

**Written Public Testimony of Ken Pimlott  
Director, California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection  
On Behalf of the National Association of State Foresters**

**Submitted to the House Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies**

**March 22, 2012**

The National Association of State Foresters (NASF) appreciates the opportunity to submit written public testimony to the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies regarding our Fiscal Year (FY) 2013 appropriations recommendations. Our priorities center on appropriations for the USDA Forest Service (Forest Service) State and Private Forestry (S&PF) programs. State Foresters fully appreciate the difficult choices that come with spending decisions. However, the commitment to the American people must also include making smart investments in programs that provide significant benefits to the health of our economy and our environment. We therefore recommend that FY 2013 appropriations for S&PF be held at \$262 million, representing similar funding levels enacted in FY 2012.

State Foresters deliver technical and financial assistance, along with forest health, water and wildfire protection for more than two-thirds of the nation's forests. The Forest Service S&PF mission area provides vital support for delivering these services alongside other socioeconomic and environmental health benefits in both rural and urban areas. The comprehensive process for delivering such services is articulated in each of the state Forest Action Plans as authorized in the 2008 Farm Bill. S&PF programs provide a significant return on the federal investment by leveraging the boots-on-the-ground and financial resources of state agencies to deliver assistance to forest landowners, tribes and communities. As state and federal governments face extremely tight fiscal conditions, State Foresters, in partnership with the S&PF mission area of the Forest Service, are best positioned to maximize the effectiveness of the limited resources available to respond to priority forest issues and focus efforts in those areas where they are needed most.

**RESPONDING TO PRIORITY FOREST ISSUES, TRENDS AND THREATS**

Management activities are underway to implement the state Forest Action Plans and respond to the following trends, issues and priorities:

*Forest Pests and Invasive Plants*

Among the greatest threats identified in the Forest Action Plans are exotic forest pests and invasive species. The growing number of damaging pests is often a result of the introduction and spread by way of wooden shipping materials, movement of firewood and through various types of recreation. A new pest is introduced every two to three years. These pests have the potential to displace native trees, shrubs and other vegetation types in forests. The Forest Service estimates that hundreds of native and nonnative insects and diseases damage the nation's forests each year. In 2009, approximately 12 million acres suffered mortality from insects and diseases.<sup>1</sup> These losses impact the availability of clean and abundant water, wildlife habitat, clean air and other environmental services that may be lost or impacted due to insect and disease infestation.

---

<sup>1</sup> Man, Gary. 2010. Major Forest Insect and Disease Conditions in the United States: 2009 Update. Last accessed on March, 7, 2012 at: [http://www.fs.fed.us/foresthealth/publications/ConditionsReport\\_09\\_final.pdf](http://www.fs.fed.us/foresthealth/publications/ConditionsReport_09_final.pdf)

Further, extensive areas of high insect or disease mortality can set the stage for large-scale, catastrophic wildfire.

In response, the Cooperative Forest Health Management program provides technical and financial assistance to states and territories to maintain healthy, productive forest ecosystems on non-federal forest lands. Funding for the Program supports activities related to prevention, suppression, and eradication of insects, diseases, and plants as well as conducting forest health monitoring through pest surveys. The Program helped combat native and invasive pests on over 766,000 acres of Cooperative lands in FY2011.<sup>2</sup>

***NASF supports the proposed consolidation of the Forest Health Program under State and Private Forestry and urges funding the Forest Health—Cooperative Lands Program at the current FY 2012 enacted level of \$49 million.*** Any further cuts to this program beyond those made in FY 2012 will necessitate deeper reductions in support for communities already facing outbreaks and expose more of the nation's forests and trees to the devastating and costly effects of exotic and invasive pests and pathogens. This request is supported by a strong diversity of organizations in the forestry, conservation and environmental community.<sup>3</sup>

#### *Fuel Loads and Wildland Fire*

More people in fire-prone landscapes, high fuel loads, drought and unhealthy landscapes are among the factors that have led State Foresters to identify wildland fire as a significant priority issue in their Forest Action Plans. These factors have created a wildland fire situation that has become increasingly expensive and complex and, in many cases, threatens human life and property. In 2011, over 74,000 wildland fires burned more than 8.7 million acres.<sup>4</sup> In the wake of these larger fires, the number of structures destroyed also surpassed the annual average with over 5,200 structures, including nearly 3,500 residences.<sup>1</sup> Of the 66,700 communities across the country currently at risk of wildland fire, only 21 percent are prepared for wildland fire.<sup>5</sup> NASF and many other organizations in the forestry, conservation and environmental community agrees that the Forest Service State Fire Assistance (SFA) Program is essential in addressing the threat of wildland fire on non-federal lands.<sup>6</sup>

