

EPA Nonpoint Source Grants Support State Non-Regulatory Approaches to Clean Water & Forest Management



ABOUT NASF

The National Association of State Foresters (NASF) is composed of the directors of state and territorial forestry agencies and the District of Columbia.

NASF represents State and Territorial Forester interests by influencing forest policy and leading efforts to optimize social, economic, and environmental benefits of trees and forests.

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U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) State and Tribal Assistance Grants (STAG) provide critical support to states to take priority actions in achieving Clean Water Act standards, including those that could be impacted by forest management. These funds represent the cooperation in the “cooperative federalism” model.

Of particular importance are the **categorical grants for nonpoint source pollution prevention (known as Section 319 funds)**. This funding allows states to address their highest priority issues relative to minimizing water quality issues from nonpoint sources (agriculture, forestry, stormwater, etc). **Federal funds are matched by states at a rate of 60:40.**

The National Association of State Foresters urges support at the current \$165 million funding level for this critical grant program which helps state forestry agencies protect water quality during forestry activities.

In fiscal year 2016, more than \$1.1 million of Section 319 funding was allocated to state forestry agencies to deliver priority water quality and best management practices (BMP) programs in a diverse range of states including Mississippi, Georgia, Nevada, North Carolina, Texas, and West Virginia. In addition, 319 grant funding in every state is used to supplement state forestry water quality-related priorities through urban and riparian tree planting, enforcement response of BMP violations, watershed-specific interventions, and more.

Forestry BMPs are effective, affordable, and practical measures implemented to protect water quality when undertaking silvicultural activities. Forestry BMPs have been evaluated, tested, revised, and adapted over time by each state since their inception in the 1970’s.

Examples of BMP-related activities funded by EPA Section 319 grant funds are:

- BMP implementation surveys/assessments on logging sites;
- BMP training for landowners and governmental entities;
- Logger education and workshops on best practices;
- Investigation and resolution of citizen complaints of water quality impacts from forestry operations;
- Ongoing refinement and improvement of BMP standards.

In 2015, NASF released a report on state BMP programs *Protecting Water Quality through State Forestry Best Management Practices*. Two key findings:

- **BMP implementation rates average 91 percent nationwide** and state BMPs are effectively providing water quality protection.
- BMP monitoring is recognized as an important information source about the interaction between forest management and water quality, which has increased demands on state programs. Unfortunately, **the availability of federal resources to support state BMP programs has not kept pace with the increased demand.**

The Trump Administration is considering eliminating the EPA Section 319 grant program in its preliminary budget discussions. NASF proposes maintaining the \$165 million funding level for this critical grant program. **Federal investment that is in support of state-defined BMPs will support the continued growth of non-regulatory approaches that leverage state funding, achieve federal environmental goals, and support rural job growth.**

Success in Mississippi: Annual 319 funding to the Mississippi Forestry Commission (MFC) supports dedicated staff that assist loggers and landowners with water quality management, and allows for periodic statewide surveys of BMP implementation and effectiveness. The most recent survey in 2016 shows 96 percent BMP implementation, which helps demonstrate that federal regulatory intervention on forestry for clean water or aquatic endangered species would be redundant. Thanks to steady 319 funding, the MFC water quality program has trained almost 600 staff, loggers, foresters and landowners in the basics of BMPs over the past two years.