



Forest Debris Management Program

(Hurricane Michael relief package)



On November 18, Governor Nathan Deal signed into law [HB 1EX](#), which provides emergency disaster relief assistance for cleanup efforts for timberland owners as well as emergency funding for state agencies and local governments in areas heaviest impacted by Hurricane Michael, and [HB 4EX](#), which creates a tax credit for timber growers in the 28 counties included in the disaster area who incurred significant damages and expenses due to the storm. Working with Governor Deal's office and our sister agencies, GFC devised the Forest Debris Management Program (FDMP) to implement HB 1EX.

FDMP is designed to help landowners with damage to their forestlands sustained from Hurricane Michael remove and/or manage forest debris from the storm. This program is intended to protect forest health, reduce wildfire risks and increase timber and orchard production. Landowners can hire private contractors to manage the debris or do it themselves. The cost of debris management will be shared at a rate of 80 percent FDMP and 20 percent landowner with maximum payment limitations possible. Applications will be accepted by GFC from **January 14, 2019 through February 11, 2019**. Landowners may apply for funds retroactively. Approved applications will be notified in writing beginning **February 25, 2019**.

General eligibility and program guidelines:

1. Applicant must be the legal owner of the property.
2. Program is not limited by county, but damage must have occurred as a result of Hurricane Michael.
3. Area must consist of at least 10 acres of forestland or a commercial orchard of any size with trees damaged by Hurricane Michael.
4. Landowners can apply for debris management funds retroactively.
5. Cost share may be limited per taxpayer identification number (TIN) depending on the demand for funds. For example, a cap may be set at \$50,000 per TIN. This will be determined at the end of the first sign-up period.
6. Upon completion of the work, participants will be required to submit official cost documentation and a detailed map, showing the property boundary. The map should also identify areas within the property where debris management occurred along the acreage of each area.
7. Cost share payments will come after the work is completed and will be based on official cost documentation. The payment is a cost share based on 80% of the documented cost. The cost must be associated with the minimum, reasonable practices necessary for managing debris and restoring forests or orchards. Participants should be mindful that this is debris management, not landscaping. The average cost of clearing debris from forestland across the Southeast is around \$500 per acre.