



2025 Annual Report
**Resilient Lands and
Ready Communities:
Kansas Forestry and Fire**



Sustaining and enhancing natural resources and communities
through forestry and wildland fire management

FROM THE STATE FORESTER

Dear Friends and Partners,

This report highlights the Kansas Forest Service staff's work during fiscal year 2025. That work was accomplished with the support received from clients, partners, and friends.

The federal funding uncertainties of 2025 led to a reflection on what has been accomplished and what Kansans would lose if the Kansas Forest Service could no longer serve with knowledge, professionalism, and desire.

This report demonstrates that the Kansas Forest Service and our partners provide consistent and innovative benefits.

This year, the Community Forestry staff helped Kansas communities invest \$9.74 per resident in tree planting and care, and log 6,919 volunteer hours. More than 1,500 youth learned about wildfire prevention through Smokey Bear programs. Our foresters helped landowners secure \$842,870 from Kansas NRCS for conservation practices.

Photo: Kansas Forest Service staff from across the state gathered in Hays, Kansas.

In 2025, we partnered with the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation, the City of Hays Fire Department, and others to host a workshop to engage community leaders and homeowners in wildfire mitigation. Our agency also worked with Governor Laura Kelly on a Kansas declaration of National Wildland Firefighter Day.

This year highlighted the need to diversify the funding sources that support our critical work. I hope I can partner with you to engage in productive discussions on how we can commit to sustaining the Kansas Forest Service into the future.

Sincerely,



Jason Hartman
State Forester,
Kansas Forest Service



WATER

Healthy forests lead to healthy streams. The Kansas Forest Service is in the business of assisting landowners in conserving and restoring the state's streamside forests. New streamside forest plantings, or buffers, act like a shock absorber against the pulses of polluted and erosive water following heavy rains. Where streamside forests have been degraded, streams, people, and the ecosystems downstream suffer. Where streamside forests are healthy, streams are less polluted and have improved water quality and calmer currents.

Foresters assist landowners with protecting, stabilizing, and restoring the important riparian forests along streams and rivers that limit erosion, keep water clean, and provide valuable habitat for wildlife. In these critical streamside forests, foresters work with landowners to eradicate invasive plant species.

Invasive species removal and community education are critical to sustaining and enhancing riparian forests.

- ▶ **Planted 7,927 pounds** of native tree seed in the spring of 2024.
- ▶ **Established 13 acres** of new streamside forest, oversaw establishment and maintenance on 95 acres, monitored 72 acres, and planned an additional 23 acres of sites that will help protect surface water quality and quantity in partnership with the Kansas Department of Agriculture.
- ▶ **Planned an additional 16,053 linear feet** of riparian forest buffers for private landowners through a partnership with the Kansas NRCS.
- ▶ **Planted 171 bur oak seedlings** as part of a study to monitor insect gall resistance.

Photo: Tech Team member Kelsey Wolf and Kimberly Jones, state park manager, plant a bur oak seedling as part of a gall research project.







QUALITY OF LIFE

Trees improve Kansans' quality of life. Gardens, parks, and other managed green spaces positively affect public well-being and health. Trees cool city streets, clean the air, reduce crime, and increase property values and business traffic. Windbreaks, shelterbelts, and riparian plantings benefit the quality of life for Kansans by improving home energy savings, increasing crop yields, and slowing erosion and sedimentation of reservoirs.

The Community Forestry Program has continued to position itself to boost Kansans' quality of life. With recently secured grant funding, the program has increased the health and safety of the state's community forests. Foresters continue to provide support to their communities through tree boards and municipal employees. Additional funding will continue to be allocated to communities through federally funded cost-share programs for tree planting, pruning, and the removal of hazardous trees.

Photo: Brady Wolken, volunteer and partnership liaison, shared the 2025 5th Grade Arbor Day Poster Contest winning poster with Governor Laura Kelly alongside McPherson 5th grader Hadley.

