Fiscal Year FY 2024-2025

Agency Budget Plan
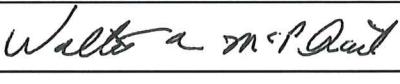
FORM A - BUDGET PLAN SUMMARY

OPERATING REQUESTS

(FORM B1)

	For FY 2024-2025, my agency is (mark "X"):
X	Requesting General Fund Appropriations.
X	Requesting Federal/Other Authorization.
	Not requesting any changes.

NON-RECURRING REQUESTS

(FORM B2)

	For FY 2024-2025, my agency is (mark "X"):
X	Requesting Non-Recurring Appropriations.
	Requesting Non-Recurring Federal/Other Authorization.
	Not requesting any changes.

CAPITAL REQUESTS

(FORM C)

	For FY 2024-2025, my agency is (mark "X"):
	Requesting funding for Capital Projects.
X	Not requesting any changes.

PROVISOS

(FORM D)

	For FY 2024-2025, my agency is (mark "X"):
	Requesting a new proviso and/or substantive changes to existing provisos.
	Only requesting technical proviso changes (such as date references).
X	Not requesting any proviso changes.

Please identify your agency's preferred contacts for this year's budget process.

	Name	*Phone*	*Email*
PRIMARY CONTACT:	Scott L. Phillips	(803) 896-8800	sphillips@scfc.gov
SECONDARY CONTACT:	Cathy C. Nordeen	(803) 896-8865	cnordeen@scfc.gov

I have reviewed and approved the enclosed FY 2024-2025 Agency Budget Plan, which is complete and accurate to the extent of my knowledge.

	Agency Director	*Board or Commission Chair*
SIGN/DATE:	*Scott L Phillips*	*Walter a McP Rail*
TYPE/PRINT NAME:	9/20/23	9/20/23

This form must be signed by the agency head – not a delegate.

Agency Name:	Forestry Commission
Agency Code:	P120
Section:	43

BUDGET REQUESTS			FUNDING					FTES				
Priority	Request Type	Request Title	State	Federal	Earmarked	Restricted	Total	State	Federal	Earmarked	Restricted	Total
1	B1 - Recurring	Recruitment and Retention	2,020,000	2,500,000	0	0	4,520,000	7.00	-3.00	-1.00	0.00	3.00
2	B1 - Recurring	Forest Inventory and Analysis	220,000	0	0	0	220,000	2.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.00
3	B2 - Non-Recurring	Law Enforcement Vehicle and Supplies	63,000	0	0	0	63,000	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
4	B2 - Non-Recurring	Forest Inventory & Analysis Vehicle and Supplies	84,000	0	0	0	84,000	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
TOTALS			2,387,000	2,500,000	0	0	4,887,000	9.00	-3.00	-1.00	0.00	5.00

Agency Name:	Forestry Commission		
Agency Code:	P120	Section:	43

FORM B1 – RECURRING OPERATING REQUEST

AGENCY PRIORITY	1

Provide the Agency Priority Ranking from the Executive Summary.

TITLE	**Recruitment and Retention**

Provide a brief, descriptive title for this request.

AMOUNT	**General: $2,020,000** **Federal: $2,500,000** **Other: $0** **Total: $4,520,000**

What is the net change in requested appropriations for FY 2024-2025? This amount should correspond to the total for all funding sources on the Executive Summary.

NEW POSITIONS	3.00

Please provide the total number of new positions needed for this request.

	Mark "X" for all that apply:
X	Change in cost of providing current services to existing program audience
X	Change in case load/enrollment under existing program guidelines
	Non-mandated change in eligibility/enrollment for existing program
	Non-mandated program change in service levels or areas
	Proposed establishment of a new program or initiative
X	Loss of federal or other external financial support for existing program
	Exhaustion of fund balances previously used to support program
	IT Technology/Security related
	Consulted DTO during development
X	Related to a Non-Recurring request – If so, Priority # 3

FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH THE REQUEST

	Mark "X" for primary applicable Statewide Enterprise Strategic Objective:
	Education, Training, and Human Development
	Healthy and Safe Families
X	Maintaining Safety, Integrity, and Security
	Public Infrastructure and Economic Development
	Government and Citizens

STATEWIDE ENTERPRISE STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

ACCOUNTABILITY OF FUNDS

This funding request supports multiple agency strategies including the following:

2.1 – Ensure prompt and effective response to wildfires and other disasters in an increasingly complex environment.

