



**FLORIDA  
FORESTRY  
ASSOCIATION**

# PINES & NEEDLES

Fall 2022 Volume 77, Issue 4 Printed November 2, 2022

## 2022 ANNUAL MEETING & TRADE SHOW

The Association's 2022 Annual Meeting was held August 29 - September 1 at the beautiful Omni Amelia Island Resort. A slate of outstanding speakers, exhibitors, sponsors, silent auction donors, and attendees combined to make this year's event a big success, hitting our highest marks in almost 20 years!



### LEADERSHIP CHANGES

**Incoming president Jimmy Bielling** (Bielling Site Prep & Reforestation, Inc.) received the symbolic presidential gavel from **outgoing president Carlton Jones** (Robbins Manufacturing) at the President's Dinner.

Other officers were also elected to lead the Association for the next two years:

#### Vice President/President Elect:

Avery Roberts – *The Roberts Companies*

#### Secretary-Treasurer:

Ann Hutchinson Duff – *WestRock*

#### Executive Vice President:

Alan Shelby – *Florida Forestry Association*

### Executive Committee Members:

#### Committee Chairs

**Communications:** John Dooner – *Southern Forestry Consultants*

**Environmental:** Russ Hannon – *Great South Timber & Lumber*

**Government Relations:** Wesley Carter – *Loncala*

**Leadership/Nominations:** Carlton Jones – *Robbins Manufacturing*

**Steering:** Jeremy Sapp – *Sapp's Land & Excavating*

**TREEPAC:** Mark Milligan – *F4 Tech*

#### At Large

Lynetta Usher Griner – *Usher Land & Timber*

Jim Karels – *Karels Forestry & Fire Consulting*

Ryan Pavlik – *Assured Partners Stoutamire-Pavlik & Associates*

John Sunday – *Georgia-Pacific WFS LLC*

Matt Webb – *Genesis Timber*

In addition, the Association's Board of Directors added several new members to its roster:

Bryan Croft – *F&W Forestry*

Will Leonard – *Timberland Solutions*

Shawn DeRome – *Rayonier*

Charles Saunders – *International Paper*

Kyle Fabbro – *Lykes Bros., Inc*

Zak Seymour – *Farm Credit of Florida*

Matt Goodin – *West Fraser*

### AWARD WINNERS

Award-winning forestry was also celebrated:

#### Legislators of the Year



#### Senator Wilton Simpson

"Senator Simpson has been a friend of Florida forestry for many years," said Association Executive Vice President Alan Shelby. "Since he was first elected in 2012, he has never backed down from championing legislation to promote, protect and enable Florida's agricultural industry to remain a key pillar to the state's economy."

With an eye toward outcomes and problem solving, Senator Simpson has a proven record of fighting for Florida's hardworking families and small business owners, protecting property rights, and taking a stand against government overreach and job killing regulations.

Senator Simpson led his chamber as its president from 2020-2022 and is now running for Commissioner of Agriculture & Consumer Services with the Association's endorsement. He and his family live in Trilby, FL, where he owns and operates a large-scale egg-laying operation.



#### Representative Josie Tomkow

"Representative Tomkow has been a friend of Florida forestry since Day One," said Association Executive Vice President Alan Shelby. "Her family tree has deep roots in Florida, and she understands how vital forestry and agriculture are to our state. She is a passionate and respected advocate for our cause."

Representative Tomkow represents the Florida House of Representatives' 39<sup>th</sup> District. As a student at the University of Florida, she served as an intern during the legislative session. After graduation, she successfully ran for the House during a special election in 2018 and proudly continues to hold that seat today.

Representative Tomkow has quickly learned to apply her common sense and business acumen to state government, consistently advocating for less regulation, lower taxes and a quicker response from Tallahassee to help citizens and businesses thrive.



#### Florida Logger of the Year Award: Dillon Stratton, III

"Winning this award seems to be a family tradition for the Stratton family," said Association President Jimmy Bielling. "Dillon's father earned the honor in 1995. We are proud to see the next generation taking its turn to achieve such a high degree of excellence."

Dillon's grandfather started the family logging company in 1958. From a young age, Dillon was working in the shop and on weekends alongside his father. When he became old enough, he started working on logging jobs. In 2013, he assumed leadership of the company. Together with his wife, Lisa, who runs the office, he has continued to grow the company many times over in a short period of time.

