



News Release

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GEORGIA WILDFIRES' IMPACT RECORDED

Georgia Forestry Commission officials have calculated the impact of the spring wildfires in south Georgia, and the results are unlike anything seen in state history. More forestland was consumed, more timber was lost, and more financial losses are being felt from these fires in Georgia than has ever been recorded.

"The Georgia Bay Complex was the largest fire in the southeast in recorded history. It started in mid-April and burned approximately 564,000 acres, which includes over 122,745 acres in Florida," said Robert Farris, Interim Director of the Georgia Forestry Commission. "In excess of \$60 million of privately-owned timber has been lost and it's expected to take over \$30 million to replant the burned forestlands."

More than 3,300 people from 44 states, Canada and Puerto Rico fought the wildfires. GFC officials report fire suppression efforts cost an estimated \$44.1 million, 75% of which may be covered by FEMA on major fires that received grants.

"To put it in perspective, the wildfires of south Georgia and north Florida burned an area more than twice the size of the area inside the perimeter of Atlanta, said Alan Dozier, Chief of Forest Protection at the GFC. "Eighteen homes were destroyed, but fortunately, no lives were lost." In a typical year, Georgia has approximately 8,000 wildfires which burn 40,000 acres, Dozier said. An extended drought set the stage for record-breaking fire activity this season. Since July 1, 2006, more than 9,500 wildfires burned more than 504,000 acres throughout the state.

The Georgia Forestry Commission is working with landowners to evaluate timber losses, assist with salvage operations, and develop long term mitigation and recovery plans. The Commission is also working to secure funding for those efforts.

"The impact of this historic event will be felt for a long time," said Robert Farris. "The Georgia Forestry Commission is committed to providing the leadership, service, and education needed to restore and protect our state's valuable forest resources."

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