2.2 – Develop and deliver innovative prevention programs that reduce wildfire risks to forests and communities.

2.3 – Deliver law enforcement services to reduce wildfire risks, illegal dumping and forest product theft and fraud.

3.1 - Support landowners with programs and services that promote active forest management and help them meet their goals.

However, it is most closely tied to Goal 5, and the following strategies, which aim to strengthen the Forestry Commission through employee development, improvements in efficiency and effectiveness, and a renewed focus on safety.

5.1 – Prioritize safety across all agency operations.

5.2 – Develop and maintain a workforce that is inclusive, skilled, engaged, and productive.

5.5 – Promote careers in forestry.

Fully funding this request will provide competitive salaries and secure funding that is critical for recruiting and retaining the skilled and engaged workforce necessary to fulfill the agency's mission. The agency has benchmarked the following key performance indicators and will continue to track these metrics to evaluate the use of these funds.

- Employee engagement index.
- Employee turnover rates.
- Time to fill vacant positions.
- Number of qualified applicants for forestry positions.

What specific strategy, as outlined in the most recent Strategic Planning and Performance Measurement template of agency's accountability report, does this funding request support? How would this request advance that strategy? How would the use of these funds be evaluated?

RECIPIENTS OF FUNDS

Funds will go towards the salary and fringe for current Forestry Commission personnel and candidates qualified to fill new or vacant FTEs. Shifting 1 FTE from other to state funds and 3 FTEs from federal to state funds. Operating funds will go to the payment of vendors for goods obtained for agency operations following the state procurement code.

What individuals or entities would receive these funds (contractors, vendors, grantees, individual beneficiaries, etc.)? How would these funds be allocated – using an existing formula, through a competitive process, based upon predetermined eligibility criteria?

The Commission was very fortunate to receive $2 million to bolster salaries for its firefighters, foresters and law enforcement officers in the FY24 budget. However, the funding fell short of the full amount requested, and an agency review of compensation indicates additional funding is needed to be competitive for several critical positions.

Recruiting and retaining well qualified firefighters, law enforcement officers, dispatchers and pilots is critical for the Forestry Commission to fulfill its mission in the most efficient and effective manner. By hiring and retaining qualified employees we can maintain staffing at appropriate levels to meet the public's needs and ensure the agency's readiness for emergency response.

Competition for workers is at an all-time high. It is becoming increasingly difficult for the SCFC to recruit firefighters, law enforcement officers, dispatchers, and pilots. Nearly 6% (9 of 160) of the agency's frontline firefighter positions, which experience a turnover rate of 15%, are vacant, with the average position being vacant over seven months. Three of these positions have been vacant for more than one year. The situation is even more dire when looking at agency dispatchers, who have an incredibly high turnover rate of 112%. Currently 33% (8 of 24) of the agency's fire dispatcher positions are vacant, with the average position being vacant more than 13 months.

Recruiting challenges are a significant concern for the Forestry Commission given the high number of employees that are eligible to retire over the next five years. Forty-one percent of agency employees, including 50% of agency pilots, 43% of agency dispatchers, 45% of the agency frontline firefighters and greater than 41% of the agency's Fire Management Officers (FMOs), are eligible to retire in the next five years. Approximately 25% of agency employees can retire today.

Based on an SCFC compensation analysis, agency fire dispatchers and pilots are significantly underpaid compared to their peers at other SC state agencies. The average salary for SCFC dispatchers is 15% less than the state average for comparable positions, while the agency's average salary for pilots is more than 33% below the average salary for other pilots working in SC state government. We are requesting $300,000 to increase the base pay for agency fire dispatch staff and $125,000 for agency pilots to make their salaries competitive with comparable positions at other state agencies.

