



National Association of State Foresters | 444 N. Capitol St NW, Suite 540 | Washington DC 20001 | 202.624.5415 | www.stateforesters.org

All-Lands Policy Platform: A Seven-Point Plan for America's Forests

The National Association of State Foresters (NASF) supports the efforts of U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Secretary Tom Vilsack and U.S. Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell to advance a shared vision for the nation's forests based on an all-lands approach to conservation. An all-lands vision for forests must recognize the value of all forests and trees—rural and urban, public and private—in all states and U.S. territories. While NASF's recommendations focus on state and private forests, we recognize that public benefits as well as forest threats cross boundaries and are best addressed through integrated partnerships and infrastructure (markets, resource professionals, and information).

Achieving an all-lands vision for forests requires flexible state-based approaches informed by Statewide Forest Resource Assessments and Strategies.

Landscape-scale conservation requires flexible state-based approaches that ensure sustainability while acknowledging differences between private and public land management and state laws and regulations. State Foresters are producing Statewide Forest Resource Assessments and Strategies that are the nation's first comprehensive state-by-state initiatives to identify and address landscape-scale forest conservation needs. This historic effort should drive policies that support flexible state-based efforts for achieving effective outcomes. The overarching need is to keep working forests working, with specific needs best defined at the state level. Statewide Forest Resource Assessments and Strategies will provide an essential foundation for achieving a national landscape-level vision for forest conservation.

USDA and Forest Service leadership is needed to align government policies, increase federal investments, and strengthen partnerships that benefit all forests.

Both USDA and the Forest Service have a unique ability and responsibility to focus policies and resources on elevating healthy working forests as a strategic national economic and environmental priority. An all-lands approach requires strong support for the Forest Service State and Private Forestry (S&PF) mission area, interagency collaboration, effective delivery of Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Farm Service Agency (FSA) forestry funding assistance, and a commitment to state and private partnerships. As the nation's lead forestry agency, Forest Service budgets, resources, and agency culture should reflect the public benefits derived from private forests. Targeted and new "next generation" federal investments in market development, state forestry agency cooperative programs, landowner assistance, and information resources will provide the essential foundation for successful all-lands outcomes.

State forestry agencies provide essential infrastructure, oversight, services, and professional expertise needed to manage and protect forests across all ownerships.

As public servants, State Foresters are credible sources of information and leadership with detailed knowledge of local economies, forest resources, partners, and landowners. State forestry agencies provide essential "boots on the ground" infrastructure that includes delivering technical and financial assistance to landowners, administering best management practices (BMP) programs and forest practices regulations, implementing conservation tools such as easements, and providing wildland fire



National Association of State Foresters | 444 N. Capitol St NW, Suite 540 | Washington DC 20001 | 202.624.5415 | www.stateforesters.org

suppression and invasive species control. State Forests and state tree seedling nurseries supply essential elements for landscape-scale conservation. Most importantly, State Foresters foster partnerships that multiply the efforts of all resource professionals and conservation experts. The infrastructure provided and supported by state forestry agencies is essential for maximizing public benefits from forests and meeting emerging challenges.

A 7-POINT PLAN FOR AMERICA'S FORESTS

- 1) Federal Agency Leadership & Collaboration** – Provide visible USDA and Forest Service (USFS) leadership to promote the State & Private Forestry mission area and align government policies supporting partnerships and incentives that meet the needs of private forest landowners.
 - Establish and support the Forest Resource Coordinating Committee (authorized in Sec. 8005 of the 2008 Farm Bill).
 - Reinforce and support the USDA Joint Forestry Team commitment: “State forestry agencies have the primary leadership role and responsibility for delivery of forestry programs on State and private lands.”
 - Develop goals for NRCS funding assistance that include forestry targets, agency-wide acceptance and promotion of USFS Forest Stewardship Plans, and technical assistance delivery through state forestry agencies.
 - Ensure inter-agency collaboration with Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Department of the Interior etc. to increase resources for addressing common priorities and ensure beneficial policies that avoid unintended consequences (e.g. EPA rules that limit use of tools that produce landscape-scale environmental benefits such as prescribed burning and soil fumigants).

- 2) Priority Landscapes & Forest Resource Needs** – Utilize Statewide Forest Resource Assessments and Strategies combined with the best available inventory and research information to inform policy development and focus resources on priority landscapes.
 - Enhance state forestry agency capabilities for implementing priority strategies and actions identified in Statewide Forest Resource Assessments and Strategies.
 - Establish the Forest Inventory & Analysis Program (FIA) as the nation’s premier information source for forest data – secure full funding to implement in all states/territories and expand capabilities to meet emerging information needs.
 - Convene a national Research Summit or Blue Ribbon Panel to assess the quantity and quality of applied ecological, economic, and social research directed at assisting communities and private landowners maintain trees and working forests.
 - Build upon existing partnerships to establish a National Wildland Fire Framework and Cohesive Strategy.



