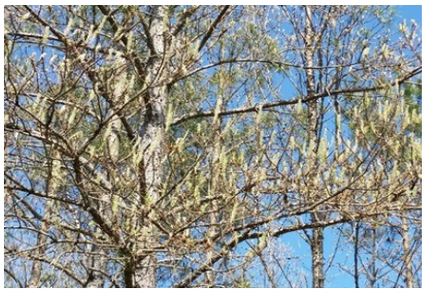
New AFC GPS Units

The Fire and Activities Reporting (FAR) website was deployed in April, 2015. The specialized website serves to record forest management activities, wildfire activities, and map creation. To train AFC personnel, AFC staff developed six, step-by-step instructional videos (ten minutes long, each), which are uploaded on YouTube for convenient access.

In November 2015, 120 Garmin GPSMAP 64s units were purchased. The number of new GPS units purchased provides two units for each work center in the AFC. The new GPS units replace the Garmin GPS 76 units that have been in service for more than 13 years. The GPSMAP 64s comes with 24K topographic base maps and is waterproof. The keys on the GPS allow the user to operate the GPS while wearing wildfire-resistant gloves. The new GPS units are compatible with the FAR website and the 59 new laptops provided to Foresters and County Rangers.

Forest Health

The Forest Health Specialist assists AFC personnel statewide in efforts to maintain healthy, productive forest ecosystems by preventing, detecting, monitoring, and suppressing damaging insects and diseases. AFC offers technical assistance to landowners who encounter forest health issues.


Loblolly pine sawfly defoliation

Loblolly pine sawfly caused defoliation in most loblolly pine plantations in Ashley County. In some cases, 100% defoliation of trees was observed. This sawfly rarely causes tree death because trees produce new needles and recover from what can be described as a growth and aesthetic loss.

The AFC continued to participate in the south-wide **southern pine beetle (SPB)** pheromone trap survey. Trapping results, which predicted a low or stable population, proved to be accurate. No SPB was captured in 2015, and no infestation was reported. Detection flights were not used to monitor for the presence of SPB infestations; however, this method will be implemented with other aerial forest health surveys in 2016.

Northwest Arkansas witnessed one of the worst **fall webworm** outbreaks in recent memory. The webworm was noticeable along roadways and within the urban forest. In most cases, trees will recover from webworm defoliation because the damage occurs so late in the year. This webworm outbreak is not expected to be as severe in consecutive years.

Pine engraver beetles, or **Ips bark beetles**, caused economic damages to loblolly pine plantations in Sevier, Howard, and Polk counties in 2015. Nearly 1,500 acres were mapped with damages in October, and this number increased over the course of the mild fall and winter weather conditions. Prevention through adequately timed thinnings remains the best defense against Ips beetles, which respond to drought-stressed trees.

From late fall into winter, **needlecast** and p**ine needle blight** fungi were prevalent in and around Hot Spring county. During moist and mild temperature conditions, these diseases cause needles of loblolly and shortleaf pine to turn brown. The base of the needle can remain green. In many cases, they will not kill a tree if it is capable of producing new shoots of foliage. However, coupled with drought-stress and Ips bark beetles, trees may sporadically die in a given area.

Needlecast and pine needle blight

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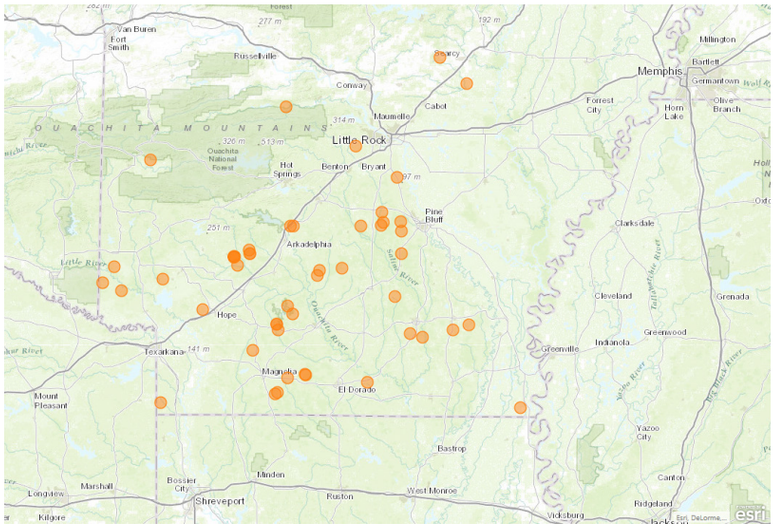
Forest Health Cont.



Southern Pine Beetle Prevention Program

Funding for the Southern Pine Beetle Prevention Program was reduced by the USFS in past years; however, the program continues to provide incentives for landowners wishing to thin dense pine stands. In 2015, 50 projects on 1,943 acres were approved for a total of $144,070 of cost-share incentives. 2015 projects locations are shown at left.

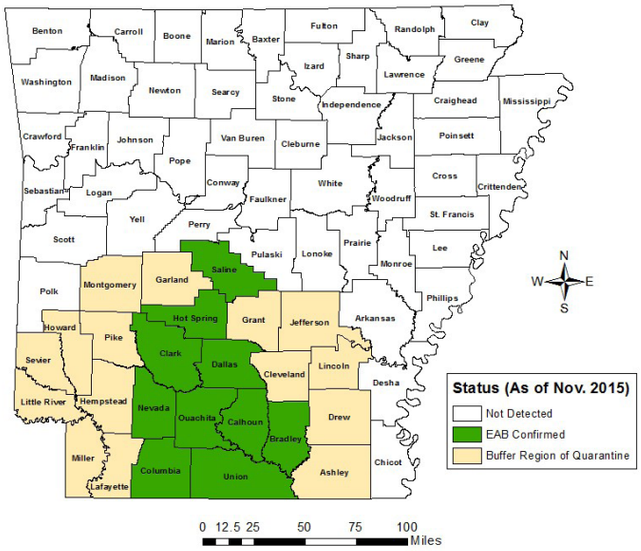
Emerald Ash Borer (EAB)

In 2014, the Animal Plant Health Inspection Service - Plant Protection and Quarantine (APHIS-PPQ) and Arkansas State Plant Board (ASPB) confirmed that the emerald ash borer (EAB) was present in six south Arkansas counties. The ASPB enacted a quarantine encompassing 25 southern counties, including the six confirmed counties and 19 "buffer" counties around the confirmations. Several agencies have joined efforts to monitor EAB and educate the state on the basics of detecting affected ash trees. These groups also emphasize the dangers of moving firewood from area to area to the public.