Recent changes to compensation packages for Class I law enforcement officers have helped with recruiting and retention for these critical employees across state government. However, SCFC FMOs were left out of the general law enforcement increases implemented in FY24, and thus, even with the significant increases provided for SCFC officers in FY24 these officers are still the lowest-paid Class I officers among SC state agencies. We are requesting $130,000 to increase the entry-level salaries for Commission FMOs to $50,000, which according to the 2023 DSHR law enforcement compensation study, is the minimum salary necessary for state agencies to compete

JUSTIFICATION OF REQUEST	for Class I officers. Additionally, we are requesting $650,000 to increase salaries for the Commission's wildland firefighters which will increase the entry-level salary for these critical positions to $32,579.

We are also requesting $340,000 in our Forest Protection section to shift 3 current federally funded positions to state funds. Since 2014, salaries for all SCFC personnel with full-time responsibilities for implementing fire prevention efforts, community wildfire planning, fuels mitigation planning, and sub grant awards have been supported by USDA Forest Service Hazard Mitigation grant funds. This critical work reduces the number of wildfires that occur, ensures that communities at risk are identified and provided with plans for wildfire preparedness and response, and that fuel accumulations within and surrounding communities with significant wildfire risk are reduced. Changes in grant guidance in FY23 indicated that the use of these grant funds for salaries is discouraged, and that as funding becomes more competitive, salary monies will be less available and harder to obtain, putting these positions at risk. With current federal funding we will only be able to sustain these positions through FY 2025, which makes the receipt of state funding for these positions imperative.

With safety being the highest priority for the agency and a significant loss of experienced employees expected in the near future, we are requesting $110,000 and 1 FTE to establish a second position in our training and safety program to bolster our safety and training efforts. Due to budget shortfalls, the responsibility for the training and safety programs was combined into one position in 2009. Since this consolidation of duties, regional and program staff from other areas have contributed time and effort to support the Training and Safety Director. However, the current model is insufficient, especially given the turnover the agency will face over the next five years. The additional FTE will focus on agency-wide safety needs, support improvements in reporting, improve the safety culture in the agency, and serve as the agency lead for the development of tools for accident and injury prevention. We are also requesting $10,000 in operating funds for support of this position.

As stated above, competition for workers is at an all-time high, and recruiting challenges are a significant concern for the Forestry Commission. We are requesting $90,000 and 1 FTE to hire a recruiting coordinator in human resources. Having a dedicated recruiting coordinator will allow the Forestry Commission to take a more strategic approach to finding talent and get our name out to prospective candidates at career fairs and in schools. This will greatly increase our applicant pool for vacant jobs and allow us to hire the most qualified employees for our positions while also raising awareness about career opportunities in the forestry sector, which is a pillar of the state's economy.

We are requesting $110,000 and 1 FTE for an investigator in the Piedmont Region. The reduction in full-time investigators in 2015 resulted in a loss of capacity to oversee regional LE operations, train new law enforcement officers, investigate complex fires and to investigate timber cases in the Piedmont Region. Investigators from other areas have provided coverage for the region, but the caseload and training need is significant and would be better served with a more local resource. Current caseload in the Piedmont region accounts for 16% of statewide fire investigations, 50% of statewide timber crime investigations, and 37.5% of state forest investigations. We are also requesting $10,000 in operating funds for support of this position.

We are requesting $135,000 to shift 1 FTE from other to state for the State Lands Coordinator in our Forest Management division. The salary and fringe of this position is currently being covered by revenue from SCFC state forests. This position includes not only oversight of state forests, but assistance to other state lands and federal lands (national parks and forests). Covering the salary and fringe of the State Lands Coordinator with state forest revenue is burdensome to the state forest system. Covering these costs with state funds will allow more of the state forest revenue to be retained by each forest and used to better manage these properties. We are also requesting $10,000 in operating funds for support of this position.

Finally, we are requesting additional federal authority. With the passing of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and the Inflation Reduction Act, the Forestry Commission has received an additional $5.8 million in federal grant funds to reduce the risk of wildland fire, restore ecosystems and invest in natural resources related to infrastructure. We are requesting an additional $2.5 million in federal authority to be able to expend these federal funds in a timely manner.

