

Release

from the South Carolina Forestry Commission



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SCFC estimates \$65M loss to forest products industry from flooding

COLUMBIA—South Carolina Forestry Commission officials estimate a loss of at least \$65 million in the forest industry's economic impact because of last week's historic flooding. The estimate was derived from forest planting and inventory data, aerial surveillance, mill reports and consultations with loggers and landowners.

The assessment does not include what are expected to be additional millions of dollars in damage and repair to private forest roads, which is currently unknown.

"Some mills have reported shortages of wood deliveries and difficulty shipping finished products because of closed roads, bridges and rail lines," said State Forester Gene Kodama. "Many loggers in the flood zone have not been able to operate since the storm because of wet ground and inaccessible roads and bridges. These conditions are not likely to improve soon."

While the economic loss represents a small part of the industry's \$18.6 billion contribution to the state's economy, it has a huge and immediate impact on the forest landowners, loggers, mills and suppliers in the counties affected by heavy rainfall and flooding. The loss of access to roads, bridges and rail lines, higher operating costs for loggers, increased transportation costs for mills, and overall lost productivity account for most of the economic loss.

"We're fortunate, however, that more than two-thirds of the state is forested because forests are resilient and renewable ecological systems," he said. "Forests help prevent erosion from flooding, filter the air and provide 60 percent of the water we use."

SCFC officials also emphasize that landowners should not feel compelled to harvest and sell their timber just because their trees have been flooded. Most forest stands beyond seedling sizes typically survive short-term flooding. Seedlings that were completely submerged for a week or more are less likely to survive. Forest landowners should continue to monitor all forested areas that have been flooded for tree health issues over the next year and consult a registered forester if they have questions or concerns.

The South Carolina Forestry Commission has created a special section on the home page of its website at www.trees.sc.gov to both collect and provide information for those affected by the flooding. There are links to information about possible disaster assistance for individuals and businesses, research about the effects of trees submerged in water and details of the assessment the agency is currently conducting.

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The South Carolina Forestry Commission was among the many state agencies that responded to last week's flooding by sending trained emergency professionals to the hardest-hit areas of the state. In addition to providing incident management teams that assisted counties with emergency operations, chainsaw crews cleared debris and other employees staffed the emergency operations center around the clock.