SFA is the fundamental federal mechanism that assists states and local fire departments in developing preparedness and response capabilities for wildland fire management on non-federal lands. This program helps train and equip first responders who can quickly and efficiently respond to wildland fires. By directing resources to actions that help reduce the number of large wildland fires—including prevention education, preparedness activities and fuels mitigation—the SFA program directly addresses concerns over rising wildland fire suppression costs, while also reducing wildland fire risks. In FY 2011, SFA directly funded hazardous fuel treatments on nearly 202,000 acres and provided assistance to 14,724 communities as they prepare for (and mitigate the risk of) wildland fire.<sup>2</sup> ***NASF supports funding for the program at no less current enacted levels of \$86 million and endorses the proposal to consolidate SFA into one line item.***

---

<sup>2</sup> USDA Forest Service Fiscal Year 2013 President's Budget Justification. Last accessed February 21, 2012 at <http://www.fs.fed.us/aboutus/budget/2013/fy2013-justification.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> Letter of support posted at [www.stateforesters.org](http://www.stateforesters.org)

<sup>4</sup> National Interagency Fire Center, Historical Wildland Fire Summaries, pg. 9. Last accessed February 1, 2012 at [http://www.predictiveservices.nifc.gov/intelligence/2011\\_statssumm/intro\\_summary.pdf](http://www.predictiveservices.nifc.gov/intelligence/2011_statssumm/intro_summary.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> National Association of State Foresters, Communities at Risk Report FY2011. Last accessed February 1, 2012 at <http://www.stateforesters.org/files/2011-NASF-finalCAR-report-FY11.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Letter of support posted at [www.stateforesters.org](http://www.stateforesters.org)

### *Working Forest Landscapes*

Working forest landscapes are a key part of the rural landscape and provide an estimated 900,000 jobs, in addition to clean water, wood products and other essential services to millions of Americans. For instance, 80 percent of renewable biomass energy comes from wood, 53 percent of all freshwater in the U.S. originates on forest land and more than \$200 billion in sales of consumer products and services are provided through the nation's forests each year.<sup>7</sup> Working forests are necessary to help the forest products industry recover and (re)employ nearly 300,000 full-time jobs that have been lost over the past five years as a result of the economic downturn.<sup>8</sup>

Private forests make up two-thirds of all the forestland in the United States and support an average of eight jobs per 1,000 acres.<sup>9</sup> The ability of working forests to continue providing jobs, renewable energy, clean and abundant water and other important services is in jeopardy as private forests are lost to development. The Forest Service estimates that 57 million acres of private forests in the U.S. are at risk of conversion to urban development over the next two decades. The Forest Stewardship Program, Forest Legacy Program and other programs within USDA are key tools identified in the Forest Action Plans to keep working forests intact.

The Forest Stewardship Program (FSP) is the most extensive family forest-owner assistance program in the country. Planning assistance is delivered in cooperation with state forestry agencies primarily through the development of Forest Stewardship Plans. The program provides information to private landowners to help them manage their land for wildlife, recreation, aesthetics, timber production, and many other purposes. The technical assistance provided through the FSP is a gateway to other effective USDA, state and private sector programs designed to help keep working forests intact. For instance, the FSP enables landowners to participate in USDA programs including the Forest Legacy Program and Environmental Quality Incentives Program. ***NASF recommends maintaining current funding at \$29 million for the Forest Stewardship Program in FY 2013. This program (and funding recommendation) enjoys support from landowners in every corner of the country.***<sup>10</sup>

### *Urban and Community Forest Management Challenges*

Urban forests provide environmental, social and economic benefits to the more than 84% of Americans who live in metropolitan areas. Forest Action Plans identified a number of benefits associated with urban forests including energy savings, improved air quality, neighborhood stability, aesthetic values, reduced noise and improved quality of life for communities across the country. At the same time, the plans reported a number of threats to urban and community forests including fire in the wildland urban interface (WUI), urbanization and development, invasive plants and insects, diseases and others.