*continued on next page >*

Dillon has a big heart for his fellow loggers, doing what he can to make the logging industry better by being involved. He is grateful for the hard work he knows his predecessors put into laying the foundation for a successful company.

The Florida Logger of the Year Award recognizes loggers who demonstrate exemplary contributions and exceed industry expectations. The award was initiated in 1987 to spotlight loggers in the state who manage their operations in compliance with forestry best management practices, maintain safe highway and woods operations, use logging personnel and equipment effectively, develop unique business practices, and practice high business ethics.



### Jon Gould Outstanding Tree Farmer of the Year Award: Albert Fuller

"Albert Fuller demonstrates the very best aspects of Tree Farmers," said Association President Jimmy Bielling. "He reaches out to other forestland owners to share his knowledge and experience, helping them to achieve the same success that he has. He is building a long-lasting legacy that will benefit an untold multitude of people in many ways."

One of Albert's greatest joys is time spent on his 75-acre farm in Levy County, FL. His farm includes planted pines and natural stands of pines and hardwoods, as well as livestock, sugar cane and other crops. He maintains a balanced focus on timber production, recreation and wildlife for his Tree Farm, which takes up the majority of his land. Long term, he views his land as a legacy.

Before his retirement, Albert spent 42 years working in agriculture. Thirty-eight of those years were with the UF/IFAS Extension program.

Florida's Outstanding Tree Farmer of the Year Award honors the memory and legacy of Mr. Jon Gould, a respected member of Florida's Tree Farm Program State Committee and a proud Tree Farmer and advocate for forestry for more than 30 years throughout the Southeast.

## GOPHER TORTOISE DETERMINATION



credit: www.birdphotos.com via wikimedia

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has found that listing the gopher tortoise as a threatened or endangered species under the Endangered Species Act is not warranted in Florida.

The decision makes three determinations:

- Listing the gopher tortoise as threatened or endangered throughout its entire range is not warranted.
- The eastern and western portions of the gopher tortoise's range meet the criteria of Distinct Population Segments (DPS). An estimated 149,000 reported gopher tortoise individuals are distributed across their range with most found in the eastern segment and only 8 percent in the western segment.
- The eastern DPS – which includes Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, and most of Alabama – does not require protection. The western DPS in Western Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana will retain its threatened status.

The USFWS is conducting a virtual public informational meeting Dec. 13, 2022, 7 – 9 p.m. EST to present the findings and address questions on gopher tortoise conservation and management. You can register for the meeting at [fws.gov/project/gopher-tortoise](https://fws.gov/project/gopher-tortoise)

As this decision recognizes, private forest landowners play an important role, providing both habitat for the tortoise and information/data to the USFWS. Many thanks to all those whose time, effort and knowledge made this decision possible.

## FLORIDA FORESTS WEEK

Florida Forests Week was celebrated October 23-29, 2022.

This annual statewide awareness campaign offers the perfect opportunity for everyone to share the forestry story. While the beaches and other tourist hot spots soak up all the attention, Florida forestry hums along quietly in the background, providing a host of environmental and economic benefits. Florida Forests Week is our time to shine the spotlight on forestry!

Association members and other forest supporters submitted opinion pieces to their local papers, posted on social media, and made presentations to civic and professional groups. This year, school visits were a big highlight of the week. In Jackson County alone, 425 fourth graders were able to learn about all the good that forestry does for Florida and the world during Florida Forests Week.

Many, many thanks to everyone who participated in this very important week!



## EMERGENCY ORDER LIFTING TRUCK WEIGHTS FOR HURRICANE IAN EXTENDED THROUGH NOVEMBER 22, 2022



Commissioner of Agriculture and Consumer Services Nikki Fried has authorized extending the suspension of truck weights for commercial trucks transporting forest products, agricultural commodities, emergency equipment or supplies under Governor Ron DeSantis's Executive Order 22-218 and 22-219.

**Now valid through November 22, 2022**, trucks may transport loads of timber up to 95,000 lbs. Each vehicle carrying this additional weight **MUST** carry a copy of the FDOT Emergency Road Use Permit letter and a TTT Bridge Restriction Map in the cab of the truck at all times or be able to access them electronically upon request.

The permit letter and applicable TTT map based on your configuration may be found on the FDOT website or by contacting the FDOT Permit Office at 850.410.5777.