If funds are not received, employee engagement will decline, turnover rates will increase, time to fill positions will increase, vacancies will lead to less service to landowners, increasing wildfire risks and damages while increasing threats to the properties, homes, and lives of citizens. Our training and safety program would continue at its current level, which is not sufficient given the expected retirements over the next five years. The state forests would continue to cover salary and fringe of the State Land Coordinator, reducing the amount of revenue that is available for management of state forests and investigators from other regions would continue to cover the Piedmont Region for any needed investigations and training.

The amounts of this request were calculated based on an agency compensation

analysis comparing similar positions in other state agencies in SC, the DSHR compensation recommendations for Class I law enforcement officers, comparisons to similar positions in other states and applying the average salary and fringe benefits of like positions within the agency and operating costs associated with those positions.

Except for the four requested transfers, the Forestry Commission does not have the vacant positions to fulfill this request, as they are obligated to other areas within the agency.

Please thoroughly explain the request to include the justification for funds, potential offsets, matching funds, and method of calculation. Please include any explanation of impact if funds are not received. If new positions have been requested, explain why existing vacancies are not sufficient.

Agency Name:	Forestry Commission		
Agency Code:	P120	Section:	43

FORM B1 – RECURRING OPERATING REQUEST

AGENCY PRIORITY	2

Provide the Agency Priority Ranking from the Executive Summary.

TITLE	**Forest Inventory and Analysis**

Provide a brief, descriptive title for this request.

AMOUNT	**General: $220,000** **Federal: $0** **Other: $0** **Total: $220,000**

What is the net change in requested appropriations for FY 2024-2025? This amount should correspond to the total for all funding sources on the Executive Summary.

NEW POSITIONS	2.00

Please provide the total number of new positions needed for this request.

	Mark "X" for all that apply:	
FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH THE REQUEST		Change in cost of providing current services to existing program audience
	X	Change in case load/enrollment under existing program guidelines
		Non-mandated change in eligibility/enrollment for existing program
		Non-mandated program change in service levels or areas
		Proposed establishment of a new program or initiative
		Loss of federal or other external financial support for existing program
		Exhaustion of fund balances previously used to support program
		IT Technology/Security related
		Consulted DTO during development
	X	Related to a Non-Recurring request – If so, Priority # 4

	Mark "X" for primary applicable Statewide Enterprise Strategic Objective:	
STATEWIDE ENTERPRISE STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES		Education, Training, and Human Development
		Healthy and Safe Families
		Maintaining Safety, Integrity, and Security
	X	Public Infrastructure and Economic Development
		Government and Citizens

ACCOUNTABILITY OF FUNDS	This funding request supports the following objective: 4.6 – Provide accurate and timely information on the inventory, utilization, and health of South Carolina's forests.

What specific strategy, as outlined in the most recent Strategic Planning and Performance Measurement template of agency's accountability report, does this funding request support? How would this request advance that strategy? How would the use of these funds be evaluated?

RECIPIENTS OF	Funds will go towards the salary and fringe for candidates qualified to fill the new FTEs and the payment of vendors for goods obtained for agency operations following the state procurement code.

FUNDS	

What individuals or entities would receive these funds (contractors, vendors, grantees, individual beneficiaries, etc.)? How would these funds be allocated – using an existing formula, through a competitive process, based upon predetermined eligibility criteria?