According to FIA estimates, ash trees represent less than 3% of Arkansas's forests. However, in the bottomland hardwoods found in the eastern and southern parts of the states, they are a much more valuable component. Ash is also a popular yard planting and is prevalent in the urban landscape. Ash was frequently used in restoration planting, and they grow as volunteers in many newly reforested areas. The loss of high-grade ash in bottomland sites will have economic concerns, especially for sawmills that specialize in hardwood products along the Mississippi River.

In 2015, EAB was confirmed in four more AR counties (please see map). Two of these detections involved a visual inspection of infested trees. A sample adult EAB was collected and then confirmed by the ASPB and APHIS-PPQ. No EAB has been found outside of the established quarantine area.

Arkansas Counties with Emerald Ash Borer and the Current Quarantine Region



The majority of observable EAB damages can be found along the Ouachita River between Ouachita and Calhoun Counties. Arkansas is on the cusp of noticing ash mortality. One big concern is that EAB will move into the Arkansas and Mississippi River Valleys where ash is also common. There is no indication that this has already happened, but visual surveys and traps will be used to monitor the arrival of EAB to these areas.

The ASPB, assisted by AFC personnel, began introductions of EAB biocontrol wasps in 2015. These tiny wasps (no larger than a pencil tip) are from the native origin of EAB in Asia. So far, *Tetrastichus planipennisi* was introduced to three sites in AR, and each site received approximately 3,000 wasps. More sites will be chosen in the future. Biocontrol efforts offer a counter defense against EAB. Wasps are expected to limit EAB population growth in the release sites.

EAB damage

Ash wood bolts, placed with wasp larvae for EAB biocontrol

Redbay Ambrosia Beetle and Laurel Wilt Disease

The invasive redbay ambrosia beetle and the disease that it transmits, laurel wilt, was discovered in Bradley County in December of 2015. This is the first discovery of the beetle and disease in Arkansas. The disease threatens to kill Arkansas's sassafras trees. Known for its unique scent when crushing the leaves, sassafras is an ecologically important native tree species. The dispersal rate of the beetle in sassafras is unknown, but we should expect the beetle and disease to spread across AR in the near future. Slowing the spread is possible by preventing the movement of sassafras cut for firewood or other needs.

Redbay Ambrosia Beetle

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A part of Forest Resource Management includes the coordination of Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Conservation Programs *

Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (*NRCS)

The Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) is a voluntary program for landowners who want to develop and improve wildlife habitat, primarily on private land. By targeting wildlife habitat projects on all lands and aquatic areas, WHIP provides cost-share assistance to conservation-minded landowners who are unable to meet the specific eligibility requirements of other USDA conservation programs.

In 2015, the Commission provided 15 Management Plans on 1,988 acres to private, non-industrial forest landowners. A total of 27 landowners were assisted, with 3,288 acres.

Conservation Reserve Program (*NRCS/FSA)

The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) began in March, 1986, and was designed to retire erodible cropland from agricultural production - in an effort to conserve soil. Landowners may submit applications for eligible crop or pastureland. Programs include vegetative cover for established trees, riparian buffers, wetland restoration, and bottomland timber establishment on wetlands.

The AFC is a primary Technical Service Provider (TSP) for landowners that are accepted into the CRP program. TSP responsibilities include development of the Conservation Plan to direct implementation, and verification of the implementation through audit and compliance checks.

In 2015, the AFC wrote Conservation Plans for 18 landowners, which resulted in forest management recommendations for CRP on 953 acres, and the planting of 96 acres of pine seedlings and 2,265 acres of hardwood seedlings.

Arkansas landowner plants tree seedlings from Baucum Nursery

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (*NRCS)

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) provides a voluntary conservation program to farmers and ranchers. EQIP offers financial and technical help to assist eligible participants with implementation of structural/management practices on eligible agricultural land. A portion of the state allocated EQIP funds may be dedicated to forestry practices. EQIP addresses Forest Protection, Health, and Water Quality. Forest practices include firebreaks, prescribed burning, fencing, forest stand improvement, invasive species control, tree planting, water bars, stream crossing structures, culverts, and seeding/stream bank stabilization. EQIP offers contracts to provide incentive payments and cost-shares to implement conservation practices. EQIP activities are carried out according to a plan that identifies appropriate conservation practice or practices to address the resource concerns.

Fireline construction on prescribed fire, Union County

In 2015, 84 landowners with 16,018 acres were given technical advice in addition to those given management plans and 7 landowners with 406 acres were referred to forest consultants and other resource professionals. The AFC prepared or revised 137 management plans on 10,085 acres for non-industrial private forest landowners to implement EQIP-eligible practices. Planting inspections were done on 33 landowner properties, comprising 1,441acres. Seedling survival checks were conducted on 3 landowner properties, comprising 286 acres. Prescribed burns were performed on 11 tracts, which totaled 916 acres. 12 fire breaks were installed or maintained, totaling 8.2 miles of fire break maintenance.

