

Jim Karels
State Forester/Director, Florida Forest Service
President, National Association of State Foresters

Jim Karels has been the Director of the Florida Forest Service since 2008. He oversees all wildland fire and land management activities and also has held the positions of Fire Chief and Assistant Director. He began his career with the division as a Forest Ranger and firefighter suppressing wildfires in 1985. He has more 30 years of experience in wildfire and emergency response and land management with the U.S. Forest Service and the Florida Forest Service.

Jim has coordinated the department's Emergency Response Program since 1995 through numerous hurricanes, floods, tornadoes, wildfire outbreaks and other emergencies. He is currently the president of the National Association of State Foresters, representing all 50 states on forestry and wildland fire issues. He also represents all states on the Wildland Fire Executive Council with the U.S. Forest Service and Department of the Interior. He received his Bachelor of Science in Forest Management from the University of Minnesota.