JUSTIFICATION OF REQUEST	The Forest Inventory & Analysis Program (FIA) collects forest resource data on a network of permanent plots across South Carolina. FIA data are used to report on the status and trends of the states and nation's forests. FIA reports on how much forest exists, where it exists, who owns it, and how it is changing over time, as well as how trees and other forest vegetation are growing and how trees and tree volume is lost due to mortality, removals, and harvesting. FIA data are used to evaluate wildlife habitat conditions, assess the sustainability of ecosystem management practices, and support planning and decision-making activities undertaken by public and private enterprises. Data collection production goals are a minimum of one panel (20% of the total) of plots per year. The FIA program reduced its crew size in January 2009 from four crews to three out of necessity because of budget shortfalls. Since then, additional workload was acquired in 2012 in the form of national forest intensification plots. These intensification plots account for one month of additional workload every year. More recently, additions to FIA field data collection, from a national level, have increased the amount of time it takes to collect data and results in fewer opportunities to increase production. Time spent contacting landowners has also impacted production. In the past several years the FIA program has had difficulty filling vacancies due to low recruitment response and/or lack of qualified applicants, resulting in longer times to fill vacancies, up to and including a year, resulting in exponentially declining plot production as replacement employees are sought. As a result, the program has had to defer collecting national forest intensification plots and increase the cycle length from 5 years to 6 years to mitigate data delivery. Due to South Carolina falling behind in production, the state's last data release was for inventory year 2021. This has an impact on providing users with timely data. FIA is the sole source for forest resource data and not only supports the forest industry but also non-traditional users like other agencies, the media, and academia. We are requesting $190,000 and 2 FTEs for a fourth FIA crew composed of two foresters. Having a fourth FIA crew would allow the SCFC to re-measure the state's FIA plots on a 5-year cycle to ascertain a timely, accurate picture of the forest resource and its health in the effort to continue collecting and providing information about land use, fragmentation, and ownership issues. We are also requesting $30,000 in recurring operating funds for support of these positions. State funding for an additional FIA crew will allow the agency to eliminate the production backlog and to maintain a lead in the region. If the FIA program's staff is not increased with an additional crew, the program will continue to fall further behind and not be able to maintain plot production goals.

Please thoroughly explain the request to include the justification for funds, potential offsets, matching funds, and method of calculation. Please include any explanation of impact if funds are not received. If new positions have been requested, explain why existing vacancies are not sufficient.

Agency Name:	Forestry Commission		
Agency Code:	P120	Section:	43

FORM B2 – NON-RECURRING OPERATING REQUEST

AGENCY PRIORITY	3
	Provide the Agency Priority Ranking from the Executive Summary.

TITLE	Law Enforcement Vehicle and Supplies
	Provide a brief, descriptive title for this request.

AMOUNT	$63,000
	What is the net change in requested appropriations for FY 2024-2025? This amount should correspond to the total for all funding sources on the Executive Summary.

FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH THE REQUEST	**Mark "X" for all that apply:**
	☐ Change in cost of providing current services to existing program audience
	☐ Change in case load/enrollment under existing program guidelines
	☐ Non-mandated change in eligibility/enrollment for existing program
	☐ Non-mandated program change in service levels or areas
	☐ Proposed establishment of a new program or initiative
	☐ Loss of federal or other external financial support for existing program
	☐ Exhaustion of fund balances previously used to support program
	☐ IT Technology/Security related
	☐ Consulted DTO during development
	X Request for Non-Recurring Appropriations
	☐ Request for Federal/Other Authorization to spend existing funding
	X Related to a Recurring request – If so, Priority # Recruitment and Retention

STATEWIDE ENTERPRISE STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES	**Mark "X" for primary applicable Statewide Enterprise Strategic Objective:**
	☐ Education, Training, and Human Development
	☐ Healthy and Safe Families
	X Maintaining Safety, Integrity, and Security
	☐ Public Infrastructure and Economic Development
	☐ Government and Citizens

ACCOUNTABILITY OF FUNDS	This funding request supports the following objective: 2.3 – Deliver law enforcement services to reduce wildfire risks, illegal dumping and forest product theft and fraud.
	What specific strategy, as outlined in the most recent Strategic Planning and Performance Measurement template of agency's accountability report, does this funding request support? How would this request advance that strategy? How would the use of these funds be evaluated?

RECIPIENTS OF FUNDS	Funds will go towards payment of vendors for goods obtained for agency operations following the state procurement code.
	What individuals or entities would receive these funds (contractors, vendors, grantees, individual beneficiaries, etc.)? How would these funds be allocated – using an existing formula, through a competitive process, based upon predetermined eligibility criteria?

JUSTIFICATION OF REQUEST	This request will provide the necessary law enforcement vehicle and supplies needed for the Investigator IV position requested in Priority #1. 4X4 Truck with LE package $47,000 Weapon $450 Body Armor $800 Taser $1,800 Mobile Radio $2,500 800mhz Radio $7,000 Other LE Supplies <u>$3,450</u> Total $63,000 This is a one-time request to supply the tools necessary for the Investigator IV to do their job if the position is funded. If this is not funded at the time the position is funded, it will require the agency to use existing law enforcement funds that are normally used for operating expenses.