- ▶ **Allocated \$751,132** in pass-through grant funding to 11 awardees for community forestry projects.
- ▶ **88 Tree City USA** communities certified in 2024.
- ▶ **7 Kansas college** campuses were recognized as Tree Campus Higher Education Campuses.
- ▶ **\$23,001,234 was spent** managing the forestry resources by Kansas Tree City USA communities.
- ▶ **9,358 trees** were planted in Kansas Tree City USA communities.
- ▶ **\$455 million in annual environmental** benefits from community trees, including carbon sequestration, air pollution removal, and stormwater runoff reduction.
- ▶ **5,141 Kansans** are employed in community forestry



FIRE

The Kansas Forest Service Fire Management Program is a vital partner in safeguarding the people and landscapes of Kansas. Through comprehensive training, highly motivated staff, and targeted financial assistance, the program empowers local fire departments across the state to respond effectively to wildland fire emergencies.

Our commitment extends beyond local boundaries. We provide rigorous training and certification to ensure Kansas firefighters meet the highest standards. When wildfires strike beyond our borders, the Kansas Forest Service mobilizes highly skilled personnel to support national firefighting efforts, demonstrating Kansas's dedication to collective safety and resilience. By strengthening the capabilities of our firefighters and fostering collaboration across communities, the Kansas Forest Service Fire Management Program plays a pivotal role in protecting lives, property, and natural resources throughout the state.

- ▶ **Supported 3 counties** in developing Community Wildfire Protection Plans; six bids received for contractor selection.
- ▶ **6 prescribed fire workshops** trained 137 private landowners.
- ▶ **\$557,000** in vehicles and **104 pieces** of safety equipment distributed through fire department support programs.
- ▶ **\$350,000** awarded through the Volunteer Fire Assistance Cost Share Program for wildland fire suppression.
- ▶ Nearly **50,000 gallons of water** were dropped on Kansas wildfires by Kansas Forest Service-contracted aviation resources.
- ▶ **2,603 students trained**, totaling 10,081 hours of fire training, and 189 fire departments received training.

Photo: A live-burn training during the inaugural 2025 Eastern Kansas Wildfire Academy — a fully NWCG-sanctioned event hosted in partnership with Johnson County Fire and Emergency Services Chiefs Association, the Johnson County Wildland Fire Task Force, and Johnson County Community College.







SUSTAINABILITY

The Kansas Forest Service supports healthy grassland and woodland ecosystems. The spread of invasive and undesirable vegetation is abated through prescribed burning and forest management, improving wildlife habitat and landowner satisfaction.

Kansas ecosystem restoration is vital not only to native plants and wildlife, but also to the Kansas economy, which depends on healthy ecosystems. Foresters provided management plans for landowners enrolled in NRCS conservation programs, writing windbreak establishment and renovation plans protecting farmsteads and ag lands, forest buffer plans protecting streams and rivers, tree planting plans to re-establish forest habitat, and forest stand improvement plans to guide management of Kansas forest land.

Participation remains high for the spring and fall conservation seedling program. Increasing production capacity, improving seedling quality, and continuing to maintain a high level of customer satisfaction are focal points at the seedling nursery.

Photo: Forest Health Coordinator Shad Hufnagel peels back the bark on an ash tree in search for emerald ash borer.

- ▶ **243,360 seedlings and 14,200 seeds were distributed** for conservation plantings.
- ▶ **17 eastern Kansas counties** have confirmed emerald ash borer.
- ▶ **6,060 seedlings, in 213 pollinator bundles**, of native tree and shrub species were distributed through the conservation tree program.
- ▶ **14 community tree inventories** were completed in Clyde, Council Grove, Fairway, Highland, Lyndon, Morrill, Osage City, Westwood, Hutchinson, Haven, Formoso, WaKeeney, Colby, and Greensburg.
- ▶ **184 forest stands** covering 1,697 acres received specific treatment plans to improve forest health and enhance wildlife habitat for private landowners.
- ▶ **227 technical assistance requests** were answered by rural foresters, who helped landowners plan and work toward creating sustainable forests on 4,503 acres of land.



DEVELOPING STEWARDS

The Kansas Forest Service supports landowners, students, and communities in their conservation efforts. The annual Arbor Day Poster Contest, Smokey Bear events, field days, and workshops support the protection of Kansas's natural resources and help individuals and communities meet the goals for their property.

The Rural Forestry Program provided technical assistance to landowners across the state, including field visits to provide forestry and natural resources guidance, develop long-term plans for landowners, and educate adults and youth.

The Utilization and Marketing Program maintains a publicly available listing of 59 timber buyers and 50 sawmills in Kansas. The timber industry provides valuable services to landowners and natural resource managers.