National Association of State Foresters | 444 N. Capitol St NW, Suite 540 | Washington DC 20001 | 202.624.5415 | www.stateforesters.org

3) Targeted Funding for Essential Infrastructure – Increase boots-on-the-ground capacity and essential infrastructure for protecting forests from harm, conserving working forest landscapes, and enhancing public benefits from trees and forests in all states and territories.

- Create a next generation of federal funding grants for state forestry agencies that support an all-lands approach, enhance capacity to support all landowners, and address activities identified in Statewide Forest Resource Assessments and Strategies. This should build on and not replace existing funding and support expanded and flexible state-based initiatives in areas such as:
 - Emergency and non-emergency fire suppression
 - Forest biomass, carbon, and ecosystem services market development
 - Insect, disease, and invasive species control
 - State forestry agency capacity to coordinate and deliver the fundamental infrastructure for effective forest resource management and protection
 - Green jobs and rural economic development.
- Secure meaningful increases in federal funding targeted at base programs supporting management and protection for private working forests, urban & community forests, and agro-forests:
 - State & Private Forestry, State Fire Assistance, Forest Inventory & Analysis
 - Centers of specialized expertise such as the USDA National Agroforestry Center
 - USDA Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) Emerging Plant Pests Program
 - USDA NRCS and FSA forestry assistance programs
- Secure full funding for all forestry programs authorized in the 2008 Farm Bill (e.g. BCAP, Community Forest and Open Space, CRP, EQIP, etc.).
- Promote fire-adapted communities through support of state forestry agency capacity and leadership to achieve wildland urban interface fire prevention and protection strategies.

4) Market Contributions to Forest Health & Restoration - Support existing markets and develop new markets to enable forest landowners to sustain forests, address forest health and restoration needs, and contribute to economic growth.

- Support effective utilization of the USDA Office of Ecosystem Services as a center of expertise for developing credible legislative, policy, and market frameworks for new ecosystem services markets that add value to private forests.
- Establish a new comprehensive Forest Markets Program (similar to the Economic Action Program with robust funding and specific direction) to support the development of forest markets, wood utilization infrastructure, and state forestry agency capacity to facilitate local market development and oversight.
- Adopt public sector policies that encourage private sector green building standards (e.g. USGBC's LEED) to recognize wood as a preferred material and give equal preference to multiple certification schemes.



National Association of State Foresters | 444 N. Capitol St NW, Suite 540 | Washington DC 20001 | 202.624.5415 | www.stateforesters.org

- 5) **Climate Change, Renewable Energy, & Water** – Connect forests to high-profile national priorities and create new markets by ensuring strong recognition of the value of working forests in climate change, renewable energy, and water legislation.
 - Ensure that federal climate change, renewable energy, and water legislation and policies recognize forestry contributions, include new market opportunities, and support state and private climate mitigation and adaptation activities.
 - Develop and implement a major public service advertising campaign based on State & Private Forestry Redesign themes (protect forests from harm, conserve working forest landscapes, and enhance public benefits from trees and forests).
 - Deliver a high profile communications initiative for the 2011 International Year of Forests that showcases the value of forests in meeting climate change, renewable energy, and clean water needs.

- 6) **Legislation & Policies that Sustain Trees & Forests** – Improve legislation and policies that maintain community trees and keep working forests working.
 - Elevate forests as a national priority through the development of a national framework for sustainable forests that raises awareness of the value of working forests, maintains state/landowner flexibility, and promotes policies to keep working forests working.
 - Restore National Forest health and working forest capacity by eliminating process gridlock and barriers to forest management
 - Convene Process Predicament and Emergency Forest Infrastructure Task Forces, promulgate a new workable Land and Resource Management Planning Rule, and amend NEPA procedures to shift the focus to the large landscape level.
 - Revise U.S. tax policies to encourage long-term forest ownership and ensure federal legislation and policies that promote private forest management and protection.
 - Enhance liability protection for non-governmental organizations and professionals engaged in wildfire suppression and prescribed burning.

- 7) **Proof of Concept Demonstrations on Priority Landscapes** – Develop and support a portfolio of projects that demonstrate an all-lands approach to forest conservation.
 - Institutionalize innovation by selecting at least one project per state from the State & Private Forestry Redesign competitive process for expansion to permanent program support.
 - Fund large-scale regional projects to meet priority conservation needs identified by State Foresters and conservation group partners.
 - Use authorized programs such as the Forest Landscape Restoration Act (FLRA).