It has been a transformative and exciting year at Southern Regional Extension Forestry (SREF). I am happy to have the opportunity to share a report of changes and accomplishments from 2019. While many things have changed at SREF, our general goals have not. SREF’s goals continue to be providing capacity to aid state Extension programs; and facilitating cooperation and education program delivery with and amongst state Extension programs, state forestry agencies, the United States Forest Service (USFS) Region 8, State and Private programs and other partners. SREF implemented a new governance model in 2019 to increase accountability, transparency and a structure that focuses on state input. Our goal, in short, is to help develop and coordinate regional programs and resources that help states carry out their work.

At the beginning of 2019, I became the lead for SREF as the Coordinator for the program, on an interim basis. I have worked for SREF as an Extension Associate since 2011, and throughout that time, I have worked with many partners across the South on numerous regional programs and resources. SREF has streamlined its operations to focus on regional coordination and continue to provide Internet Technology (IT) consultations and services through our grant-funded IT team. I am excited to work in this new role at SREF and am looking forward to continued engagement with partners and colleagues, as well as looking for new ways to serve the southern forestry community.

While there have been many positive changes over the past year, there is still a need to secure funding from more state partners to ensure that SREF can continue to facilitate programming and communication across all of the southern states. We look forward to further opportunities to work together in the future and will continue to explore new ways to enhance southern forestry extension and outreach programs and collaborations.

Sincerely,

Leslie Boby
Interim Coordinator

IN 2019, SREF...

• Implemented a new advisory board structure
• Collected stakeholder input
• Continued with regional recognition awards program and awarded more than 30 projects
• Completed Master Gardeners’ Firescaping Modules, including 11 videos, a training toolbox and more
• Added new features to the Forestry Webinar Portal
• Represented Extension Forestry in the Keeping Forests Collaborative
• Planned Regional Forest Economic Summit

SUMMARY

ACHIEVEMENTS

co-lead
REGIONAL LANDOWNER EDUCATION WEBINAR SERIES
interviewed and surveyed more than
REGIONAL PARTNERS
for input on new goals and workplan for SREF
wrote and delivered
WEEKLY AND BI-WEEKLY NEWSLETTERS
to
3,000 regional and national subscribers
served on
ADVISORY BOARDS and numerous regional and national committees
created, updated or redesigned
WEBSITES
and MOBILE APPLICATIONS
in addition to the 60+ that are already managed by SREF IT
consulted on more than
INTERNET TECHNOLOGY PROJECTS
with regional partners, some of which were funded
Restructuring

The stakeholder-led SREF restructuring effort has resulted in a significantly reduced budget, appropriate capacity and improved oversight. Currently there is one full-time Coordinator position and three full-time IT solutions positions, as well as student workers. The retention of IT staff is purposeful as the Extension units, stakeholders, and partners have indicated the importance of continued SREF engagement in developing online platforms to support state programs. Further, SREF’s IT staff have led the nation in providing the most successful continuing education platforms in forestry and natural resources and it was recognized that retaining this capacity is in the best interest of the region at this time.

Funding Changes

The SREF funding model requires base funding from university members and partners solely for a full-time Coordinator, while IT staff will continue to be funded 100% through fees for using SREF IT services and/or tools (ex. website development and hosting regional webinars). Previously, funding for the lead of SREF (regional forester) and a business manager came from the Association of Southern Region Extension Directors (ASRED), and funding for all other positions came through contracts or grants. In order to continue to sustain Southern Regional Extension Forestry, support from more university forestry programs will be necessary. Current funding for SREF during this transition period has generously been provided by:

In order to continue to sustain Southern Regional Extension Forestry’s support for the region, support from more university programs will be necessary.
The information below was collected in a questionnaire in an interview with stakeholders prior to the first advisory board meeting. Stakeholders were asked, “How do you think that SREF could most benefit your team, the region, forestry, etc.?" The input was summarized into these categories. This information can be used by the advisory board and the executive committee to refine SREF’s goals.

