



STATE FORESTER PRIORITIES FOR *The Farm Bill*

BACKGROUND



As Congress works to draft the next Farm Bill, the National Association of State Foresters is engaging with partners to champion key priorities for state and private forestry.

By enhancing support for America's trees and forests, this critical piece of legislation can provide a unique opportunity to support rural America's economic backbone and improve the quality of life of our nation's communities.

FOREST FACTS



- There are 750 million acres of forests in the United States including 136 million acres of urban and community forests.
- Nearly 60 percent of America's forests are privately owned.
- 90 percent of the nation's wood supply comes from privately owned land.
- The United States pulp, paper, packaging, and wood products manufacturing industry manufactures more than \$200 billion in products annually, and employs approximately 900,000 people. (AF&PA)

FORESTRY PRIORITIES FOR THE NEXT FARM BILL



The National Association of State Foresters encourages members of Congress to support Farm Bill policies and programs that:

- Help achieve effective and efficient long-term conservation of our nation's state, private, and public forests;
- Encourage the retention and perpetuation of forestland in the face of economic pressures from urban growth and development;
- Increase employment and grow rural economies through active forest management;
- Enhance achievement of forest conservation program outcomes and increase the availability and utility of those programs to landowners and land managers;
- Protect and enhance wildlife habitat, particularly habitat for at-risk species subject to listing authorities of the Endangered Species Act.



SUPPORT POLICIES AND PROGRAMS THAT ACHIEVE EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT LONG-TERM PROTECTION OF FOREST RESOURCES INCLUDING:

- Encourage the USDA Forest Service to work in conjunction with the State Forester and in consultation with the state Forest Action Plan to develop annual targets as part of the budget process for implementation of the Insect and Disease Treatment program; extend the program (authorization of appropriations) beyond the 2024 existing "sunset" date for another 10 years.
- Develop a program for federal lands at high risk for wildfire, similar to the insect and disease program designations and streamlined planning processes.
- Incorporate comprehensive wildfire funding reform language into the Farm Bill. A comprehensive solution should address fire transfers ("fire borrowing") and the continued erosion of USDA Forest Service non-fire program budgets over time due to the dramatic increasing costs of wildfire suppression. To the extent that the Farm Bill process can help facilitate a Congressional solution to this issue, we ask that Congress find a comprehensive wildfire funding solution quickly for the Forest Service and the Department of the Interior.

SUPPORT POLICIES AND PROGRAMS THAT INCREASE EMPLOYMENT AND GROW RURAL ECONOMIES THROUGH ACTIVE FOREST MANAGEMENT:

- Ensure that woody biomass receives the same incentives and tax advantages as other renewable energy sources and programs.
- Include tall timber building legislation as part of the Farm Bill in order to advance utilization opportunities.





SUPPORT POLICIES AND PROGRAMS THAT ENCOURAGE THE RETENTION AND PERPETUATION OF FORESTLAND AND ASSOCIATED VALUES, GOODS, AND SERVICES:

- Establish a five-year national reforestation initiative with special income tax based incentives and targeted at regions experiencing rapid land development and/or forest loss or wildfire and insect and disease devastation.
- Establish a green infrastructure tree planting and maintenance program for communities to improve human health, water quality, reduce storm water flooding and treatment, reduce energy costs, increase business opportunities, reduce crime and improve air quality.
- Establish a program that would support source water protection and stormwater management, including state water quality best management practices (BMPs) programs.

SUPPORT POLICIES AND PROGRAMS THAT PROTECT AND ENHANCE WILDLIFE HABITAT, PARTICULARLY HABITAT FOR AT-RISK SPECIES:

- NASF supports an expanded role for state agencies in evaluating potential species listings, policies and implementation. For example, NASF would support strategic revisions to Section 10 of the Endangered Species Act, which authorizes Habitat Conservation Plans, Safe Harbor Agreements and Candidate Conservation Agreements {Section 10(a)(1)(A) & (B)}.





SUPPORT POLICIES THAT ENHANCE ACHIEVEMENT OF FOREST CONSERVATION PROGRAM OUTCOMES AND INCREASE THE AVAILABILITY AND UTILITY OF THOSE PROGRAMS TO LANDOWNERS AND LAND MANAGERS:

- Codify the Landscape Scale Restoration program as part of the Farm Bill. This bill highlights the importance of state Forest Action Plans and focuses funding on the highest national priorities in those plans. This legislation would also encourage federal land managers to focus a portion of hazardous fuels funding to support cross-boundary fuels reduction work in coordination with State Foresters, and particularly in areas identified as priorities in state Forest Action Plans.
- Expand opportunities to utilize Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) by removing the “exception” for reconstruction and maintenance of forest roads in the Farm Bill GNA. Without the ability to replace culverts or reconstruct roads, the Good Neighbor Authority will have limited application in forest management projects. The projects, which would be implemented by state agencies, go through the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process and are approved by the responsible federal agency.