Please thoroughly explain the request to include the justification for funds, potential offsets, matching funds, and method of calculation. Please include any explanation of impact if funds are not received. If new positions have been requested, explain why existing vacancies are not sufficient.

Agency Name:	Forestry Commission		
Agency Code:	P120	Section:	43

FORM B2 – NON-RECURRING OPERATING REQUEST

AGENCY PRIORITY	4
	Provide the Agency Priority Ranking from the Executive Summary.

TITLE	Forest Inventory & Analysis Vehicle and Supplies
	Provide a brief, descriptive title for this request.

AMOUNT	$84,000
	What is the net change in requested appropriations for FY 2024-2025? This amount should correspond to the total for all funding sources on the Executive Summary.

FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH THE REQUEST	**Mark "X" for all that apply:**
	☐ Change in cost of providing current services to existing program audience
	☐ Change in case load/enrollment under existing program guidelines
	☐ Non-mandated change in eligibility/enrollment for existing program
	☐ Non-mandated program change in service levels or areas
	☐ Proposed establishment of a new program or initiative
	☐ Loss of federal or other external financial support for existing program
	☐ Exhaustion of fund balances previously used to support program
	☐ IT Technology/Security related
	☐ Consulted DTO during development
	X Request for Non-Recurring Appropriations
	☐ Request for Federal/Other Authorization to spend existing funding
	X Related to a Recurring request – If so, Priority # Forest Inventory and Analysis

STATEWIDE ENTERPRISE STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES	**Mark "X" for primary applicable Statewide Enterprise Strategic Objective:**
	☐ Education, Training, and Human Development
	☐ Healthy and Safe Families
	☐ Maintaining Safety, Integrity, and Security
	X Public Infrastructure and Economic Development
	☐ Government and Citizens

ACCOUNTABILITY OF FUNDS	This funding request supports the following objective: 4.6 – Provide accurate and timely information on the inventory, utilization, and health of South Carolina's forests.
	What specific strategy, as outlined in the most recent Strategic Planning and Performance Measurement template of agency's accountability report, does this funding request support? How would this request advance that strategy? How would the use of these funds be evaluated?

RECIPIENTS OF FUNDS	Funds will go towards payment of vendors for goods obtained for agency operations following the state procurement code.
	What individuals or entities would receive these funds (contractors, vendors, grantees, individual beneficiaries, etc.)? How would these funds be allocated – using an existing formula, through a competitive process, based upon predetermined eligibility criteria?

JUSTIFICATION OF REQUEST	This request will provide the necessary vehicle and supplies needed for the Forest Inventory & Analysis positions requested in Priority #1. 4X4 Truck $52,000 Gator XUV590M $19,000 Trailer for Gator $3,000 Field Equipment $5,000 Computers/Printer $3,300 Desk & Chairs $1,700 Total $84,000 This is a one-time request to supply the tools necessary for the FIA crew to do their job if the positions are funded. If this non-recurring request is not funded at the time the positions are funded, it will require the agency to use existing funds that are normally used for operating expenses.

Please thoroughly explain the request to include the justification for funds, potential offsets, matching funds, and method of calculation. Please include any explanation of impact if funds are not received. If new positions have been requested, explain why existing vacancies are not sufficient.

Agency Name:	Forestry Commission		
Agency Code:	P120	Section:	43

FORM E – AGENCY COST SAVINGS AND GENERAL FUND REDUCTION CONTINGENCY PLAN

TITLE	Agency Cost Savings and General Fund Reduction Contingency Plan

AMOUNT	$889,057

What is the General Fund 3% reduction amount? This amount should correspond to the reduction spreadsheet prepared by EBO.

ASSOCIATED FTE REDUCTIONS	17 FTEs

How many FTEs would be reduced in association with this General Fund reduction?

PROGRAM / ACTIVITY IMPACT	1. Administration 2. Forest Protection and Development

What programs or activities are supported by the General Funds identified?