Central Facilitation and Coordination Across the Region
Facilitate getting work done, but do not create the content necessarily
Assist with connecting individuals across the region
Identify issues that states may not be working on that could impact forest management in the future and share with the group

Enable Strong Regional Communication
Share information on regional efforts outside the South
Regularly communicate what is happening in participating states that could lead to better regional efforts
Share Extension forestry or general forestry work or good news
Create or share success stories
Market or advertise forestry program
Inform the region of issues/programs at the national level that may affect state programs

Create Regional Products
Factsheets, web-based products or other materials that are needed
Regional program development which may include educational outreach
Webinars and short courses
Assist with development of regional online training for agents, for example on grant-writing or ethics training or specific skills-driven courses

Provide Internet Technology (IT) Consulting and Support
The SREF IT team should provide consultation on feasibility of projects and possible support, though specific project work is done on a “pay-as-you-go” model

Assist with Developing Project Ideas for Funding
This may include grant-writing assistance or connecting stakeholders who may be working on compatible projects for grant development

Provide Opportunities to Connect
Foster relationships amongst forestry extension agency and other partners by providing opportunities to connect with one another

SREF’s new accountability and decision-making structure with region-wide representation, streamlined staffing and reduced base budget requirements was created to serve southern forestry partners.
Providing Information Technology solutions for forestry and natural resource organizations for more than 15 years.

IT services

- Consultations
- Website and business process consulting
- Website and mobile app development
- Graphic design
- Workflow processing
- Multi-device information collection
- Workflow-based business processing
- Optimized information delivery methods
- Leading-edge end-user technology experiences
- Secure enterprise content management systems

SREF IT professionals provide information technology consultations and solutions for forestry and natural resource organizations. For over 15 years, they've worked with organizations to help them create and develop custom websites and mobile applications that help bring extension, research, and education-based initiatives and information to life.

SREF’s IT staff have led the nation in providing the most successful continuing education platform in forestry and natural resources, the Forestry Webinar Portal. Funding for the IT Services team comes exclusively from contracts, grants, and web-hosting fees.
The SREF Digest Newsletter is a biweekly newsletter that provides subscribers with current and impactful news relevant to their work. Content for the newsletter is targeted towards sharing important information and helpful resources for forestry and natural resources personnel from Cooperative Extension and state and federal agencies, as well as other partners and outreach professionals.

The SREF Digest includes news sections that cover regional and national news, funding opportunities, Extension forestry and forestry agency jobs and upcoming events. Next steps for the newsletter include surveying readers for feedback and looking for new ways to improve and better utilize it as a regional communication tool.

31% open rate with a 15% click rate

3,000 subscribers

40 total SREF digests sent for calendar year

“very useful, keeps regional activities in the forefront”

“very useful for compiling regional forestry info into one place”

“great, and good information +++”

“the weekly e-news is a very useful resource and regional communication tool”

have some news to share? New publication, event, etc.? Email SREFNewsletter@sref.info
Regional Collaborations and Impacts
In February and March 2019, Forestry and Natural Resource professionals from Cooperative Extension programs across the southeast US, in collaboration with university, state and federal partners, collaborated to deliver a regional education program for woodland owners. The goal of the program was to empower woodland owners to promote environmental and forest health through increased awareness, experience and access to resources.

The series included four sessions conducted over four weeks. County and regional agents from participating states hosted landowner groups while speakers presented via webinar software. Over the four-week period, as many as 13 states representing as many as 70 sites tuned into the webinar series, with an average of over 380 registrants per session. Over 90% of the sites were across six states: Kentucky, Missouri, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee and Virginia.

The goal of the program was to empower woodland owners to promote environmental and forest health through increased awareness, experience and access to resources.

OVERALL QUALITY OF THE PROGRAM: 3.3/4

participants would recommend the webinar series to other landowners

NEARLY 100% of attendees said that they now know who to contact if they have questions about their woodlands, as a result of this workshop

97% of participants felt the information was easy to understand

"...that presentation was really an eye-opener for me on the need to manage timber"

"The class gave me a base of information that I can take into my woods, and start evaluating my trees."

"The information was excellent, more people need to hear these presentations!"

60% of participants plan to contact a natural resource professional within the next three months

participants indicated collectively owning over 42,227 ACRES

Participants averaged a 34% INCREASE in knowledge related to the topics of the webinar

60% of participants plan to contact a natural resource professional within the next three months

participants indicated collectively owning over 42,227 ACRES
Funded by a grant from the USDA National Institutes of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)'s Renewable Resources Extension Act, the course serves as an asynchronous webinar series to onboard next generation Extension professionals. This course could best be described as providing a roadmap for new Extension forester or natural resource specialists who are just beginning their Extension and natural resources journey. It was designed to supplement institutions’ individual training programs. While initially the course was planned to be asynchronous, it was offered to a live cohort in Fall 2018.

National Planning Team!
Planning for this course took nearly a year, as it included a survey to determine what information Extension specialists felt would be important to include. Lead organizers included Leslie Boby, Karen Bennett, Marc Thomas, Janean Creighton, Eli Sagor, Jim Johnson, Mark Megalos, Jim Finley, Titus Andrews, Bill Hubbard, and Jeff Stringer. Each module was planned by a team lead who recruited other individuals to co-plan and co-present, leading to diverse perspectives.

