

# **Alabama Forestry Commission**

## **Functional Analysis & Records Disposition Authority**

**Presented to the  
State Records Commission  
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## Table of Contents

Functional and Organizational Analysis of the Alabama Forestry Commission.....	<u>1-1</u>
Sources of Information .....	<u>1-1</u>
Historical Context.....	<u>1-1</u>
Agency Organization .....	<u>1-1</u>
Agency Function and Subfunctions .....	<u>1-2</u>
Promulgating Rules/Regulations and Plans .....	<u>1-2</u>
Protecting .....	<u>1-2</u>
Servicing .....	<u>1-3</u>
Educating .....	<u>1-4</u>
Administering Internal Operations .....	<u>1-4</u>
Organizational Chart.....	<u>1-6</u>
Analysis of Record Keeping System and Records Appraisal of Alabama Forestry Commission	<u>2-1</u>
Agency Record Keeping System .....	<u>2-1</u>
Records Appraisal .....	<u>2-1</u>
Temporary Records .....	<u>2-1</u>
Permanent Records .....	<u>2-2</u>
Records No Longer Created .....	<u>2-6</u>
Permanent Records List .....	<u>2-7</u>
Alabama Forestry Commission Records Disposition Authority .....	<u>3-1</u>
Explanation of Records Requirements .....	<u>3-1</u>
Records Disposition Requirements .....	<u>3-2</u>
Promulgating Rules/Regulations and Plans .....	<u>3-2</u>
Protecting .....	<u>3-3</u>
Servicing .....	<u>3-5</u>
Educating .....	<u>3-6</u>
Administering Internal Operations .....	<u>3-6</u>
Requirements and Recommendations for Implementing the Records Disposition Authority .....	<u>3-12</u>

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# **Functional and Organizational Analysis of Alabama Forestry Commission**

## **Sources of Information**

Representatives of the Alabama Forestry Commission  
Code of Alabama, 1975, Sections 9-3-1 to 9-3-19; 9-13-1 to 9-13-227; 9-13-270 to 9-13-274  
Alabama Administrative Code, Chapters 390-X-1 to 390-X-7  
Alabama Government Manual (2006) page 152  
Alabama Forestry Commission Records Retention Schedules (1990-1991), S-66-1 to S-66-59  
Alabama Forestry Commission Audit Reports  
Alabama Forestry Commission Website  
Alabama Forestry Commission Procedural Manual  
Alabama Forestry Commission Publications

## **Historical Context**

The legislature established in 1907 the State Commission of Forestry. Members of the commission were the governor as ex-officio chairman, the Game and Fish commissioner, the commissioner of Agriculture and Industries, a member of the State Tax Commission, one practical lumberman engaged in the manufacture of lumber in the state, a member of the U.S. Forest Service, and a professor of Forestry at the Alabama Polytechnical Institute. A reorganization of the commission occurred in 1923. The governor continued to serve as ex-officio chairman. Members of the commission were changed to: the commissioner of Conservation, three practical lumbermen, two landowning farmers, and a state forester, who served as secretary of the commission and chief executive officer. In 1932, the Legislature transferred from the Office of State Auditor to the commission some responsibilities for the administration of lands. The Legislature abolished the commission in 1939 and assigned its duties to the Department of Conservation. A Forestry Division was established within the Department of Conservation to supervise and administer the state's forests. In 1969, the Legislature removed the Forestry Division from the Department of Conservation and established it as a separate agency known as the Alabama Forestry Commission.

## **Agency Organization**

The Alabama Forestry Commission (AFC) is composed of seven members appointed by the governor with the advice and consent of the Senate. At least two members must be licensed and registered foresters and three members must be owners of timberland in the state. All members serve five-year staggered terms. A chairman and vice-chairman are elected every year from the commission's members. The chairman or a majority of the commission may call meetings at any time, but at least two meetings must be held each year, one in January and one in July. Four members constitute a quorum. A member may not miss three successive meetings or his/her office

will be considered vacant. In addition, the commission is authorized, under the Code of Alabama, Section 9-3-11 and 9-3-16, to establish a steering committee for the Rural Community Fire Protection Program and a committee (the Alabama Forest Stewardship Advisory Committee) to advise it on general forestry matters in Alabama.

The commission is headed by a state forester, appointed by the commission with the approval of the governor. The state forester may employ professional foresters, forest rangers, and other staff to operate the agency's headquarters in Montgomery and four field regions across the state. An organizational chart is attached.

## **Agency Function and Subfunctions**

The Alabama Forestry Commission maintains, supervises, operates, and controls state forests. Additionally, the commission enforces laws concerning the preservation of forests, operates tree nurseries, and provides technical assistance in forest management to other state agencies or private landowners. The commission is one of the agencies that is primarily involved in carrying out the Economic Development, Law Enforcement and Emergency Powers, and Stewardship functions of Alabama government. In the performance of its mandated functions, the commission may engage in the following subfunctions:

- **Promulgating Rules/Regulations and Plans.** In accordance with the Code of Alabama, Section 9-3-9, the commission is authorized to “adopt and promulgate rules and regulations pertaining to all phases of forestry within this state, which rules and regulations when adopted shall have the force and effect of law.” The commission is advised by the Alabama Forest Stewardship Advisory Committee, authorized under the Code of Alabama, Section 9-3-16, on general forestry matters. In addition, Code of Alabama, Section 9-3-11 requires the commission to create a steering committee to make recommendations regarding “how to improve the rural community fire program and how to solve immediate problems including parts exchange, training and financial assistance through federal grants.” The commission is also responsible for “making exploration, surveys, studies and reports concerning the timber and forest resources and to publish such thereof as will be of general interest.” (Code of Alabama, Section 9-3-4 [2]). This subfunction encompasses the efforts of the commission/committees in the development of rules/regulations and/or plans for the management of the state's forestlands.
  