SUMMARY	The Forestry Commission's mission is protecting, promoting, and enhancing the state's forests for the benefit of all. To achieve this mission, agency employees provide numerous services to the citizens of South Carolina and to forested lands themselves. Forestry Commission personnel not only protect the forest lands and surrounding communities from wildfires, but they also provide outreach services to landowners who enable forestry to be a top industry and economic driver in South Carolina. In order to accommodate a 3% budget reduction, the Forestry Commission will have to eliminate 17 FTEs. These FTEs directly serve the citizens of South Carolina. By eliminating these positions, services that are currently provided will be significantly reduced. This will be a negative effect on the economic value that the forest industry provides to the state and will further reduce the Commission's ability to protect the forest resource, homes, other structures and lives. The agency will use vacant positions if available at the time of the cut. However, if positions are not vacant, the agency will use other methods to reduce state operating funds. Such methods will include a combination of elimination of at-will employees, temporary employees, furlough of current employees and/or a reduction in operating expenditures.

AGENCY COST SAVINGS PLANS	The agency evaluates operations throughout the year to ensure we are operating efficiently and effectively. In FY2018 the agency entered into a 10-year public-private partnership with Arborgen at the Commission's Taylor Nursery. The partnership allows the agency to continue to provide state-of-the-art seedlings to forest landowners for tree planting in the future while mitigating agency budget shortfalls associated with the operation of the nursery. As a result of this agreement, we continue to see savings of approximately $200,000 annually in salary/fringe and operating costs associated with nursery operations. The agency has repurposed the salary and fringe funds to assist with our recruitment and retention efforts. The operating funds saved are being used to bolster our Tree Improvement program to ensure SC landowners have access to the best available genetics that will be critical to maintaining and improving the productivity and health of our forests in the future.

Agency Name:	Forestry Commission		
Agency Code:	P120	Section:	43

FORM F – REDUCING COST AND BURDEN TO BUSINESSES AND CITIZENS

TITLE	Use of warning tickets for documenting violations of SC Code Title 48.
	Provide a brief, descriptive title for this request.

EXPECTED SAVINGS TO BUSINESSES AND CITIZENS	$154,217.00 in fines, court costs, personnel hours and 70.5 hours of court time saved.
	What is the expected savings to South Carolina's businesses and citizens that is generated by this proposal? The savings could be related to time or money.

FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH THE REQUEST	**Mark "X" for all that apply:**	
		Repeal or revision of regulations.
	X	Reduction of agency fees or fines to businesses or citizens.
		Greater efficiency in agency services or reduction in compliance burden.
		Other

METHOD OF CALCULATION	141 warning tickets were issued which are multiplied by the maximum fine of $500 plus court costs of $587.50 for most violations of SC Code Title 48.

Case prosecution would take approximately 15 minutes per case multiplied by 141 violations.

Officer's average hourly rate of approximately $24.95 per hour multiplied by 35.25 hours of court time.

The defendants' time added to the court staff's time would determine the total hours of 70.5 saved by citizens and businesses. |
| | *Describe the method of calculation for determining the expected cost or time savings to businesses or citizens.* |

REDUCTION OF FEES OR FINES	Fines for violations of SC Code Title 48.

Enabling authority is derived from SC Code 48-23-96. |
| | *Which fees or fines does the agency intend to reduce? What was the fine or fee revenue for the previous fiscal year? What was the associated program expenditure for the previous fiscal year? What is the enabling authority for the issuance of the fee or fine?* |

REDUCTION OF REGULATION	This action would not require any amendments or deletions of current regulations.
	Which regulations does the agency intend to amend or delete? What is the enabling authority for the regulation?

	During FY 2022-2023 a total of 141 warning tickets were issued. Through the use of warning tickets versus courtesy summons for documented violations the expected saving in fines and court costs is $153,338. This is based on the maximum fine of $500 plus included court assessments. Case prosecution would take approximately 15 minutes per case multiplied by 141 violations which saved 35.25 hours of officer court time. Based on the average hourly rate of $24.95 per hour this provided an additional savings of $879. This saved the public 35.25 hours of personal or employer time due to not being required to attend court. Court personnel also saved 35.25 hours due to not hearing these cases.

SUMMARY

Provide an explanation of the proposal and its positive results on businesses or citizens. How will the request affect agency operations?