

**Membership Recruitment and Retention Strategy  
Southern Forest Service Retiree’s Association  
Updated: August 16, 2023**

The mission of the Southern Forest Service Retiree’s Association is to create and maintain an active network of Forest Service retirees in the South for the purpose of sustaining relationships, sharing information, and promoting involvement in natural resource issues. The more retirees who are engaged as members, the better this mission can be met. Therefore:

**The goal of this strategy is to increase the number and proportion of Forest Service retirees in the South who are members of the Association.**

**Membership Trends**

As of December 2021, membership was at 353 retirees. As of March 2023, membership was at 338 members.

**Strategies and Actions**

We aim to increase Association membership using 7 broad strategies:

1. Solicit feedback from members, prospective members, and current employees near retirement on ways to strengthen and grow the Association.
2. Update and implement a living Membership Retention and Recruitment Strategy.
3. Develop a marketing plan and products and use them to promote the Association and recruit new members.
4. Promote the Association with current Forest Service employees.
5. Improve engagement with local Association groups.
6. Identify and initiate program elements that add value to Association membership.
7. Enhance digital capacity and social media profile of the Association.

Strategies and associated actions are detailed below. Completed actions are highlighted in green:

**1. Solicit feedback from members, prospective members, and current employees near retirement on ways to strengthen and grow the Association.**

Actions	Persons Responsible	Planned Year	Accomp. Year
Convene focus groups and compile focus group results	Membership Chair	2021	2021
Conduct member feedback survey	Membership Chair	2022	2022
Add feedback box to the Association website, with input going to the President’s and Vice-President’s email inbox	Vice President	2023	2023

Accomplishment Notes:

- Synopsis of feedback from focus groups:
  - Many employees are not aware or have knowledge of the Retiree Association. Develop flyers to post at regional office, field offices and work centers. Work with ASC to include Retiree Association information in Retiree packages.
  - Consider taking on a project that benefits the National Forest Service or the Community. In-kind donation on behalf of the SFSRA to a non-profit organization.
  - Consider location of meetings, to consider variety and geographical location of members. Add more topics relevant to retirees.
  - Update payment methods to include electronic payment options.
  - Re-brand the newsletter to better reflect our diversity and inclusiveness. Add more topics relevant to retirees.
- Draft member feedback survey was created by David Meriwether as of Feb 2022. Plan to deploy in March 2022.
- Synopsis of member feedback survey results is posted on the SFSRA website, <https://www.southernforestretees.org/>
- Established advisory board to review feedback received from membership survey related to newsletter name change.
- The SFSRA website has a section where members can submit any comments/suggestions/concerns to the SFSRA <https://www.southernforestretees.org/>

**2. Update and implement an active Membership Retention and Recruitment Strategy. Continue to identify barriers to participation/membership and opportunities to add value to membership in the Association.**

Actions	Persons Responsible	Planned Year	Accomp. Year
Review, update, prioritize, and approve this Strategy as part of annual board meeting	Board	2022	2022
Conduct SWOT analysis using feedback from Strategy 1	Board	2022	2022
Review, update, prioritize, and approve this Strategy as part of annual board meeting	Board	2023	

Accomplishment Notes:

- One issue from SWOT analysis was negative connotations of the newsletter name, The Dixie Ranger. Leadership decided it was time to address this issue. Dialogue with membership was initiated in the July 2022 newsletter. Decision to change the name of the newsletter was made in January 2023.

**3. Develop a marketing plan and products and use them to promote the Association and recruit members.**

Actions	Persons Responsible	Planned Year	Accomp. Year
Develop powerpoint presentation on the Association	Membership Chair	2021	2021
Develop short video about the Association; post on website		2022	
Develop vision statement for the Association.	Vice President	2023	2023
Develop team and strategy for recruiting members into Association leadership	President	Spring 2023	2023
Develop leadership position descriptions	President	2023	
Conduct membership drive	Board	Fall 2023	
Review and revise Association powerpoint presentation	Board/ Membership Chair	2023	

Accomplishment Notes:

- Powerpoint presentation created for presentations with Forest Service Employees on SFSRA. Recommend review and revising as needed every year.
- Leadership recruitment team established in 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2023 and used to fill Board vacancies.
- In 1st quarter of CY 2023 is working on strategy to recruit Retiree Members for current and future needed positions on the Board Of Directors and other officer and staff positions such as Newsletter Editor; Vice-President, Membership Chair, Database Manager, Webmaster, Secretary, & Events Manager. A working group was established to address this.
- Vision Statement was developed and published in the July 2023 issue of the Association newsletter.
- Draft position descriptions were developed in Spring 2023. They still need to be finalized as of August 2023.