- **Protecting.** Code of Alabama, Section 9-3-4 requires the commission to “protect, conserve, and increase the timber and forest resources of this state and to administer all laws relating to timber and forestry.” This subfunction involves the efforts of the Fire Division staff to protect the forests from wildfire, insects, and disease. The commission operates a detection system that allows the staff to discover and suppress wildfires. A fleet of airplanes regularly patrols over the forest and looks for wildfires. The public can report wildfires 24 hours a day through a toll-free telephone system. Most wildfires are suppressed by the commission crews, volunteer fire departments, and others as needed. A fire prevention

program is also in place to educate the public about fire hazards.

The commission, in cooperation with county and other local government entities, fire associations, and interested individuals, has developed a Rural Community Fire Protection Program to establish, fund, train, and maintain fire protection structures for rural areas. In addition, the commission is the certifying authority for all volunteer fire departments across the state. All local volunteer fire fighters who meet requirements for personnel, training, and equipment are reviewed first by the Alabama Association of Volunteer Fire Departments. A recommendation for certification is then made by the association to the Alabama Forestry Commission for certification.

In addition, commission personnel engage in the detection of insects (such as the southern pine beetles) and other diseases that cause damage to the forest. In times of natural disaster or other emergency situations, the commission staff and equipment may also be utilized to assist in recovery work.

The Code of Alabama, Section 9-13-10, authorizes certain staff members of the commission to be appointed as law enforcement officers to enforce the forestry-related laws.

- **Servicing.** Handled mainly by the commission's Forest Management Division, this subfunction involves the efforts of the staff to help landowners in carrying out responsible forest management on their property. The most important forest management program of the commission is TREASURE Forest (acronym for Timber, Recreation, Environment, Aesthetics, for a Sustained, Usable, Resource), which promotes multiple-use forest management through landowner education and technical assistance. To be a TREASURE Forest, the property must have been nominated and inspected to ensure that it meets minimum standards. Certified landowners receive a TREASURE Forest sign to display on their property. The property must be recertified every five years.

Another important service is the Best Management Practices (BMP) for Forestry Program designed to protect and improve water quality. Staff members work with the Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM) to address water quality complaints associated with forestry operations.

The commission partners with the USDA Forest Service to participate in the Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) Survey Program. AFC crew members are distributed throughout the state to collect a variety of timber and other forest resource data from survey plots. The field data is then transmitted to the USDA Forest Service for analysis and compilation.

The commission is responsible for managing state-owned forests under the commission's direct control. In addition, the commission has cooperative agreements with three other state agencies to help manage their forestlands and public lakes. Through these agreements, commission personnel are involved in preparing timber sales and overseeing harvesting

activities, overseeing prescribed burning for wildlife habitat improvement, aesthetics, wildfire hazard reduction, site preparation and reforestation activities, and monitoring for forest health.

In 2000, Governor Siegelman appointed the commission as the state lead agency to develop and administer a Forest Legacy Program in Alabama to identify and protect environmentally important forest land from conversion to non-forest use, through the use of conservation easements and fee purchases.

The commission also administers or participates in a number of other forest management-related programs/projects. These may include various grant projects to receive and disburse funds earmarked for state and local government entities for forestry-related activities/projects; cost-share programs to reimburse landowners who plant trees or complete timber stand improvements; prescribed burning programs to control the use of fire to guard the safety of the forest; a survey program to update the forest resource; an economic development program to attract and locate opportunities for Alabama's forest products firms; and other programs to improve the management of urban trees.

- **Educating.** Provisions of the Code of Alabama, Section 9-3-4, specify that the commission is to carry on a program of education and public enlightenment with respect to the economic and environmental importance of timber, forest, and other natural resources of Alabama. To educate the public, staff members of the commission may produce and distribute promotional or informational publications/videos; visit schools or civic clubs to make presentations; establish and implement forestry camps; and conduct other outreach/public awareness campaigns. The commission joined the Alabama Forestry Association, the State Board of Registration for Foresters, and Auburn University's School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences to form the Forestry Forever Foundation, which is responsible for administering a forestry public awareness campaign. The commission also has an outreach program to assist minority and underserved landowners to stay in the forestry business and to assist new landowners interested in forestry.

- **Administering Internal Operations.** A significant portion of the agency's work includes general administrative, financial, and personnel activities performed to support its programmatic areas.

**Managing the Agency:** Activities include internal office management activities common to most government agencies, such as corresponding and communicating; scheduling; meeting; documenting policy and procedures; reporting; litigating; drafting, promoting, or tracking legislation; publicizing and providing information; managing records; and managing information systems and technology.

**Managing Finances:** Activities involved in managing finances may include the following: budgeting (preparing and reviewing the budget package, submitting the budget package to

the Department of Finance, documenting amendments and performance of the budget); purchasing (requisitioning and purchasing supplies and equipment, receipting and invoicing for goods, and authorizing payment for products received); accounting for the expenditure, encumbrance, disbursement, and reconciliation of funds within the agency's budget through a uniform system of accounting and reporting; authorizing travel; contracting with companies or individuals; bidding for products and services; and assisting in the audit process.

**Managing Human Resources:** Activities involved in managing human resources may include the following: recruiting and hiring eligible individuals to fill vacant positions within the agency; providing compensation and benefits to employees; supervising employees (evaluating performance, disciplining, granting leave, and monitoring the accumulation of leave); and providing training and continuing education for employees.