Since its expansion under the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1990 (CFAA), the Forest Service's Urban & Community Forestry (U&CF) program has provided technical and financial assistance to promote stewardship of urban forests in communities of all sizes across the country. The program is delivered in close partnership with State Foresters and leverages existing local efforts that have helped thousands of communities and towns manage, maintain, and improve

---

<sup>7</sup> Society of American Foresters. *The State of America's Forests*. 2007.

<sup>8</sup> Guldin, R.W. and W. B. Smith. *Forest Sector Reeling During Economic Downturn*. 2012. Last accessed on-line at: [http://www.nxtbook.com/nxtbooks/saf/forestrysource\\_201201/index.php?startid=1](http://www.nxtbook.com/nxtbooks/saf/forestrysource_201201/index.php?startid=1)

<sup>9</sup> Forest2Market. *The Economic Impact of Privately-Owned Forests*. 2009.

<sup>10</sup> Letter of support posted at [www.stateforesters.org](http://www.stateforesters.org)

their tree cover and green spaces. In FY 2011, the U&CF program delivered technical, financial, educational, and research assistance to 7,172 communities in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, U.S. territories and affiliated Pacific Island nations.<sup>11</sup> The program reached nearly 195 million Americans (i.e., over 60% of the U.S. population) and leveraged an additional \$30 million in state and local support. ***NASF and the broad urban forestry community support an appropriation of \$31 million in FY 2013 for the Urban and Community Forestry Program***<sup>12</sup>.

#### **LANDSCAPE SCALE RESTORATION AND RESPONSE TO FY 2012 MANAGER'S STATEMENT**

Members of NASF recognize the value of competitively allocating a percentage of CFAA funds to encourage innovative approaches to addressing national, regional and state-specific priorities consistent with each state's Forest Action Plan. NASF also recognizes that the ability to provide State Foresters flexibility, with appropriate accountability, to reapply a portion of their allocations is necessary to address changing forest conditions and priorities. To that end, NASF supports the proposed Landscape Scale Restoration (LSR) line item with the understanding expressed in the FY 2013 Budget Justification that the current competitive process would be "formalized" and that options for potentially establishing "funding flexibility" (per the FY 2012 Interior Appropriations Managers Statement) would not be eliminated.

NASF greatly appreciates (and requests) the continued support from the Subcommittee to further explore options for providing State Foresters the ability to apply Federal funds in the highest priority areas including, but not limited to, through the new LSR line item. Our recommended funding level for the LSR line item is contingent upon further discussions with the Subcommittee and with the Administration to better understand the budget relationships between the new line item, other CFAA programs and funding flexibility. NASF remains committed to working with the Administration, including the USDA Forest Service, Congress and other non-federal partners to further define how Forest Action Plans can best inform and enhance federal budget formulation and funding allocation decisions for CFAA programs.

#### **IMPORTANCE OF FOREST INVENTORY DATA IN MONITORING FOREST ISSUES**

The Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) program, managed by Forest Service Research, is the nation's only comprehensive forest inventory system for assessing the health and sustainability of the nation's forests across all ownerships. FIA provides essential data related to forest species composition, forest growth rates, and forest health data and delivers baseline inventory estimates used in state Forest Action Plans. The Program provides unbiased information that serves as the basis for monitoring trends in wildlife habitat, wildfire risk, insect and disease threats, predicting spread of invasive species and for responding to priorities identified in the Forest Action Plans.

***We urge Congress to support the FIA program in FY 2013 at no less than current funding levels of \$69 million and provide direction to the Forest Service to look for the most efficient way(s) to deliver the program including contracting with partners, most notably state forestry agencies, who can accomplish necessary field work at lower cost.*** With efficient delivery, current funding levels can contribute towards the original goals of providing a fully annualized inventory in all states and provide policy makers, forest managers, private investors, and others with the information they need to make sound decisions regarding the nation's forests.

---

<sup>11</sup> USDA Forest Service Fiscal Year 2013 President's Budget Justification. Last accessed February 21, 2012 at <http://www.fs.fed.us/aboutus/budget/2013/fy2013-justification.pdf>.

<sup>12</sup> Letter of support posted at [www.stateforesters.org](http://www.stateforesters.org)