**4. Promote the Association with current Forest Service employees.**

Actions	Persons Responsible	Planned Year	Accomp. Year
Produce flier promoting the SFSRA for posting on bulletin boards in Forest Service offices	Membership Chair	2021	2021
Initiate regular communication with Forest Service Executive Assistants to solicit their assistance in identifying new retirees and sharing Association information	Membership Chair	2021	2021 and On-going
Include Association website link on Retirement Information website		2021	2021

Include Association information in package sent to those applying for retirement		2021	
Send employees who have announced their retirement a letter from the Association President congratulating them, a certificate giving them one year of free membership, and the most recent Retiree Newsletter	Membership Chair	2022	2022 and Ongoing
Initiate regular Zoom meetings with prospective retirees. Distribute invitations to these Zoom meetings through Forest Service leadership.			
Identify and participate in current employee appreciation events and mentoring programs as Association representatives			
Hold lunch-and-learn events with current employees on the activities and benefits of the Association			

Accomplishment Notes:

- Production and distribution of bulletin board flier was pending return of employees to in person work vs virtual due to COVID-19 (2021). In 2023, President of SFSRA met w/RF to notify and move forward w/publication and distribution. This was completed towards the 4th quarter of CY 2022. Sent to RO and Forests for distribution and posting.
- We contacted HRM Director to discuss possible inclusion of retiree association links to their website under the Retirement Information Section and they agreed to include a document as part of the retirement package with information regarding all Forest Service Retiree Associations (2021).
- We held zoom meetings with RO and Field Executive Assistants to discuss the SFSRA and have them serve as a liaison in informing the Membership Chair of any future employee retirements (2021).
- We drafted a retirement letter from the President and certificate of one year of free membership (2021/2022).
- In 2nd quarter of 2023, email sent to RF Executive Assistant asking a reminder be sent to the Forest Executive Assistants to advise the Membership Chair via email when a Forest Service Employee has announced their retirement, so we may send to them electronically the letter from the SFSRA President with certificate and newsletter.

**5. Improve engagement with local Association groups.**

Actions	Persons Responsible	Planned Year	Accomp. Year
Initiate regular communication with local group Points of Contact.		2021	2021 and On-going

Encourage establishment of local groups where none currently exist (including PR and for Southern Research Station). Identify and encourage local leaders.		2022	
--	--	------	--

Accomplishment Notes:

- We conducted a zoom meeting with Field Retiree Point of Contacts (2021).

**6. Identify and initiate program elements that add value to Association membership.**

Actions	Persons Responsible	Planned Year	Accomp. Year
Develop process for sponsoring one project a year within the Region.			
Develop program for recognizing members annually for outstanding public service/volunteer work.			
Broaden scope of speaker topics at meetings.			
Enhance engagement of the Association with the National Forest Service Retirees Association			
Initiate series of Zoom social gatherings for members			

Accomplishment Notes:

- Sponsor project process: Need to follow up on this action
  - Need a nomination and selection process.
  - Consider creating another position to support this process.
  - Silvia Molina received a written proposal from Jacqueline Belwood (Forest Service employee Dennis Krusac spouse) to produce a series of audio recordings that highlight the career, experiences, and accomplishments of retirees from all levels at the USDA Forest Service (FS). Archive these recordings in an easily searchable and already established database called StoryCorps ([www.storycorps.org](http://www.storycorps.org)). The proposal is available for review from Silvia.
  - Projects might include adopting a trail on national forest.
- Board member suggested we look at ways to add value for those retirees that are outside of the Atlanta area.

**7. Enhance digital capacity and social media profile of the Association.**

Actions	Persons Responsible	Planned Year	Accomp. Year
Send annual email reminder of membership dues	Membership Chair	2022	2022
Provide method for paying dues online			
Create online forum (on website or through social media) for members to post updates and opportunities for professional and social gatherings			

Accomplishment Notes:

- In 2022, we mailed out hardcopy reminders via mail and also sent out email reminders.
- For 2023, we need to mail out email reminders to members who have not yet paid their dues. Requesting list from David Meriwether.
- Discussions held in 2023 to commence looking at implementing method for paying dues online. Need to establish a team to look into this and provide recommendations to the Board.