**Managing Properties, Facilities, and Resources:** Activities involved in managing properties, facilities, and resources may include the following: inventorying and accounting for non-consumable property and reporting property information to the appropriate authority; leasing and/or renting offices or facilities; providing for security and/or insurance for property; and assigning, inspecting, and maintaining agency property, including vehicles.

# **Analysis of Record-Keeping System and Records Appraisal of the Alabama Forestry Commission**

## **Agency Record-Keeping System**

The Alabama Forestry Commission operates a hybrid system composed of a computer system and a paper record-keeping system.

The commission's computer system consists of personal computers and laptops running Vista Business and Windows XP Professional. Most of them utilize files stored on a Windows 2003 Server which is incrementally backed up every night and fully backed up once a month. A week's worth and every monthly copy of the backups are stored off-site at one of the agency's local district offices.

## **Records Appraisal**

The following is a discussion of the two major categories of records created and/or maintained by the Alabama Forestry Commission: Temporary Records and Permanent Records.

**I. Temporary Records.** Temporary records should be held for what is considered to be their active life and disposed of once all fiscal, legal, and administrative requirements have been met. The following are some examples of temporary records created by the agency:

- **Prescribed Burn Manager Certification Files.** Both the general public and staff members of the commission may apply, upon meeting the requirements, for certification as a prescribed burn manager. Applications are reviewed by a supervisory chain and then approved by the director of the Fire Division. Certification is for a period of five (5) years and may be renewed if the certified individual has met required education or burn experience over the past five years. If requirements are not met for recertification within the allotted timeframe, the burn manager must apply for certification again. The commission maintains these files for two (2) years after the expiration of the certification.
  
- **Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) Survey Program Raw Data.** The commission partners with the USDA Forest Service to participate in the Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) Survey Program. AFC crew members are distributed throughout the state to collect a variety of timber and other forest resource data from survey plots. The data is obtained from inventory plots located primarily on a 3 x 3-mile grid across the entire state. There are more than 5,600 survey plots in Alabama and each plot is re-surveyed every five to seven years. Field data is then transmitted to the USDA Forest Service for analysis and compilation. The commission maintains the survey raw data until it is transmitted to USDA Forest Service in Tennessee. The resulting information is available on USDA Forest Service website, and summarized information may be obtained from the commission's annual report.



- **Arrest Records.** This series contains arrest ticket (bail bond) forms (FC-6) and arrest/case report forms (FC-14) utilized by the commission's law enforcement officers to document the arrest. The commission maintains these records for 25 years, as similar records created by local law enforcement agencies are also scheduled for 25 years (No. 4.02 of the RDA for Local Law Enforcement Agencies). The same justification also applies to the retention of Investigation Files.
- **Fire Protection / Forest Management Routine Administrative Records.** This series consists of files or records that are not covered by other series. Created by the commission staff on a daily basis, these records deal with routine technical assistance or related activities that have no long-term value to the agency. The commission maintains the records for one audit cycle.
- **Federal Excess Property Program / Firefighter Property Program Agreement / Transmittal Files.** The commission may obtain federal excess property for wildland fire suppression use through the USDA Forest Service and the General Service Administration. This excess property is obtained from military installations through two programs. In the Federal Excess Property Program, the property is considered on loan and must be tracked and accounted for. When this property is no longer of use, it is sold at auction and the proceeds are returned to the federal government. The second program is the Firefighter Property Program, which allows the commission to obtain property, and once obtained it becomes state property that can be transferred directly to local volunteer fire departments. This series consists of memoranda of agreements and transmittals that need to be retained for one audit cycle after the disposition of the property.

**II. Permanent Records.** The Government Records Division recommends the following records as permanent.

#### **Promulgating Rules/Regulations and Plans**

- **Meeting Agendas, Minutes, and Packets of the Alabama Forestry Commission, the Alabama Forest Stewardship Advisory Committee, and the Steering Committee for the Rural Community Fire Protection.** This series contains information on proposed and executed proceedings of the commission/committee. In addition to minutes, this series also includes meeting agendas and other supporting or reference documents. The meeting minutes of the commission/committee provide important documentation of the actions of the commission/committees that may not be found elsewhere. (RDA page 3-2) **(Bibliographic Title: Meeting Agendas, Minutes, and Packets of the Alabama Forestry Commission the Alabama Forest Stewardship Advisory Committee ,and the Steering Committee for the Rural Community Fire Protection)**
- **Alabama's Stewardship Plan** – Through the U.S. Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of

1978, the USDA Forest Service provides funding to individual state forestry agencies to “encourage the long-term stewardship of non-industrial private forest lands by assisting owners of such lands to more actively manage their forest and related resources.” The Stewardship Plan and its updates, prepared by the commission staff, address the commission’s long-range plans and strategies to manage Alabama’s natural resources. (RDA page 3-2) **(Bibliographic Title: Alabama’s Stewardship Plan)**

- **Procedural Manuals.** This series may include procedural manuals, rules and regulations, instructions, memoranda, and other issuances that establish a course of action for the agency or its divisions/programs. These records should be retained to document the official policies and procedures of the agency. (RDA page 3-2) **(Bibliographic Title: Policies and Procedures)**