Ranger 1 Kevin South conducts seedling checks

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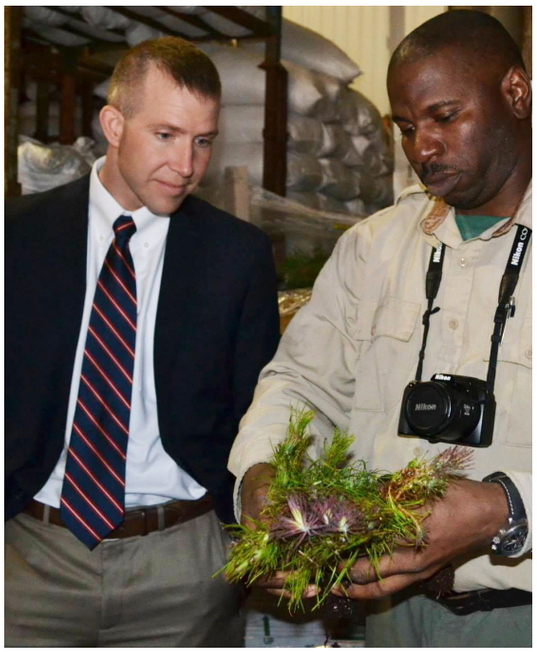
Baucum Nursery tour during seedling harvest



Arkansas Agriculture Secretary Wes Ward and Reforestation Foreman James Shelton

Baucum Nursery

The purpose of the AFC Nursery is to produce, store and distribute pine and hardwood seedlings of the highest quality. Seedlings are coupled with genetic background that provides them with the greatest chance of survival and the highest possible growth potential. These seedlings are sold primarily to private, non-industrial landowners for afforestation and reforestation purposes.

Baucum Nursery produced 5,431,500 hardwood seedlings and 2,488,900 pine seedlings for Arkansas landowners in 2015. Baucum Nursery sold and distributed 4,290,400 hardwood seedlings and 2,038,650 pine seedlings to Arkansas landowners. Private landowners purchased most of the seedlings. The majority of pine and hardwood seedlings were planted under federal conservation programs which include: EQIP, CRP, WHIP, WRP (refer to pages 20-21), and the Southern Pine Beetle Prevention and Restoration Program.

Nursery employees completed all necessary cultural practices to ensure top-quality seedlings. Fertilizers were applied per soil test results. Soil fumigation was done and pesticides were applied to prevent and control weeds, diseases, and insects. Approximately 100 tons of soil amendments, as well as cover crops on layout fields, were used to maintain soil productivity.

Promotional efforts for seedling sales will be continued by all district and county personnel. In 2015, a new 19 ft. x 21 ft. cooler was constructed at the District 5 Office in Malvern. **There are 13 remote cooler locations in addition to Baucum Nursery, where landowners can pick up seedlings. New coolers have been built in 5 of the 13 remote locations.** These new coolers are critical to the distribution of seedlings, especially for landowners with small land tracts.

Tree Improvement

The AFC continues to be aggressive and innovative in meeting the reforestation needs of Arkansas's private non-industrial landowners by providing seed of the highest genetic gain and quality. The AFC's breeding and testing program and orchard management practices continually improve the genetic gain offered by our programs.

Production orchards are managed for maximum seed production with low cost. All cultural practices are applied according to specifications provided by the Western Gulf Forest Tree Improvement Program (WGFTIP). Establishment, maintenance and measurements continue on all the pine and hardwood progeny tests.

The AFC, in association with WGFTIP, continues to improve the genetic quality of plant material available for reforestation in the Western Gulf region. The AFC sells pine seedlings produced from seed with the highest possible genetic gain. Only the best clones in AFC's loblolly and shortleaf pine seed orchards are being harvested. The balance of cones and seed are then sold.

Cone and Seed Collection

The AFC harvested 461.3 bushels of improved loblolly pine cones for a yield of 853.3 pounds of seed - which is a rate of 1.85 lbs of seed per bushel. AFC accepted bids for the sale of pine cones that were not needed by AFC: 669.15 bushels were sold for $96,357.60 and 191.88 bushels were sold for $25,229.14. Shortleaf pine orchards produced 881.8 bushels of cones for a yield of 826.04 pounds of seed – which is a rate of .94 lbs of seed per bushel. The AFC collected 1,350 pounds of sawtooth oak seed, 234 pounds of improved cherrybark oak, and 219 pounds of improved nuttall oak seed.

Baucum Nursery

Reforestation Manager
Dave Bowling

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Lake Maumelle Watershed, and nearby Prescribed Burn area

Water Quality Management Program

The AFC is the designated management agency for the silvicultural section of the Arkansas Water Plan. The Southern Group of State Foresters has emphasized six areas for state water quality programs, which AFC follows: 1) Best Management Practices (BMP) training and education for landowners, loggers, and foresters; 2) Courtesy Exams on active logging sites; 3) Biennial monitoring of BMP implementation on silvicultural sites throughout the state; 4) Resolution of timber harvesting/water quality complaints; 5) Coordination with other state and federal agencies, and; 6) Participation in water quality grants.

BMP Training
In 2015 the AFC offered three specialized BMP technical training sessions for skidder stream crossing to 98 loggers and foresters.

BMP training was provided to 61 private landowners, as well as two in-house technical training sessions for 6 AFC County Rangers and Foresters. The AFC worked with the Arkansas Timber Producers Association to provide several training sessions in Arkansas and Oklahoma to approximately 245 loggers, foresters, and timber buyers.

