

Introduction

Emory University Forest Management Plan: Connectivity For Life

The Emory University community has long recognized that the original, hardwood forest lands of Emory represent irreplaceable scientific, educational, health and aesthetic value for current and future generations of Emory students, staff and faculty.

To restore, preserve and maintain this treasure, the University Senate Committee on the Environment (COE) and Campus Services teamed up to develop and implement the Lullwater Comprehensive Management Plan (2002).

Recognizing that all of Emory’s forest areas need a comprehensive management plan, the COE and Campus Services have partnered again to develop an Emory University Forest Management Plan. The goal is to create, restore, enhance and maintain its forested areas with an emphasis on ecological connectivity, ecosystem function, and native biodiversity.

As our work continues, we invite members of the Emory community to learn more about our efforts, and to join us in recommitting ourselves to efforts that preserve our priceless forest ecosystems.

Christopher Beck, PhD, senior lecturer, biology,
Chairman, University Senate Committee on the Environment

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Vision Statement

We envision a healthy forest ecosystem nourished by clean waterways, sustained by native habitat, and protected from encroachment; a healthy forest ecosystem abundant with the rich biodiversity made possible by the connectivity of Emory’s remaining natural areas; a healthy forest ecosystem that is appreciated, enjoyed and treasured by current and future generations.

Mission Statement

The mission of the Emory University Forest Management Plan is to create, restore, enhance and maintain its forested areas with an emphasis on ecological connectivity, ecosystem function, and native biodiversity.

In support of Emory’s Sustainability Vision, and in coordination with other forest-related University policies, the Forest Management Plan will serve as a comprehensive plan that will enable Emory to follow “best practices” in caring for its forest areas.

Guiding Principles

We believe that protection and nurturing of our forests is a core value of Emory University as stated in our guiding principle on environmental stewardship: “We are good stewards of our resources and the environment, mindful of the interrelationships of all human and natural

systems on our campus. To that end, we must seek alternative practices and strategies to create a sustainable campus that conserves natural resources, restores environmental quality, and protects biodiversity.”

We have a special responsibility to our natural areas given the fact that some of the best-preserved, hardwood forests in the entire Piedmont Province of the southeastern United States exist on property belonging to Emory.

As stated in the 1986 landmark Murdy-Carter “Report on the Status of Forested Land of Emory University, “ Mature forests like those at Emory are self-perpetuating, complex associations of living species, the products of millions of years of evolution and are virtually impossible to replace or recreate if lost. The Emory forests represent a natural resource even more valuable than the much-acclaimed Fernbank Forest in terms of the diversity of species, the presence of rare and endangered species and the absence of human disturbance.”

Forest ecosystems are living, breathing natural systems dependent on other resources—plants, animals, water, microorganisms, soil—to reproduce and thrive. In an urban setting such as Emory University, forest ecosystems are dependent on humans to protect and maintain its health—its very existence.

We believe that the original, hardwood forest lands of Emory are of irreplaceable scientific, educational, health and aesthetic value for current and future generations of Emory students, staff and faculty. We believe that there needs to be a clear distinction between forest lands used for human activity, and those special areas that should be preserved and left undisturbed.

We believe that it is time to marshal our resources, expertise and energy to recommit ourselves to efforts that preserve our priceless forest ecosystems.

Goals, Objectives and Tactics

The Forest Management Plan is an umbrella plan that outlines policy and guidelines for all University forested areas, and incorporates other related University policies, plans and procedures including the Lullwater Comprehensive Management Plan, the No-Net Loss Policy, and the Land Classification System. The goals of the Forest Management Plan will be fulfilled within the context of available resources and other University priorities.

- **Goal: Restore and maintain the connectivity of Emory’s forests, particularly the natural corridor along South Peachtree Creek from Wesley Woods, through Harwood Forest and the Lullwater Preserve, within the context of its Piedmont origins**

- **Objective:** Manage and maintain research areas

- **Objective:** Reestablish native species and remove invasives

- **Objective:** Develop guidelines for tree and plant species for specific areas, including stream bank restoration, and develop protocols for sensitive areas

- **Tactic:** Inventory biological diversity of forest areas including trees, plants, aquatic species, and wildlife

- **Objective:** Develop approved trail map for campus and identify areas that have restricted or very limited access in order to maintain ecological health of forests

- **Goal: Prevent further forest fragmentation and restore connectivity of forest fragments to larger forested areas**

Objective: Develop and implement a reforestation plan to increase the amount of forest on campus

- **Goal: Restore a stream ecosystem structure and function**

Objective: Restore and stabilize stream banks; remove sediments, silt from waterways; restore form and function

- **Goal: Implement the University's Stormwater Management Plan**

- **Goal: Implement the University's Lullwater Comprehensive Management Plan**

- **Goal: Educate the Emory and greater community about the importance of forest ecosystems, including its role in impacting human health; engage the community in activities to fulfill goals of Forest Management Plan**

Objective: Work with surrounding community organizations to integrate Emory's forest into larger forested ecosystem located outside of the University's boundaries

Objective: Develop and implement ongoing and multi-prong communications plan for all stakeholders

Tactics: Create web-based page for Forest Management Plan

- **Goal: Designate individual forest management plans for the University's forest ecosystems—Lullwater Preserve, Wesley Woods, and Harwood Forests—and for central campus areas including Baker Woodlands, Tull Ravine and landscaped areas.**

Objective: Establish Forest Management Committee under the auspices of Campus Services and the University Senate Committee on the Environment (and absorb some Lullwater Management Committee functions, as appropriate)

Objective: Develop and implement strategies that recognize the differences between managing natural forests and urban forests

Tactic: Follow adaptive management practices so that approaches can be evaluated and revised quickly and effectively

- **Goal: Establish a "best practices" model that other universities and organizations can use in maintaining forest ecosystems**

Tactic: Provide demonstration sites and educational opportunities for best management practices in various areas

Tactic: Establish environmental GIS database that links data and maps and can be used to track the effects of the Forest Management Plan

Individual Forest Management Plans/Forest Areas

In addition to the existing Lullwater Comprehensive Management Plan (2002), individual forest management/forest area plans will be developed for Wesley Woods, the Harwood Forest, Baker Woodlands, and the Tull Ravine.

The plans will include recommendations for restoration and guidelines for continuing maintenance within an ecological context, focusing on categories such as streams and lakes, native plant habitat management and improvement, invasive species, wildlife management,

teaching and research areas, and recreation areas (if relevant). Maps, photos, species list and other relevant data will be included.

Plans also will be developed for other areas, including the Houston Mill House ravine, designated areas on Emory's main campus, and Oxford College, as the Forest Management Plan expands and evolves. Additional categories, including an outline of the area's history, will be added to individual management plans.

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