### **Protecting**

- **Fire Reporting Database.** Wildfire reports are required for all known or suspected fires reported to the Alabama Forestry Commission or its dispatch center. Data is then entered into the commission’s database for tracking and reference. Information may include numbers of fires, acres burned, causes and status of fires, names of owners of land, and other related data. Staff members analyze the reports to discover need and opportunity for improving the agency’s fire protection services. Wildfire reports also provide documentation and historical record of the state’s wildfire problem and efforts to manage it. (RDA page 3-2) **(Bibliographic Title: Fire Reporting Database)**
- **Burning Permit Records.** The Code of Alabama, Section 9-13-11(6) states that burning permits are required for any person, firm, association, or corporation to burn woodland, grassland, fields, or new ground that is over one-quarter (1/4) acre in size or that is done within 25 feet of continuous natural fuel. The commission is authorized to review requests and issue burning permits. Burning permit records document the acres, purposes, and trends in silvicultural and agricultural burning in the state. They are valuable in monitoring forest management, fire prevention, law enforcement, and court evidence in civil suits, and in research concerning prescribed burning and smoke management. (RDA page 3-2) **(Bibliographic Title: Burning Permit Records)**
- **Deed Files.** The Code of Alabama, Section 9-3-4, authorizes the commission to “increase the timber and forestry resources of this state.” This series consists of deeds for the purchase of land, documents relating to right of ways, easements, and maps. This series has legal and historical value providing proof of real property ownership. The value of this series is intensified by the fact that it is the complete body of documentation in one location (RDA page 3-2) **(Bibliographic Title: Deed Files)**

## Servicing

- **TREASURE Forest Program Files.** Established in 1974, the TREASURE Forest Program promotes multiple-use forest management through landowner recognition and education. To be a TREASURE Forest, the property must have been nominated and inspected to ensure that it meets minimum standards. Certified landowners receive a TREASURE Forest sign to display on their property. The property must be recertified every five years. This series may include nominations, inspection records, copies of certificate, TREASURE Forest management plans prepared by the commission, contracts, correspondence, and other related materials. (RDA page 3-4) **(Bibliographic Title: TREASURE Forest Program Files)**
  
- **Alabama's Famous and Historic Tree Program Files.** Since 1981, the commission has sponsored a program to locate, recognize, and preserve trees associated with or related to historic events, persons, and sites. Staff members maintain files which include nominations for historic trees, certifications of trees, and correspondence pertaining to the nomination, research, and certification. (RDA page 3-4) **(Bibliographic Title: Alabama's Famous and Historic Tree Program Files)**
  
- **Alabama's Champion Tree Program Files.** The commission supports saving and recognizing trees through the Champion Tree Program, which was designed in 1970 to discover, recognize, and preserve the champions of each tree species in the state. Once a champion is declared, its owner and nominator receive certificates and a permanent marker is placed at the base of the tree. Eligible nominations will also be submitted to the National Register of Big Trees for considerations as national champions. This series consists of nomination forms, correspondence, news releases, and publications relating to the program. (RDA page 3-4) **(Bibliographic Title: Alabama's Champion Tree Program Files)**
  
- **Endangered Species Files.** The Alabama Forestry Commission is recognized by the USDA Fish and Wildlife Services as the lead agency in Alabama with respect to the handling and treatment of endangered and threatened plants. This series contains rules and regulations, information on endangered or threatened species, and related materials (newsletters, etc.) (RDA page 3-3) **(Bibliographic Title: Endangered Species Files)**
  
- **State Land Management and Assistance Files.** The commission is responsible for managing state-owned forests under the commission's direct control. In addition, the commission has cooperative agreements with three other state agencies to help manage their forestlands and public lakes. Through these agreements, commission personnel are involved in preparing timber sales and overseeing harvesting activities, overseeing prescribed burning for wildlife habitat improvement, aesthetics, wildfire hazard reduction, site preparation and reforestation activities, and monitoring for forest health. These records document the activities undertaken by the commission staff in the management of state-owned forestlands and should be preserved permanently. (RDA page 3-4) **(Bibliographic Title: State Land Management and Assistance Files)**

- **Assessment of Need for the Forest Legacy Program.** Guidelines for the Forest Legacy Program (FLP) require the commission to prepare an Assessment of Need (AON) to establish a state FLP in consultation with the Alabama Forest Stewardship Advisory Committee. The AON is prepared by the commission and the Alabama Forest Resource Center, a non-profit land trust organization that deals with conservation easements on working forests in the state. The assessment is subject to periodic review and revision to meet future needs of the program. (RDA page 3-4) **(Bibliographic Title: Assessment of Need for the Forest Legacy Program)**
  
- **Landowner Direct Service Files (County).** Code of Alabama, Section 9-3-4(4) gives the commission authority to provide “assistance to the owners of farms in establishing, improving, and renewing wood lots, shelter belts, wind breaks, and other valuable forest growths.” Section 9-13-3(a) also provides that the commission “gives advice, assistance, and cooperation as may be practicable to private owners.” The commission utilizes personnel and equipment, for a fee, to assist private landowners with the performance of certain forest management practices not readily available from the private sector in an effort to maintain, enhance and/or protect timber, wildlife, water, and soil quality. Direct services may cover technical assistance, referral, and other professional advices in prescribed burning, fire lane/wildlife/water diversion opening construction, TREASURE forest management, and related programs. This series consists of service files that cover all programs that affect individual landowners. County offices create and maintain these records permanently to track various services provided to landowners. (RDA page 3-4)

## Educating

- **Informational and Publicity Publications/Videos.** To inform and educate the general public about the value of forests in insuring both a healthy economy and environment, the commission prepares various publications or videos for distribution. They should be preserved as part of the state publication collection.(RDA page 3-5) **(Bibliographic Title: Informational and Publicity Publications/Videos)**