We will keep you posted on any further developments.



## ATTENTION, MASTER LOGGERS AND OTHER PARTICIPANTS!

You *must* take a class by December 31, 2022, for your certification to stay current. Our final class of the year will be held Thursday, December 8 at 8AM CST in Blountstown, FL. To register, go to the Master Logger option under the Programs tab at [FloridaForestry.org](http://FloridaForestry.org).



Robert Gilbert, UF/IFAS Dean for Research and Director of the Florida Agricultural Experiment Station, presented the award to Doug Long, VP of Forest Resources for Rayonier.

Credit: Tyler Jones, UF/IFAS Communications

## RAYONIER NAMED UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA INSTITUTE OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES INDUSTRY PARTNER OF 2022

Rayonier was honored to receive the 2022 Industry Partner award recently at University of Florida's IFAS (Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences) Dinner of Distinction. Senior Vice President Doug Long, a UF graduate, accepted the award on the company's behalf.

UF/IFAS is a federal-state-county partnership dedicated to developing knowledge in agriculture, human and natural resources, and the life sciences. The Dinner of Distinction celebration recognizes the commitment of individuals and organizations to the UF/IFAS mission of teaching, research and Extension.

## LYNETTA USHER GRINER NAMED 2022 AGRICULTURAL ENVIRONMENTAL LEADER



Lynetta Usher Griner of Usher Land and Timber, Inc. has been honored with the 2022 Agricultural Environmental Award by Commissioner of Agriculture Nikki Fried.

The program, created in 1994, highlights environmentally innovative farming practices across different parts of Florida's agricultural industry.

The nominations for the award were evaluated by a committee of representatives from FDACS and key Florida agricultural groups. Award winners were judged on the following environmental practices:

- **Wildlife Protection and Habitat Conservation:** Provide a safe, viable habitat for wildlife within an agricultural operation.
- **Pesticide/Nutrient Management:** Use pesticides/nutrients responsibly, maximizing benefits and minimizing potential adverse environmental effects.
- **Water Quality:** Preserve or improve water quality within or adjacent to an agricultural operation.
- **Soil and Water Conservation:** Reduce soil erosion, nutrient depletion, and water consumption; and enhance water recharge.
- **Waste Management/Recycling:** Reduce waste by recycling agricultural by-products and waste products on site.

"Lynetta's passion for forestry and agriculture shows in everything she does," said Association Executive Vice President Alan Shelby. "It's gratifying to see her recognized for the strides she has taken to lead forestry on all fronts."

## ONLINE PRESCRIBED FIRE TRAINING COURSE AVAILABLE ON UF/IFAS EXTENSION CANVAS CATALOG

This course is designed to provide individuals with knowledge and resources to better accomplish their land management goals and to cultivate fire-educated communities. Topics include Basic Fire Knowledge, How to Implement Prescribed Fire, Air Quality & Smoke, Fire Liability & Risk Reduction, Wildlife Management, Forest Management, and more. This course is free and for educational purposes only. It is not a professional certification course. Visit [ifas-cesrxfire.catalog.instructure.com](http://ifas-cesrxfire.catalog.instructure.com) for more information.

## GET ENGAGED!



The success of any organization is highly dependent on an engaged membership. An easy and effective way to be active in the Association is through our committees: Government Relations, TREEPAC, Environmental, Steering and Communications. To learn more about the Association's committees and their missions, please visit the Association's website at [FLForestry.org/Programs/Committees](http://FLForestry.org/Programs/Committees).



## HUNTING FOR WAYS TO SAVE?

Partnering with Outdoor Underwriters, Inc., the Association offers our members special reduced rates for liability insurance for hunting leases and timberland. For more information, please contact Brittany Varn (850.222.5646 or [Brittany@FLForestry.org](mailto:Brittany@FLForestry.org)).

## PLANNED GIVING, BEQUESTS & CHARITABLE CONTRIBUTIONS

Consider making a gift of a lifetime to support the future of Florida's working forests by naming the Florida Forestry Association or Florida Forestry Foundation as a beneficiary in your will, charitable trust, life insurance policy, estate plan or retirement plan. Please contact Alan Shelby at 850.222.5646 for more information.

**The only place  
success comes  
before work  
is in the  
dictionary.**

*-Vince Lombardi*

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