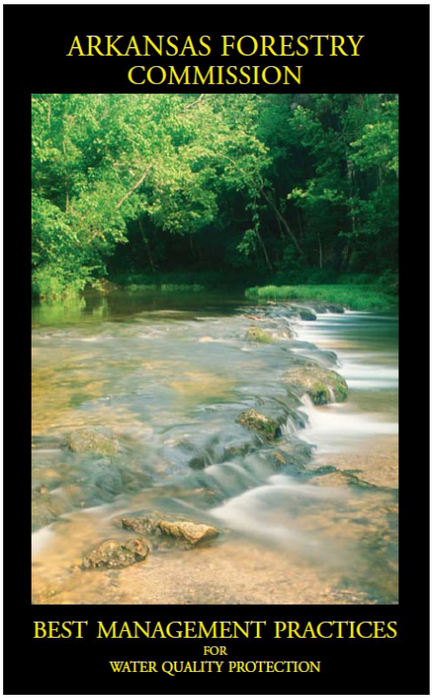
Courtesy Exams
Courtesy exams provide an opportunity for water quality staff to meet with foresters and loggers in the field to discuss BMP implementation. Manuals, brochures, and fact sheets are provided to participants. Four exams with 14 participants in four counties were hosted in 2015.

Complaint Resolution
The AFC processes logging complaints and makes a determination concerning whether water quality impairment, or the potential of impairment has taken place. In 2015 there were 11 complaints filed, five of which were valid complaints. All five valid complaints were resolved by implementing Best Management Practices (BMPs).

Coordination with other State and Federal agencies
The AFC participated on the planning committee and attended the Southeastern Partnership for Forests and Water Forum at Camp Mitchell on Petit Jean Mountain May 26-27, 2015.
The goals of the Forum were to:

- Share information about the strong connection between forests and drinking water.
- Discuss the challenges and day-to-day operations of the forestry and drinking water sectors.
- Provide local examples of collaboration between forestry and drinking water organizations.
- Develop a brief list of short-term actions to continue the momentum from the Forum.

Participation in Water Quality Grants
The AFC was awarded an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) 319h grant of $178,462 through the Arkansas Natural Resource Commission for the purpose of conducting a BMP Implementation monitoring survey (which is an exercise conducted once every five years).



Arnold Hameister, Best Management Practices Coordinator

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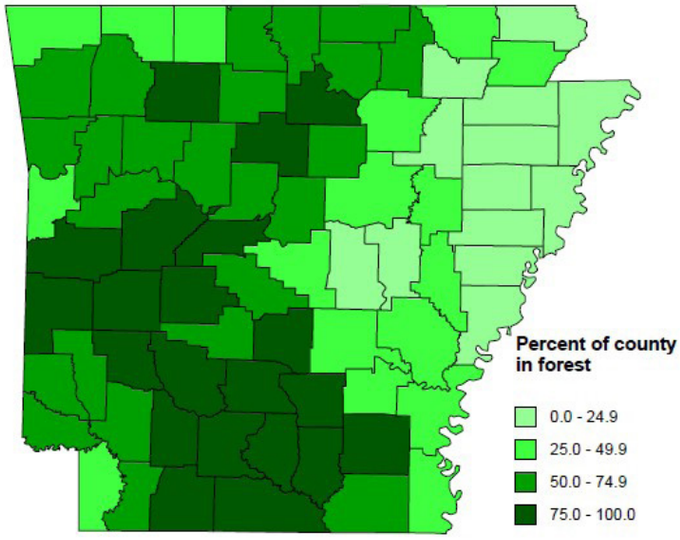
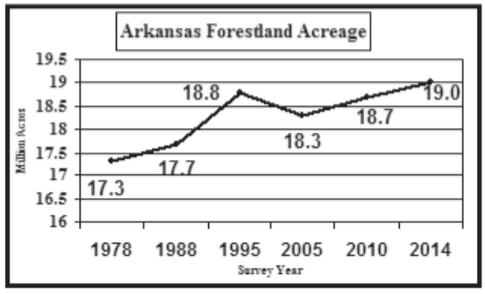
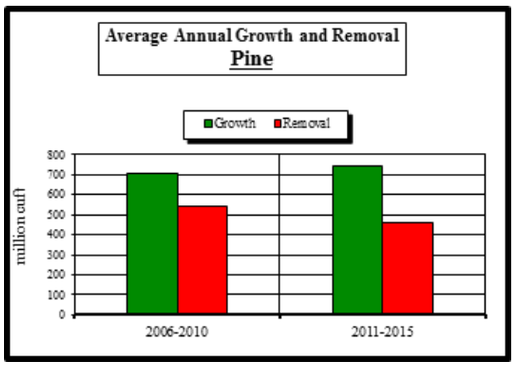
Aaron Williams, Forest Inventory Specialist



Annual Forest Survey Data

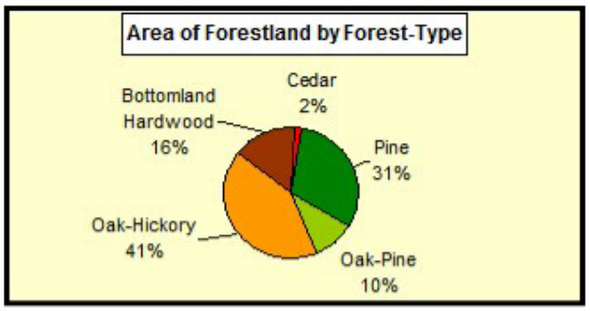
The Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) program has been collecting forest resource data in Arkansas since the 1930s. The AFC FIA program consists of one Forest Inventory Coordinator and six Forest Inventory Specialist positions. These foresters work full time collecting research data and must maintain a minimum Quality Control/Quality Assurance grading average of 87%. FIA data is obtained from permanent inventory plots located primarily on a 3x3 mile grid across the state. There are about 5,700 FIA sample plots in Arkansas; each is re-inventoried every five years. FIA foresters collect measurements on 20% of the plots each year, which provide annual updates about forest growth, damage, mortality, health, biomass, ownership trends, timber availability, and land use trends.