## Administering Internal Operations

- **Files of the State Forester.** This series, although consisting of correspondence of the State Forester, also contains various other records documenting the activities of the agency. Typical records may include correspondence, memoranda, reports, and other documents concerning agency policy, procedures, organization, programs, and fiscal and personnel matters. These records should be preserved permanently to document policy making within the agency (RDA page 3-5) **(Bibliographic Title: Administrative Files)**
  
- **Annual Reports.** In accordance with the Code of Alabama, Section 9-3-4 (7), the commission is obligated to make an annual report to the governor. Information may include significant accomplishments of individual programs/projects, statistics, operating statements,

financial balance sheets, commission officials and names of all staff members, and directory of the commission's county offices. (RDA page 3-5) **(Bibliographic Title: Annual Reports)**

- **Website.** The agency has a website at [www.forestry.alabama.gov](http://www.forestry.alabama.gov). Information on the website includes commission members, staff directory, various programs and services, online publications, statistics, and forms. The website should be preserved as it serves as an important medium for communication with the public. (RDA page 3-5) **(Bibliographic Title: Website)**
- **Photographs/Videos.** Photographs and videos that document forests, properties, wildlife, natural settings, and work related activities should be preserved as a resource for future publications and reference needs. (RDA page 3-5) **(Bibliographic Title: Photographs/Videos)**
- **Grant Project Final Narrative Reports.** The agency's primary operations are often sponsored, in part, by the federal government. The final narrative reports should be maintained permanently as documentation of the agency's fulfillment of obligations to the federal government in receiving funding. (RDA pg. 3-6) **(Bibliographic Title: Grant Project Final Narrative Reports)**
- **Inventory Lists.** The Code of Alabama, Section 36-16-8[1] requires that ". . . All [state agency] property managers shall keep at all times in their files a copy of all inventories submitted to the Property Inventory Control Division, and the copies shall be subject to examination by any and all state auditors or employees of the Department of Examiners of Public Accounts." These files need to be maintained in the agency's office. (RDA pg. 3-9)

**III. Records No Longer Created.** The following records were created by the commission over time, but are no longer created in this same format. In most cases these records were created for a purpose that no longer exists.

- **Seedling Sale Records.** The commission used to sell genetically-improved forest tree seedlings to landowners, but voted to cease the operation in 2006. This series consists of seedling purchase applications, copies of checks, and seedling pick up receipts. The commission maintains these records for 3 years to meet the audit requirements.

# **Permanent Records List**

## **Alabama Forestry Commission**

### **Promulgating Rules and Regulations**

1. Meeting Agendas, Minutes, and Packets of the Alabama Forestry Commission, the Alabama Forest Stewardship Advisory Committee, and the Steering Committee for the Rural Community Fire Protection
2. Alabama's Stewardship Plan
3. Procedural Manuals

### **Protecting**

1. Fire Reporting Database\*
2. Burning Permit Records\*
3. Deed Files

### **Servicing**

1. TREASURE Forest Program Files
2. Alabama's Famous and Historic Tree Program Files
3. Alabama's Champion Tree Program Files
4. Endangered Species Files
5. State Land Management and Assistance Files
6. Assessment of Need for the Forest Legacy Program
7. Landowner Direct Service Files\*

### **Educating**

1. Informational and Publicity Publications/Videos

### **Administering Internal Operations**

1. Files of the State Forester
2. Annual Reports
3. Website
4. Photographs/Videos
5. Grant Project Final Narrative Reports
6. Inventory Lists\*

\*Indicates records that ADAH anticipates will remain in the care and custody of the creating agency.

ADAH staff members are available to work with agency staff in determining the best location and storage conditions for the long-term care and maintenance of permanent records.

# Alabama Forestry Commission Records Disposition Authority

This Records Disposition Authority (RDA) is issued by the State Records Commission under the authority granted by the Code of Alabama 1975, Sections 41-13-5 and 41-13-20 through 21. It was compiled by the Government Records Division, Alabama Department of Archives and History (ADAH), which serves as the commission's staff, in cooperation with representatives of the Alabama Forestry Commission. The RDA lists records created and maintained by the Alabama Forestry Commission in carrying out its mandated functions and subfunctions. It establishes retention periods and disposition instructions for those records and provides the legal authority for the Alabama Forestry Commission to implement records destruction.

Alabama law requires public officials to create and maintain records that document the business of their offices. These records must be protected from "mutilation, loss, or destruction," so that they may be transferred to an official's successor in office and made available to members of the public. Records must be kept in accordance with auditing standards approved by the Examiners of Public Accounts (Code of Alabama 1975, Sections 36-12-2, 36-12-4, and 41-5-23). For assistance in implementing this RDA or for advice on records disposition or other records management concerns, contact the ADAH Government Records Division at (334) 242-4452.

## Explanation of Records Requirements

- This RDA supersedes any previous records disposition schedules governing the retention of the Alabama Forestry Commission records. Copies of superseded schedules are no longer valid and should be discarded.
- The RDA establishes retention and disposition instructions for records regardless of the medium on which those records may be kept. Electronic mail, for example, is a communications tool that may record permanent or temporary information. As for records in any other format, the retention periods for e-mail records are governed by the requirements of the subfunctions to which the records belong.
- Some temporary records listed under the Administering Internal Operations subfunction of this RDA represent duplicate copies of records listed for long-term or permanent retention in the RDAs of other agencies.
- Certain other short-term records that do not materially document the work of an agency may be disposed of under this RDA. Such materials include: (1) duplicate record copies that do not require official action, so long as the creating office maintains the original record for the period required; and (2) transitory records, which are temporary records created for internal purposes that may include, but are not limited to, telephone call-back messages; drafts of ordinary documents not needed for their evidential value; copies of material sent for information purposes but not needed by the receiving office for future business; and internal communications about social activities. They may be disposed of without documentation of destruction. Other items that may be disposed of without destruction documentation include:



(1) catalogs, trade journals, and other publications received that require no action and do not document government activities; and (2) stocks of blank stationery, blank forms, or other surplus materials that are not subject to audit and have become obsolete.