Course Delivered Synchronously in Fall 2018
From September to December 2018, 8 distinct modules were delivered synchronously via online webinars. These webinars used clips recorded from video interviews with 33 experienced Extension personnel. This course put New Extension foresters or natural resource specialists in touch online with much of the national network of diverse, knowledgeable colleagues that are a part of the Land-grant University System. This allowed participants to learn from their experiences and perspectives, as well as engage and build connections with them.

SEEDING SUCCESS Tools, Technology and Techniques for a Successful Extension Natural Resources Career

funding for this project was provided by USDA NIFA

INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE

MODULE 1: ONBOARDING BASICS
GETTING STARTED IN FORESTRY & NATURAL RESOURCES

MODULE 2: NETWORKING YOUR WAY TO SUCCESS
THE ROLE OF MENTORS
MODULE 3: AUDIENCES & NEEDS ASSESSMENTS

MODULE 4: PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT & DELIVERY

MODULE 5: AN INTRODUCTION TO PROGRAM EVALUATION

MODULE 6: EXTENSION SCHOLARSHIP

MODULE 7: FINDING FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR PROGRAM ENHANCEMENT

MODULE 8: NEGOTIATING EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIPS

FINAL WEBINAR & WRAP-UP

"Modules, 3, 4 and 5 presented information I desperately needed, so they were my favorites. Several of the resources mentioned in those sessions are ones that I have looked up and used since."

"I liked the broad range of experts that shared experiences and/or suggestions with us. I also liked the flexibility of the course."

90% of participants agreed that the Seeding Success course was very helpful for their Extension and/or outreach work.

OVERALL WEBINAR RATING: 4.1/5 STARS

HELPFUL TOPICS

development & delivery
86%

audience needs assessments
77%

program evaluation
76%

100% of attendees reported that they would recommend the program.

https://sref.info/seeding-success
WEBINAR PORTAL

For forestry and natural resource extension and education, the portal leads in providing a wide range of forestry and natural resource content for participants. For presenters or webinar providers, the portal is a full-featured online platform that enables them to present relevant and impactful information and research. In the ten years the Webinar Portal has existed, it has grown and added new features to better serve webinar providers and users.

The #1 free educational webinar platform for forestry, natural resources, conservation and climate science.

One-Stop Shop for Webinar Viewers

- Single platform for participants to find content on the latest research and issues
- Webinars presented by a wide range of professionals
- Intuitive and easy-to-use interface
- Home page features make each visit unique
- Easy to obtain CEUs

Provides a suite of tools that assist with and automate time-consuming pre- and post-webinar tasks and access to

21,000+ active subscribers.

One-Stop Shop for Webinar Deliveries

- Subscriber management
- Email marketing & campaign analytics
- Continuing education application and approval
- Participant registration

New Features and Improvements in 2019:
GROUP VIEW AND IMPACT SURVEY TOOL

New this year to the Webinar Portal are two new major features that extend the functionality of the Portal for webinar providers and participants. The new Group View capabilities allow groups to participate in both live and on-demand webinars as a group from a single remote location. Each member of the group can obtain a Certificate of Participation and earn continuing education credits that may be offered.

The Impact Survey Tool allows webinar providers the ability to define custom impact surveys for their webinars that are automatically sent to participants six months after the participant’s viewing of a webinar. The impact survey gives webinar providers another tool to help gauge knowledge transfer and improvements realized in the field.

Additional Webinar Portal improvements and changes include expanded statistical gathering of participant and feedback data as well as real-time statistical reporting of aggregated attendance, demographics, feedback and website traffic.

"Very applicable. Love hearing from the professionals that have both the academic and boots-on-the-ground experience."

- D. Fox, Florida

WEBINAR PORTAL
WEBINAR PORTAL

MAJOR FUNDING IN 2019 FOR THE WEBINAR PORTAL WAS PROVIDED BY:

NC STATE EXTENSION

Our ongoing partners and stakeholders include NC State, UGA Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources, USDA Forest Service, USDA Northeast Climate Hub, and the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service.

AVERAGE WEBINAR RATING

4 STARS

RATED BY 40,017 PARTICIPANTS

“[I appreciate the specific guidance] contained in this webinar; it is very helpful.”

- K. Clause, Federal Agency Employee, Wyoming

“Very informative...it will be useful on the job...thank you!”