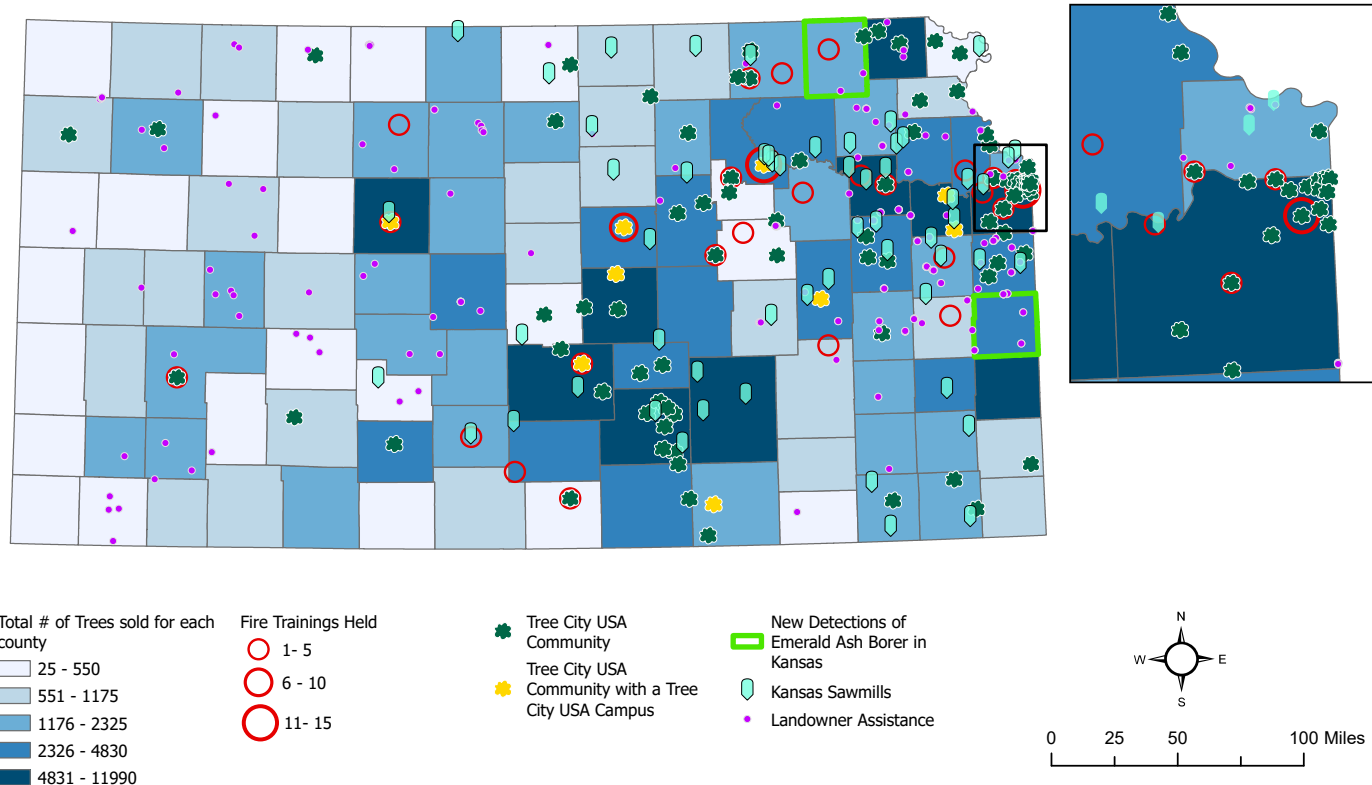
- ▶ **185,000 pounds of black walnuts** were processed at six Kansas hulling stations operated by Hammons Black Walnuts. Hulled walnuts benefit local economies while reducing walnuts sent to landfills.
- ▶ **53 comprehensive Forest Stewardship Plans** were created by rural district foresters to help landowners manage 5,515 woodland acres.
- ▶ **\$842,870 in financial assistance** to landowners was provided by Kansas NRCS to implement conservation practice plans developed by rural foresters.
- ▶ **3,273 adults and youth** were reached through 54 outreach, educational, or training programs led by rural and community foresters.