Prior to 1999, the U.S. Forest Service conducted all Forest Inventory surveys in the state. Beginning in 1999, the AFC entered into a cooperative agreement with the Southern Research Station (SRS) where the AFC would conduct the field measurements and the Forest Service would continue producing statistical reports from the data. The latest inventory data can be found at the National Forest Inventory Program Data and Tools website (http://www.fia.fs.fed.us/tools-data/).

During the 2015 calendar year, The AFC's Forest Inventory program collected data from 875 research plots. The QC/QA grading average for the year was 97.7 %. The 2014 annual survey has been posted on the National FIA Data and Tools website. The 2014 data tables are available on the SRS website at: http://srsfia2.fs.fed.us/states/arkansas.shtml.



Poison Springs State Forest

Poison Springs State Forest (PSSF) demonstrates science based forest management that protects and conserves water, wildlife, soil, and related forest resources for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. PSSF is located in western Ouachita and eastern Nevada counties. PSSF provides the AFC with yearly revenue, while demonstrating different forest management techniques to private non-industrial landowners.

When the AFC purchased PSSF in 1957, the 19,942-acre forest had 20,240,000 board feet of pine sawtimber and 10,303,000 board feet of hardwood sawtimber. The AFC has cut timber every year since 1957. **Today PSSF is more than 23,000 acres and has over 120,000,000 board feet of pine sawtimber and over 15,000,000 board feet of hardwood sawtimber.** PSSF has added some land each year for the last several years. The most recent acquisitions came from non-industrial private forest landowners.

The AFC used timber sale proceeds to make annual payments to the U.S. Forest Service until the original land purchase was paid for. The recent land purchases were paid for primarily through grants from the Natural and Cultural Resources Commission. Timber sale proceeds pay operations and salary expenses and provide the AFC revenue for general operations. The AFC places timber sale proceeds in excess of expenses and operations into a trust fund for equipment purchases.

Income generated from formal timber sales during FY'15 was $759,798.65. Receipts from miscellaneous sales during the same time period amounted to $57,173.02

Public Use

Arkansans use PSSF for camping, hunting, hiking, horseback riding, and sightseeing. The AFC requires a permit for camping on PSSF. Most permits are issued for the October and November deer seasons. Over 300 campsite reservations were made for PSSF's primitive campsites in 2015.

Income from Poison Springs State Forest, 2015

Product	Volume	Value
Pine Sawtimber	23,857 (tons)	$699,014.16
Hardwood Sawtimber	1,481 (tons)	$44,068.32
Pine Pulpwood	317 (tons)	$9,117.58
Hardwood Pulpwood	151(tons)	$4,558.79
Misc. and Salvage		$57,173.02
	Total:	**$813,931.87**

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Administration

AFC administration provides support and leadership to agency personnel with operational efficiency and effectiveness by fostering partnerships, exercising fiscal management, and cultivating a workforce that consistently responds to the challenges facing Arkansas's forests, forest owners, and citizens.

Human Resources

The Human Resources (HR) Department is responsible for employment procedures, recruitment, employee benefits, time data entry, payroll processing, workers compensation claims, training, and safety. The HR staff works with AFC employees on a myriad of day-to-day assists to facilitate a productive work environment. **The Arkansas General Assembly authorized 300 regular positions for 2015, but the AFC averaged filling these with a total of 293 employees. A total of 30 agency training courses were provided – representing 5,958 total man hours taken by employees and cooperators.**

Safety

Safety is a topic of every staff meeting agenda, in addition to routine tailgate sessions and local AFC unit safety meetings. Inspection of PPE (personal protective equipment) worn by AFC firefighters is reviewed in conjunction with annual equipment inspections. AFC firefighters must meet annual physical fitness standards.

Employee Development

HR handles training requests and is responsible for maintaining copies of individual training records. Other departments also provide and report training that occurs within respective departments. Training conducted in 2015 was accomplished with several different methods, ranging from the traditional classroom settings, to field demonstrations, as well as hands-on/practical, and distance/on-line self-study training.

AFC staff continued to comply with training directives from the Department of Homeland Security, which applies to employees with emergency response responsibilities. Much of the training is available by distance-learning from the FEMA Emergency Management Institute. 82 AFC employees completed such training during 2015.

Additionally, personnel are required to take specific training provided by the Arkansas Department of Finance and Administration Inter-Agency Training Program (IATP). A total of 71 employees participated in 5 different IATP courses in 2015, including: Administering Discipline, Interpersonal Communications, Grievance Prevention and Handling, HRkansas for Supervisors, and AR Government Basics. A total of 106 employees were certified in CPR/First Aid training to maintain their biannual certification requirements in 2015. A group of 11 AFC staff members are certified instructors in CPR/First Aid to provide training to other AFC personnel.

In 2015, 9 AFC employees and 30 others from state, federal and private organizations attended the Prescribed Fire Course held annually at Camp Robinson. AFC personnel help organize and instruct the annual Prescribed Fire Course. Agencies require their personnel to pass this course before they can manage a prescribed burn.

The 11th Annual River Valley Fire Academy was held on the campus of Arkansas Tech University in May, 2015. During this academy, 325 individuals registered for classes, and most attended either one or more courses that were offered. The River Valley Fire Academy remains the main training method by which AFC employees and partners/cooperators receive required wildland fire training that meets both agency standards and the standards of the National Wildfire Coordinating Group. This event also continues to be a very cost effective means for agencies to arrange for employee training, locally. A total of 11 different agencies and organizations were represented at the academy with attendees from several surrounding states. A total of 39 AFC employees participated as students and 11 AFC employees as classroom instructors.

AD Training – U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and National Interagency Fire and Disaster Responses
AFC employees and other cooperators receive specialized training for emergency response positions within the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) or other federal agencies. AFC employees attend training as Administratively Determined (AD) employees of the Federal Government. The Federal Government pays for travel and training expenses. Upon meeting the training requirements, AFC employees are then selected by the USFS or other federal agencies to fill emergency response positions.

