



New Forestry Video Shares Challenges and Solutions  
*by Stasia Kelly*

When faced with a complicated communication objective, the Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC) decided to stop, sort, and simplify. The result is a media tool that tells a big story in a way audiences of all descriptions can understand.

The project had its beginnings in 2015, when the forest agency updated its evaluation of Georgia's 25 million acres of forestland. The report listed eight ongoing threats to forest sustainability, which led to a "roadmap" that outlines strategies to deal with those challenges. The "Forest Action Plan" (FAP) is a thorough document used by the GFC and its partners to help citizens understand threats facing our forests and ways we can mitigate those challenges.

Reducing a detailed document to an easy-to-understand communication vehicle was a challenge in itself! The GFC Communications Department decided an animated video would best serve the purpose, and in March of 2017 issued a Request for Proposal to numerous video production outlets. In May, a first creative meeting with ECG Productions of Atlanta was held. There was a lot of listening and note-taking in that meeting, and throughout the coming weeks, questions, answers and resources were shared.

Threats facing Georgia forests include urbanization and changing land use, insects and disease, wildfire and many more. To address these threats, eight strategic issues were used in the video to explain forest maintenance efforts: water quality and quantity, urbanization, forest health, biodiversity, air quality, fire management, fragmentation and parcelization and economics and changing markets. That's still a lot of information to share in a video that was targeted to be just three minutes long!

ECG was up to the task, however, and rapidly began producing drawings of people, forests and images that told the FAP story. The GFC team provided feedback and resources that helped sharpen the messages. Who knew a tree could have so many renditions? Georgia trees look different than western trees, GFC vehicles have their own unique look, as do images representing our state's biodiversity.

An online tool that proved invaluable to this process is known as Wipster. ECG was able to upload their latest renditions and adjustments to the Wipster website, where GFC personnel could provide specific feedback by placing notations on the video itself.



Next it was time to add music and a voice-over. Several samples of each were presented to the GFC team, and within a few more weeks, all pieces of the puzzle had been clicked together and a final version of the video was completed.

"We're all very pleased with the way it turned out," said GFC Communication Specialist and Project Coordinator Joanna Warren. "ECG did an amazing job and now our agency has a very valuable communications tool. We'll be using it far and wide to spread the word about how everyone can help keep Georgia's rich forest resource sustainable for generations to come."

*See the Forest Action Plan video here: <https://youtu.be/sHfet7jATcw>.*

*For more information about the FAP as it applies to your county, contact: [jwarren@gfc.state.ga.us](mailto:jwarren@gfc.state.ga.us).*

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