Photo: EJ Jamison, northeast rural district forester, leads a group of partners, foresters, and USDA Forest Service staff on a tour of Baldwin Woods as part of a regional meeting.





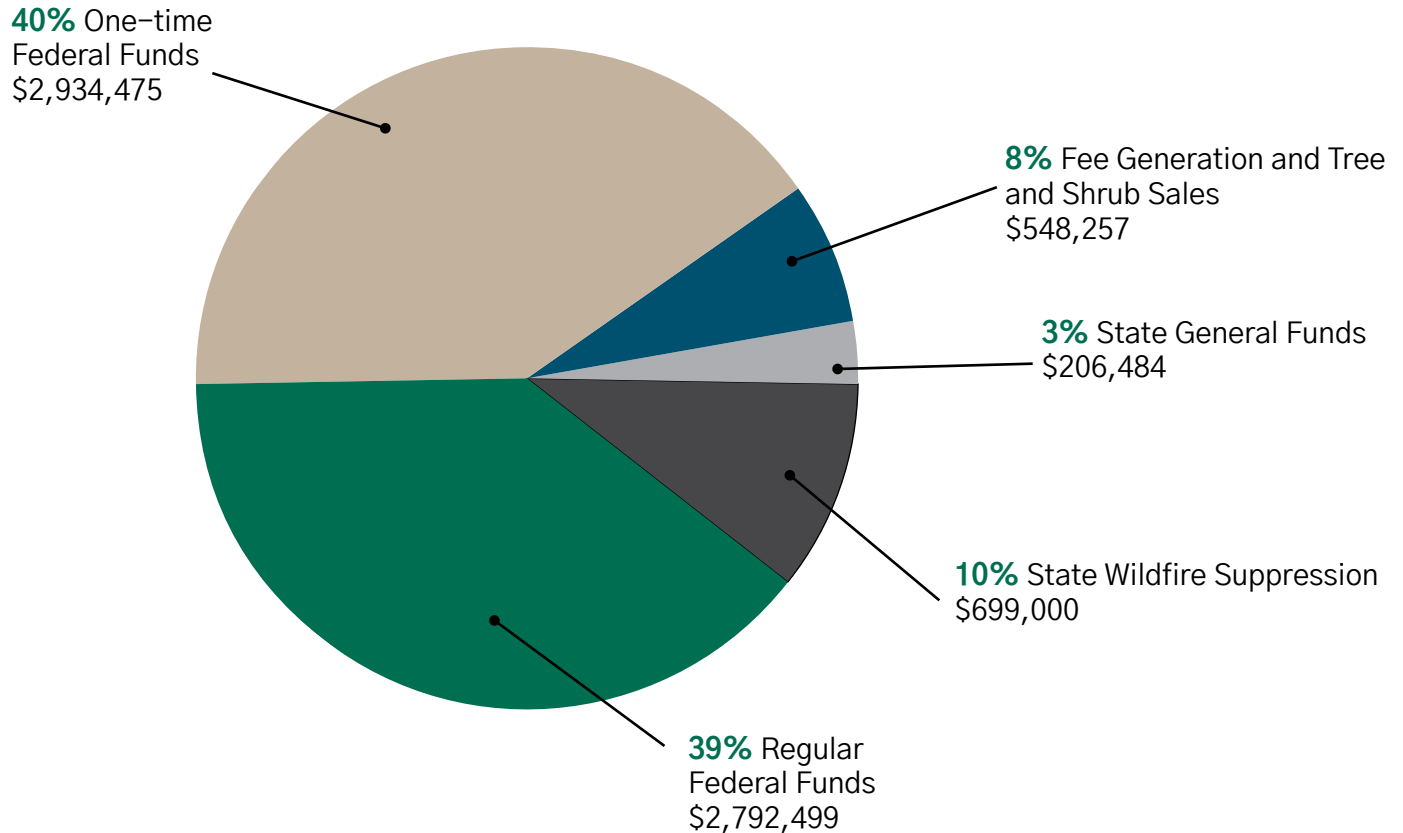
PROGRAM ACTIVITIES





FUNDING

FISCAL YEAR 2025 BUDGET \$7,180,715





KANSAS STATE
UNIVERSITY

Extension

2610 Claflin Rd
Manhattan, KS 66502
kansasforests.org



@kansasforestservice

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