In 2015, the AFC issued Fire Qualification Cards to 47 AFC employees, 5 retired AFC employees, 10 to individuals from paid or volunteer fire departments, and 22 to individuals from Arkansas State Parks. All of these individuals met the training, experience, and physical fitness requirements for national certification amid many different emergency response positions. Many AFC employees continue to maintain job qualifications that allow them to be utilized as resources for national emergencies.

In 2015, the AFC deployed 25 AFC and 5 non-AFC individuals to FL, OR, CA, WA, ID, NV, MT and TX wildfires. These individuals worked as: Faller Class C, Firefighter Type 2, Air Tanker Base Manager, Emergency Medical Paramedic, RAMP Manager, Crew Boss, Staging Area Manager, Medical Unit Leader, Squad Boss, Emergency Medical Tech Basic, Faller Class B, Public Information officer and Line Safety Officer. **Arkansas also sent out the Arkansas Razorbacks 1 Crew, which is a 20 person wildfire hand crew that included 12 AFC employees.**

Arkansas Razorback Crew

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Minority Outreach

County Forester Cory Bostic

Little River County Conservation Day

The Outreach Coordinator along with many dedicated AFC staff around the state continues to conduct outreach efforts to limited resource and historically underserved landowners. As a result, **some 240 minority landowners (females, the disabled, citizens of an African-American, Latino and Asian-American decent) on 22,794 acres in 2015 have benefited from these initiatives.**

The AFC along with University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff (UAPB) and Silas H. Hunt Community Development Cooperation and other partnering agencies participated in the 2nd Conservation Day held at the 4-H Archery Range in Little River County. The AFC led a nature walk that included Tree ID and core sampling demonstrations. The conservation day also provided educational information about forestry, land surveying, GIS, soil health, archery, wildlife, career opportunities and included a tour of the Domtar Paper Mill in Ashdown.

During 2015, the AFC's Rural Fire Protection Program worked with minority volunteer fire departments across the state providing a total of 6 Freightliner trucks and a generator. One minority volunteer fire department attended the Wildland Training Course.

Arkansas Firewise program staff worked with Firewise-recognized minority fire departments in Waldo, Tollette, Eudora, Keller Bend, and Dry Bayou toward renewing with program requirements in 2015.

As part of other minority outreach efforts to youth, Smokey Bear programs, fire safety awareness, a Shade Trees On Playgrounds (STOP) program, and tree planting ceremonies were offered to the following communities: Little Rock, Springdale and Cotter Elementary School in Baxter County.

One new minority hire was included among newly added AFC staff members in 2015.

AFC Law Enforcement Officers assisted 82 minority landowners with timber theft complaints, timber theft investigations and stolen logging equipment cases on a combined total of 5,392 acres.

Special events and conferences that included minority outreach or training are as follows: Rural Life Conference, Small Scale Producer Workshop, Southwest Arkansas Small Farms Conference, and landowner outreach meetings with the Arkansas Land & Community Development Corporation at Hope, Fargo, Dermott and Conway. These meetings continue to provide great networking opportunities that result in follow-up requests for management assistance from landowners. All landowners attending these meetings are given the opportunity to sign up and receive emails about various forestry related updates. These updates were emailed four times in 2015.

The Outreach Coordinator and crews also reported the following forestry programs and services to minority Arkansans: Visits to the UAPB Holiday Farm and other private land (by request) to provide education and advice, assistance at planning committee meetings, forest stewardship plans, tree planting inspections, and tree assists. The Outreach Coordinator assisted four local and six absentee landowners in 2015. She also worked with partners at the Texas A&M Forest Service to have three AFC brochures and an educational poster translated into Spanish.

County Ranger Anthony Brown and Smokey Bear in Little Rock

Urban League
Tree Presentation

The Arkansas Forestry Commission prohibits discrimination in all of its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or familial status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs). The Arkansas Forestry Commission is an equal opportunity employer.

