

SOUTH CAROLINA



Thirty-five million acres of wetland forests provide valuable ecosystem services for people living in the US South, including:

- Protection from extreme events
- Recreation, tourism, and aesthetics
- Water filtration and waste treatment
- Food and pollination
- Climate regulation
- Raw materials.

Wetland forest ecosystem services are worth more than \$500 billion per year. But wetland forests are constantly under siege by external forces, including urban expansion, invasive species, increased demand for timber, conversion to intensively managed plantations or

agriculture, pollution, sea-level rise, and the changing climate. Over the next 30 years, how will we protect the valuable services our Southern wetland forests provide? What can we gain if we do the right thing? And what do we stand to lose if we do not invest in our forests?

We investigated how the value of wetland forests in the US South would increase if we protected more land, extended natural riparian buffers, and managed forests more responsibly. Here are the best facts from South Carolina.

South Carolina's Wetland Forests Are Worth \$39.6 Billion

- Worth could increase up to \$5.1 billion by investing in conservation
- Wetland Forest Gem: largest tract of old growth bottomland hardwood forest in Congaree National Park
- 3.1 million acres of wetland forest, including 501 named swamps and 3,669 named streams in the state¹

Protection From Extreme Events: South Carolina's Wetland Forests Provide \$11.9 Billion

- Value in protection from extreme events and water flow regulation could increase up to \$1.5 billion by investing in conservation
- Two flood events cost over a billion dollars in damages each since 1980²
- Between 1851 and 2004, 31 hurricanes and 6 major hurricanes (categories 3-5) made landfall on the North Carolina coastline³

Aesthetics, Tourism, and Recreation: South Carolina's Wetland Forests Provide \$9.8 billion

- Value in aesthetics and recreation could increase up to \$1.4 billion by investing in conservation
- South Carolina had 29.8 million visitors in 2015, which contributed \$20² billion in visitor spending and supported ~200,000 tourism jobs⁴
- Nearly half of residents participated in wildlife-related recreation, spending \$2 billion in 2011⁵

Water Supply and Waste Treatment: South Carolina's Wetland Forests Provide \$9 Billion

- Value in water supply and waste treatment could increase up to \$1.2 billion by investing in conservation
- Over half of residents rely on public sewer systems. Many public facilities rely on natural infrastructure to reduce costs of waste and water treatment⁶
- Over twenty percent of residents rely on private water sources like wells. Residents rely on forests to naturally filter pollutants from their water supply⁶

Food and Pollination: South Carolina's Wetland Forests Provide \$5.7 Billion

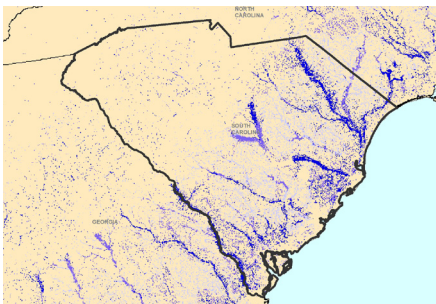
- Value in food and pollination could increase up to \$760 million by investing in conservation
- Wetland forests provide habitat for pollinators of agricultural crops
- Approximately 615,000 residents in the state hunt or fish⁵
- In 2016, hunters purchased nearly 150,000 deer hunting licenses⁷
- In 2016, hunters harvested over 150,000 ducks and geese within the state⁸

Regulating Services: South Carolina's Wetland Forests Provide \$3.4 Billion

- Value in climate regulation, air quality, soil formation, and erosion control could increase up to \$206 million by investing in conservation
- There are an estimated 187 million megagrams of carbon stored in the state's wetland forests, and continual carbon storage reduces the worst impacts of climate change

Raw Materials: South Carolina's Wetland Forests Provide \$180 Million

- In 2011, there were 70 forest product mills (e.g., pulp and timber) employing 8,732 people in the state⁹
- Wetland forests currently provide raw materials worth \$180 million in ecosystem services value, and investing in conservation could increase the worth to \$206 million



There are 187,160,000 megagrams of carbon stored in South Carolina wetland forests.



South Carolina has 3.1 million acres of protected wetland forest (green), with an additional 974,000 acres of wetland forest proposed (purple) to be protected.

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