## **Records Disposition Requirements**

This section of the RDA is arranged by subfunctions of the Alabama Forestry Commission and lists the groups of records created and/or maintained by the agency as a result of activities and transactions performed in carrying out these subfunctions. The agency may submit requests to revise specific records disposition requirements to the State Records Commission for consideration at its regular quarterly meetings.

\*\* denotes agency vital records, defined as records required to carry on its essential operations, to protect its legal and financial interests, and to assist in its recovery during a period of emergency or natural disaster.

Location of Records:

HQ - Agency Headquarters

Region – Agency Regional Offices (4 offices)

County – Agency County Offices (67 offices)

### **■ Promulgating Rules and Regulations**

MEETING AGENDAS, MINUTES, AND PACKETS OF (1) THE ALABAMA FORESTRY COMMISSION, (2) THE ALABAMA FOREST STEWARDSHIP ADVISORY COMMITTEE AND (3) THE STEERING COMMITTEE FOR THE RURAL COMMUNITY FIRE PROTECTION\*\* (HQ)

Disposition: PERMANENT RECORD.

ALABAMA'S STEWARDSHIP PLAN\*\* (HQ)

Disposition: PERMANENT RECORD.

PROCEDURAL MANUALS\*\*(HQ)

Disposition: PERMANENT RECORD.

Recordings of Meetings (HQ/Region)

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain until the official minutes are adopted and signed.

Printouts of Acknowledgment from the Secretary of State Relating to Notices of Meetings Posted by State Agencies (HQ)

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years.

## ■ Protecting

FIRE REPORT DATABASE\*\* (HQ)  
Disposition: PERMANENT RECORD.

BURNING PERMIT RECORDS (HQ)  
Disposition: PERMANENT RECORD.

DEED FILES\*\* (HQ)  
Disposition: PERMANENT RECORD.

Fire Protection Program Routine Administrative Records (HQ)  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years after end of the fiscal year in which the records were created.

Fire Report Raw Data (HQ)  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain until data is entered into the Fire Report Database or no longer useful, whichever is longer.

Fire Alert and Situation Reports (HQ)  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years after end of the fiscal year in which the records were created.

Annual Fire Prevention Action Plans/Contacts (HQ/Region/County)  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 1 year or until superseded.

Monthly Fire Danger Records/Spread Sheets (Region)  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years after end of the fiscal year in which the records were created.

Radio Logs (HQ)  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 10 years.

Aircraft Pilot Files (Region)  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 6 years after separation of employee from the agency.

Annual Flight Reviews of Pilots (Region)  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 2 years.

Daily Flight Logs (Region)  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 2 years after the sale or transfer of the aircraft.

Aircraft Operation and Maintenance Files (Region)  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 2 years after the sale or transfer of the aircraft.

Monthly Flight Reports (HQ)

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 2 years after the sale or transfer of the aircraft.

Disaster Relief and Assistance Files (HQ)

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 7 years.

Prescribed Burn Manager Certification Files (HQ)

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 2 years after expiration of certification.

Unlawful Burning Notes (County)

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 5 years.

Reward Program Secret Witness Reports (HQ/Region)

Temporary Record. Retain 3 years after end of the fiscal year in which the records were created.

Landfill Tonnage Fee Distribution Files (HQ)

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 5 years.

Inactive Volunteer Fire Department Administrative Files (HQ)

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 5 years

Volunteer Fire Department Personnel Listings (HQ)

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 7 years.

Volunteer Fire Department Directories /Rosters (HQ/Region/County)

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain until superseded.

Rural Community Fire Protection Communication Equipment Files (HQ)

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years after the end of the fiscal year in which the equipment is removed from the property inventory.

Vehicle Accident and Personal Injury Files (HQ)

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 5 years or until final case disposition.

Quarterly Summary Reports of Vehicle Accident and Personal Injury (HQ)

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 1 year.

Law Enforcement Officer Files (including application for appointment, finger prints, inspection of firearms, firearms qualification and training data, etc.) (Region)

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 6 years after separation of employee from the agency.

Arrest Files\*\* (HQ / Region)

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 25 years.

Investigation Files (HQ / Region)  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 25 years.

■ **Servicing**

TREASURE FOREST PROGRAM FILES (HQ)  
Disposition: PERMANENT RECORD.

ALABAMA'S FAMOUS AND HISTORIC TREE PROGRAM FILES (HQ)  
Disposition: PERMANENT RECORD.

ALABAMA'S CHAMPION TREE PROGRAM FILES (HQ)  
Disposition: PERMANENT RECORD.

ENDANGERED SPECIES FILES (HQ)  
Disposition: PERMANENT RECORD.

STATE LAND MANAGEMENT AND ASSISTANCE FILES (HQ)  
Disposition: PERMANENT RECORD.

ASSESSMENT OF NEED FOR THE FOREST LEGACY PROGRAM (HQ)  
Disposition: PERMANENT RECORD.

LANDOWNER DIRECT SERVICE FILES (County)\*\*  
Disposition: PERMANENT RECORD. Retain in Office.

Forest Management Program Routine Administrative Files (HQ)  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years after the end of the fiscal year in which the records were created.

Records document the implementation of the Best Management Practices (BMP) for Forestry Program (complaints, monitoring reports, correspondence, and other related materials) (HQ)  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 5 years.

Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) Survey Program Raw Data (HQ)  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain the survey raw data until it is transmitted to USDA Forest Service.

Flood and Storm Damage Reports (HQ)  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 7 years.

■ **Educating**

INFORMATIONAL AND PUBLICITY PUBLICATIONS/VIDEOS (HQ)  
Disposition: PERMANENT RECORD.

■ **Administering Internal Operations**

**Managing the Agency:**  
FILES OF THE STATE FORESTER (HQ)  
Disposition: PERMANENT RECORD.

ANNUAL REPORTS (HQ)  
Disposition: PERMANENT RECORD.

WEBSITE\*\* (HQ)  
Disposition: PERMANENT RECORD. PRESERVE A COMPLETE COPY OF WEBSITE ANNUALLY OR AS OFTEN AS SIGNIFICANT CHANGES ARE MADE.

PHOTOGRAPHS/VIDEOS (HQ)

- a. SUBJECTS INVOLVE FORESTS, PROPERTIES, WILDLIFE, NATURAL SETTINGS, AND WORK RELATED ACTIVITIES  
Disposition: PERMANENT RECORD.
- b. Other Subjects  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 5 years.

Alabama Forestry Commission/Committee Member Appointment Letters (HQ)  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years after the expiration of the term.

Legal Case Files\*\*(HQ)  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 10 years.

Meeting Agendas/Minutes/Packets of Regional Offices or Subsidiary Committees within the Agency (HQ/Region)  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years after end of the fiscal year in which the records were created.

Routine Correspondence (HQ/Region/County)  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years after end of the fiscal year in which the records were created.

Calendars/Schedules/Directories/Logs/Mailing Lists/Contact Lists (HQ/Region/County)  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain for useful life.

Records documenting the implementation of the agency's approved RDA (copies of transmittal forms to Archives or the State Records Center, evidence of obsolete records destroyed, and annual reports to the State Records Commission) (HQ)

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years after end of the fiscal year in which the records were created.

Copy of RDA (HQ/Region/County)

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years after end of the fiscal year in which the RDA is superseded.

Program Database (HQ/Region/County)

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain until superseded.

System Documentation (hardware/software manuals and diskettes, warranties) (HQ)

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain documentation of former system 3 years after the end of the fiscal year in which the former hardware and software no longer exists in the agency and all permanent records have been migrated to a new system.

Records documenting the Assignment and Use of Credit Cards (HQ)

a. Requests for and Acknowledgment of Receipt of Credit Cards

Disposition: Temporary Record. File these records in employee personnel file.

b. Records documenting credit card transaction

Temporary Record. Retain 3 years after end of the fiscal year in which the records were created.

Recycling Reports (HQ)

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 1 year.

**Managing Finances:**

Records documenting the preparation of a budget request package and reporting of the status of funds, requesting amendments of allotments, and reporting program performance\*\* (HQ)

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years after the end of the fiscal year in which the records were created.

Records documenting the requisitioning and purchasing of supplies and equipment, receipting and invoicing for goods, and authorizing payment for products\*\* (HQ)

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years after the end of the fiscal year in which the records were created.

Records of original entry such as journals, registers, and ledgers; and records of funds deposited outside the state treasury, including bank statements, deposit slips, and canceled checks\*\* (HQ)

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years after the end of the fiscal year in which the records were created.

Records documenting requests for authorization by supervisors to travel on official business and other related materials, such as travel reimbursement forms and itineraries (HQ/Region)  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years after the end of the fiscal year in which the records were created.

Records documenting grants\*\* (HQ)

- a. GRANT PROJECT FINAL NARRATIVE REPORTS  
Disposition: PERMANENT RECORD.
- b. Records documenting routine grant related activities and compliance with grant program requirements  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years after the end of the fiscal year in which the project was closed.

Records documenting contracts for services or personal property\*\* (HQ)

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 6 years after expiration of contract. (Code of Alabama, Section 6-2-34).

Agency Audit Reports (HQ)

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 6 years after the end of the fiscal year in which the records were created.

Records documenting the bid process, including requests for proposals and unsuccessful responses (HQ)

- a. Original bid records maintained in the purchasing office of the agency for contracts over \$7500  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 7 years after the end of the fiscal year in which the bids were opened.
- b. Duplicate copies of bid (where originals are maintained by the Finance Department - Division of Purchasing)  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years after the end of the fiscal year in which the bids were opened.

Federal Emergency Assistance Claim Files (HQ)

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years after end of the fiscal year in which the claim is closed.

Cigarette Tax Funding Distribution Files (HQ)

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years after end of the fiscal year in which the records were created.

Seeding Sale Records# (HQ)

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years after end of the fiscal year in which the records were created.

#This series is no longer created.

**Managing Human Resources:**

Records documenting job recruitment (HQ)

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years after the end of the fiscal year in which the records were created.

Position Classification Files\*\* (HQ)

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years after position is reclassified.

Records documenting job description (HQ)

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain until superseded.

Certification of Eligibles for Employment\*\* (HQ)

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain until superseded.

Certification/Personnel Transaction Files (HQ)

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 6 years after the end of the fiscal year in which the records were created.

Records documenting application for employment (HQ)

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years after the end of the fiscal year in which the records were created.

Records documenting an employee's work history - generally maintained as a case file\*\*

- a. Central Office Copy: Temporary Record. Retain 6 years after separation of employee from the agency.
- b. Region/County/Division Copy: Temporary Record. Retain 1 year after separation of employee from the agency.

Records documenting payroll (e.g. pre-payroll report, payroll check registers)\*\* (HQ)

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years after the end of the fiscal year in which the records were created.