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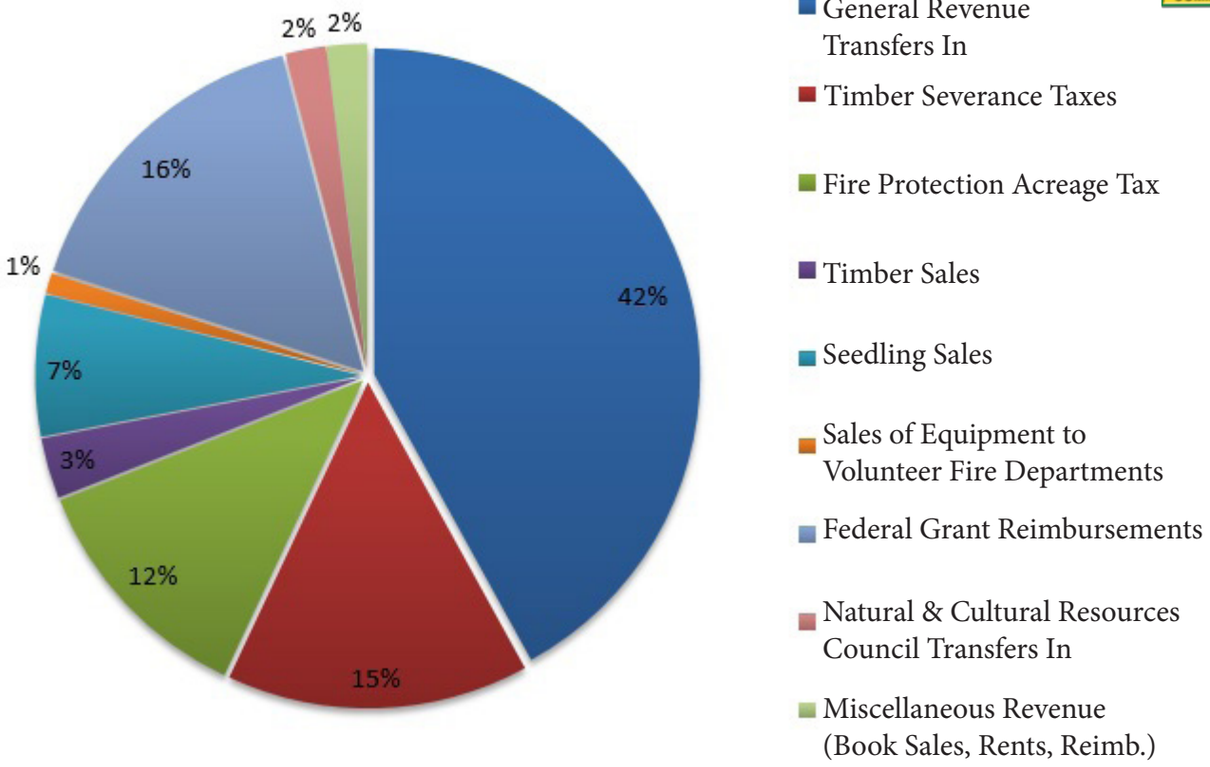
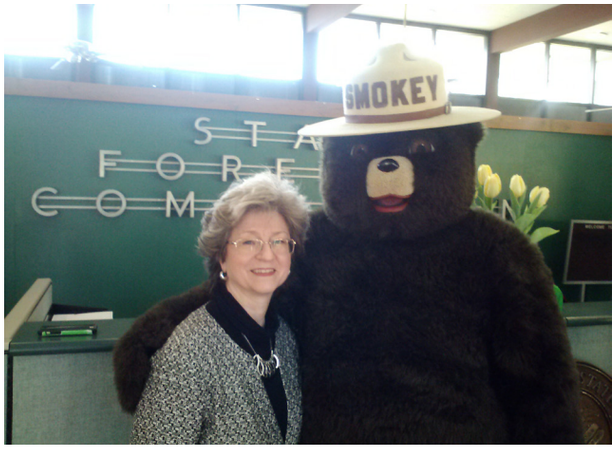
Financial Report: For the Year Ending June 30, 2015

Cash Balance, July 1	$6,607,037
RESOURCES PROVIDED	
General Revenue Transfers In	10,015,537
Timber Severance Taxes	3,615,459
Fire Protection Acreage Tax	2,771,401
Timber Sales	759,474
Seedling Sales	1,504,272
Sales of Equipment To Volunteer Fire Departments	334,238
Federal Grant Reimbursements	3,789,056
Natural & Cultural Resources Council Transfers In	540,516
Miscellaneous Revenue (Book Sales, Rents, Reimb.)	372,016
Total Receipts	**23,701,970**
EXPENDITURES	
Salary Expense	14,609,727
Communication & Transportation of Commodities	331,428
Printing & Advertising	62,450
Repairing & Servicing	924,308
Utilities & Rent	361,012
Travel and Subsistence	145,381
Professional Services & Fees	535,352
Insurance and Bonds	134,517
Other Expenses & Services	780,121
Commodities, Materials & Supplies	1,690,065
Assistance, Grants & Aid	371,109
Refunds, Taxes & Claims	24,509
Treasurer of State Service Charges	192,079
Capital Outlay	1,863,905
Interagency Transfers for Claims & Other Expenses	(10,435)
Total Expenditures	**22,015,530**
Cash Balance, June 30*	**$8,293,477**
Non-Cash Expenditures	
Depreciation & Amortization	1,708,788
Loss on Disposal of Fixed Assets	3,109
Total Non-Cash Expenditures	**1,711,897**

*2015 Cash balance included **$883,136** restricted for Federal Grant programs, **$460,347** restricted for the Rural Fire Revolving Loan program, **$57,478** restricted for General Improvement Projects, **$1,180,100** restricted for repayment of potential Federal liabilities, **$2,328,738** restricted reserve in the Trust Fund, and **$1,110** restricted for private grant activities, leaving **$3,355,105** unrestricted Special Revenue and **$27,463** unrestricted General Revenue for use in operations.

FY2015 Resources Proivided (Receipts)





Chief Fiscal Officer Deevee Pearson and Smokey Bear

Chainsaw Training

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Communications Report

The AFC is committed to providing consistent, updated information to Arkansans and partner agencies through multiple mediums including online and print media, a state-of-the art website, television and radio, and through personal relationships. Additionally, programs including Arkansas Champion Trees and Arkansas Famous and Historic Trees are administered to further engage Arkansans in forestry initiatives.

Press Release Distribution and Media Partners
AFC press releases and announcements are distributed according to the safety and needs of the public, and may include topics such as wildfire frequency/wildfire danger projections, special announcements and events, unique forestry news or regulation, forestry program opportunities, forestry awards or grant opportunities, and other significant forestry or safety information to local and state media partners. AFC staff members across offices and programs work through the Communications Director to identify media opportunities, and submit photos and details for inclusion in state and local communications efforts.

AFC Website
The AFC website is updated daily with valuable forestry news, resources, and contact information for residents. AFC Dispatch works to ensure that Burn Ban and Wildfire Danger Maps are accurate. Prescribed Fires are also recorded there for reference. Residents can purchase seedlings from Baucum Nursery in a secured, online page. Landowners can request assistance from foresters, wildfire officials, forestry law enforcement, and others with the click of a button. Readers can order online the *Trees of Arkansas* resource. Every forestry offering, service, program area, landowner opportunity, resource, form, partner link, and update available to the AFC for provision to Arkansans is available at *forestry.arkansas.gov*.

Online/Social Media
The AFC has a rich social media presence on both Facebook and Twitter. In 2015, AFC Facebook likes increased from 12,238 in January, 2015 to 13,167 in January, 2016. AFC Twitter followers increased from 4,353 followers in January, 2015 to 5,718 followers in January, 2016.