- W. Stewart, Logger, Mississippi

WEBINAR PORTALS

- ForestryWebinars.net 13,741 views
- ConservationWebinars.net 27,741 views
- BioEnergyWebinars.net 49 views
- ClimateWebinars.net 1,683 views

2015-2019 TOTAL WEBINAR VIEWS

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2015-2019 TOTAL WEBINAR VIEWS: 18,139 Live, 20,469 On-Demand

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MOBILE APPLICATIONS

SREF has over a decade of experience developing a wide variety of custom mobile application solutions for both the iOS and Android platforms, utilizing technologies such as custom API (Application Programming Interface) & data integration, calculators & decision support tools, interactive charts & graphs, GIS & mapping intelligence, calendar- & event-based push notifications, & accessibility & multilanguage support.

CARINATA YIELD CALCULATOR

- Provides interactive charts for comparing available growth information regarding the production of Carinata in the Southeastern United States
- Serves both state and regional interests and needs

IFERTIGATE

- Helps formulate ideal ratios for nursery combined fertilization & irrigation
- Assists with the creation of tank mixes for nursery fertigation practices
- Serves regional, state, national, and international nursery manager interests and needs

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IT Accomplishments

**eYIELD (COMING SOON)**

This website was created to assist private landowners with financial and silvicultural decision-making by providing them access to decision support tools. Landowners can plug their information into the website and receive feedback on their hardwood and natural pine forests.

**FOREST VEGETATION MANAGEMENT (COMING SOON)**

This is a regional website updated to promote the management of forest vegetation for forestry and wildlife objectives. Resources include educational materials arranged by tool or goal such as using herbicides, prescribed fire, hand tools or managing for wildlife objectives.

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**WEBSITE SPOTLIGHT**

- **eYIELD**
  - Southern Regional Extension Forestry
  - Two models and several reports have been integrated into the website beta testing phase begins in **Spring 2020**

- **FOREST VEGETATION MANAGEMENT**
  - Updates to the website include a redesign of the layout to improve information delivery
  - The updated website serves both state and regional interests and needs
The national Renewable Resources Planning Act (RPA) Assessment was conducted in 2019, and this website was created to share research and findings from the 2020 report. The RPA assessment forecasts changes in land uses for the coterminous United States between 1997 and 2060.

Website includes customized communication tools that produce interactive bar charts and choropleth maps of findings.

Workflow-based portal automatically creates one combined grant application package.

The goal of the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy is to address complex challenges in wildland fire management and the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) areas. This Storymap was developed for the Southeastern Cohesive Strategy in order to:

- Communicate the past & present story of wildland fire in the South
- Provide examples of programs that are addressing wildfire challenges
- and more!

Release date coming soon!
General websites for partners
Southeastern Forest Vegetation Management
https://fvm2.sref.info
Longleaf Alliance Website
http://longleafalliance.org
Southern Forest Health
https://southernforesthealth.net
Southeastern Cohesive Fire Strategy
http://southernwildfire.net
Shortleaf Pine Initiative
http://shortleafpine.org
Southern Fire Exchange
https://southernfireexchange.org
Georgia Wild Pigs
http://georgiawildpigs.com
Georgia Master Timber Harvester
https://gamth.org

Plantation Management Research Cooperative
http://pmrc.sref.info
eYield
http://eyield.sref.info
Continuing Education at Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources
https://conted.warnell.uga.edu
PINEMAP
http://pinemap.org
Southeastern Partnership for Integrated Biomass Supply
http://ibss.sref.info
ProForest Health
http://proforesthealth.org
Wood Decay Fungi Identification: http://wdfi.sref.info

US Department of Agriculture Forest Service Websites and portals
Eastern Forest Environmental Threat Assessment Center
https://forestthreats.org
Reforestation, Nurseries, & Genetics, Resources
https://rngr.net
Native Plant Network
https://npn.rngr.net
RNGR Forum
https://forum.rngr.net
Urban Forestry South
https://urbanforestryouth.org
National Timber Tax Website
https://timbertax.org
National Urban and Community Forestry Advisory Council Intranet
https://nucafac.org
Ten-Year Urban Forestry Action Plan
https://urbanforestryplan.org
NUCAFAC FS Challenge Cost-Share Grant
https://grants.nucafac.org
Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning
http://rpa.sref.info
Learning Modules
https://elearn.sref.info

Former USDA NRCS East West Technology Transfer Portal
http://conservationwebinars.net
SREF BioEnergy Webinars Portal
http://bioenergywebinars.net
SREF Climate Science Webinars Portal
http://climatewebinars.net

WEBSITES CREATED AND MAINTAINED BY SREF

Southern Group of State Foresters
https://southernforests.org
Forest Products Locator
https://primary.woodproductslocator.org
Forestry Economic Impacts
https://forestryimpacts.net

GEOGRAPHIC WEBSITES

Woodland Knotweed
https://woodlandknotweed.org

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