Records documenting payroll deduction authorizations\*\* (HQ)

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 6 years after separation of the employee from the agency.

Records documenting payroll deductions for tax purposes\*\*(HQ)

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years after the end of the fiscal year in which the records



were created.

Records documenting employees' daily and weekly work schedules (HQ)

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years after the end of the fiscal year in which the records were created.

Records documenting an employee's hours worked, leave earned, and leave taken (including time sheets)\*\* (HQ/Region)

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years after the end of the fiscal year in which the records were created.

Records documenting sick leave donations\*\* (HQ)

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years after the end of the fiscal year in which the records were created.

Records documenting final leave status\*\* (HQ)

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 6 years after separation of the employee from the agency.

Records documenting verification of accuracy of State Personnel Department records (HQ)

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain for useful life.

Records documenting Equal Employment Opportunity (Code of Federal Regulations, Title 29) (HQ)

a. Compliance Records

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years after the close of the program year.

b. Complaint Records

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years from the date of resolution of the complaints.

State Employees Injury Compensation Trust Fund Files\*\* (HQ)

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 6 years after separation of the employee from the agency.

Worker Compensation Injury and Settlement Reports\*\* (HQ)

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 12 years after the end of the fiscal year in which the transaction occurred. (Code of Alabama 1975, Section 25-5-4).

Employee Flexible Benefits Plan Files (applications and correspondence)\*\* (HQ)

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 6 years after termination of participation in program.

Employee Administrative Hearing Files\*\* (HQ)

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 6 years after separation of employee from the agency.

Records documenting Agency Provision of Training and/or Professional Development (HQ)

Temporary Record. Retain 3 years after the end of the fiscal year in which the records were created.

**Managing Properties, Facilities, and Resources:**

Federal Excess Property Program / Firefighter Property Program Transmittal/Agreement Files\* (HQ)  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years after the end of the fiscal year in which the property is removed from the inventory.

INVENTORY LISTS\*\*(HQ)

Disposition: PERMANENT RECORD. Retain in Office. (Code of Alabama 1975, Section 36-16-8[1]).

Letters of Transmittal (HQ)

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years after the end of the fiscal year in which the records were created.

Agency Copies of Transfer of State Property Forms (SD-1) (HQ)

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years after end of the fiscal year in which the records were created.

Property Inventory Cards and/or Computer Files (HQ)

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years after the end of the fiscal year in which the records were created.

Receipts of Responsibility for Property (HQ)

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain until return of item to property manager.

Real Property Leasing/Rental Records (HQ)

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 6 years after termination of lease or rental agreement.

Real Property Database\*\* (HQ/Region/County)

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain for useful life.

Records documenting the use, maintenance, ownership, insurance, and disposition of vehicles owned by the agency (HQ/Region)

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years after the end of the fiscal year in which the vehicle is removed from the property inventory.

Records documenting the use, maintenance, ownership, insurance, and disposition of equipment owned by the agency (HQ/Region)

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years after the end of the fiscal year in which the equipment is removed from the property inventory.

Insurance Policies/Risk Management Records (HQ)

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 6 years after termination of policy or membership.

Risk Management Property Loss Claim Files (HQ)

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years after the end of the fiscal year in which the records were created.

## **Requirement and Recommendations for Implementing the Records Disposition Authority (RDA)**

Under the Code of Alabama 1975, Section 41-13-21, “no state officer or agency head shall cause any state record to be destroyed or otherwise disposed of without first obtaining approval of the State Records Commission.” This Records Disposition Authority constitutes authorization by the State Records Commission for the disposition of the records of the Alabama Forestry Commission (hereafter referred to as the agency) as stipulated in this document.

One condition of this authorization is that the agency submit an annual Records Disposition Authority Implementation Report on agency records management activities, including documentation of records destruction, to the State Records Commission in October of each year. In addition, the agency should make every effort to establish and maintain a quality record-keeping program through the following activities:

- The agency should designate a records liaison, who is responsible for: ensuring the development of quality record keeping systems that meet the business and legal needs of the agency, coordinating the transfer and destruction of records, ensuring that permanent records held on alternative storage media (such as microforms and digital imaging systems) are maintained in compliance with national and state standards, and ensuring the regular implementation of the agency’s approved RDA.
- Permanent records in the agency’s custody should be maintained under proper intellectual control and in an environment that will ensure their physical order and preservation.
- Destruction of temporary records, as authorized in this RDA, should occur agency-wide on a regular basis--for example, after the successful completion of an audit, at the end of an administration, or at the end of a fiscal year. Despite the RDA’s provisions, no record should be destroyed that is necessary to comply with requirements of the state Sunset Act, audit requirements, or any legal notice or subpoena.
- The agency should maintain full documentation of any computerized record-keeping system it employs. It should develop procedures for: (1) backing up all permanent records held in electronic format; (2) storing a back-up copy off-site; and (3) migrating all permanent records when the system is upgraded or replaced. If the agency chooses to maintain permanent records solely in electronic format, it is committed to funding any system upgrades and migration strategies necessary to ensure the records’ permanent preservation and accessibility.

The staff of the State Records Commission or the Examiners of Public Accounts may examine the condition of the permanent records maintained in the custody of the agency and inspect records destruction documentation. Government Records Division archivists are available to instruct the agency staff in RDA implementation and otherwise assist the agency in implementing its records management program.

The State Records Commission adopted this records disposition authority on October 24, 2007.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Edwin C. Bridges, Chairman, by Tracey Berezansky  
State Records Commission

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Receipt acknowledged.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Linda Casey, State Forester  
Alabama Forestry Commission

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date