Print Resources
In 2015, an updated general AFC brochure was published, which provides an overview of all services, programs, and offerings of the AFC. Additionally, multiple print resources, including posters, fact sheets, and reference cards were created by AFC Forest Health and the Arkansas State Plant Board to inform the public about the invasive Emerald Ash Borer Beetle. Another update to the *Trees of Arkansas*, Eighth Edition book was completed, and print copies will be available in 2016. Annual print resources are available from the Forest Inventory and Analysis Program, as well as Forest Health, Forest Stewardship, Urban Forestry, Arkansas Firewise, and the Rural Fire Program.

Arkansas River Valley Fire Academy

Special Events
The AFC participates in several events and training programs each year that also create opportunities for public education and public information sharing. The AFC directs communications efforts at the Arkansas Prescribed Fire School, Arkansas Fire Boat School, and the River Valley Fire Academy at Arkansas Tech University to initiate, enrich, and follow-up on those media opportunities.

Chairman of the AFC Board of Commissioners Rob Parkes, Arkansas Agriculture Secretary Wes Ward, and State Forester Joe Fox present Spencer Fox Award and District Forester of the Year Award

AFC Employees of the Year, 2015

Spencer Fox Award	*Don McBride*
Career Achievement	*Don Tate*
District Forester of the Year	*Robert Murphy*
Program Manager of the Year	*Kevin Kilcrease*
Program Support of the Year	*David Wiley*
Administrative Support of the Year	*Pia McDonald*
District 1 Employee of the Year	*Dale Pace*
District 2 Employee of the Year	*Jerry Huff*
District 3 Employee of the Year	*Shane Booth*
District 4 Employee of the Year	*David Porter*
District 5 Employee of the Year	*Jon Goss*
District 6 Employee of the Year	*Asia DeMayo*
District 7 Employee of the Year	*Anthony Brown*
District 8 Employee of the Year	*Jack Coy*

Career Achievement Award recipient Don Tate and District 8 personnel

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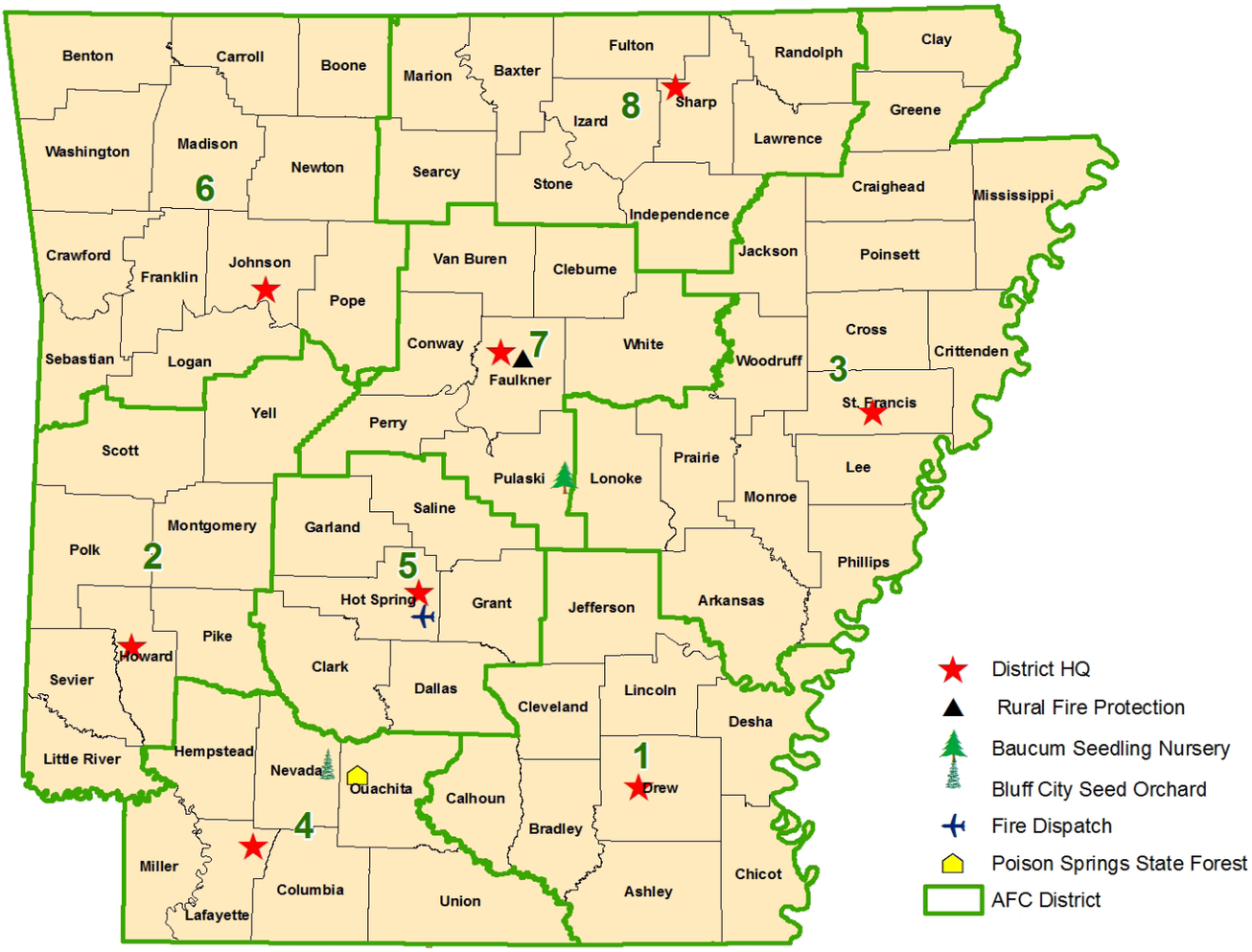
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