

Introduction/BIO

Jim Karels

Jim Karels is the State Forester and Director of the Florida Forest Service. He oversees all wildland fire protection on the 26 million acres of land in Florida; directs the largest prescribed fire program in the nation and; provides leadership and guidance on all land management activities for 35 state forests comprising over 1.1 million acres.

Jim is a native of Minnesota, and a graduate of the University of Minnesota. He has over 32 years experience in land management and wildfire suppression and has served with the U.S. Forest Service as well as the Florida Forest Service. He was appointed to his current position as State Forester in May 2008, by the Florida Commissioner of Agriculture.

He represents all 50 states on the Wildland Fire Leadership Council, Wildland Fire Executive Council, and Chair of the National Association of State Foresters Fire Committee, providing support for the implementation and coordination of National Fire Management Policy. Jim also serves as the Vice President of the National Association of State Foresters. Jim oversees the statewide emergency disaster response for the Florida Department of Agriculture and sits as an appointed member of the Governor's Land Acquisition and Restoration Council; additionally, he sits on numerous national boards and associations dealing with wildland fire suppression, forest land management and he led the Yarnell Hill Fire Investigation.

