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State Foresters Call for Green Job Creation by Investing in the Nation's Forests

Stimulus funds could do more by broadening forestry authorities

Washington DC, February 10, 2009 – One of the surest ways Congress can maintain and create green jobs that improve the health of the nation's forests and support communities is to broaden investment in the full range of existing state forestry programs. Today, the Senate passed its version of the economic stimulus package which partially recognizes the potential to create green jobs in forestry. The National Association of State Foresters (NASF) believes it fails to deliver the broad authorities needed to make the greatest number of jobs available in rural and urban economies where they are needed most.

All-time lows in home construction and a reduced demand for paper and packaging materials have led to thousands of jobs lost in the forestry sector. State Foresters hold the primary responsibility of delivering USDA State & Private Forestry (S&PF) programs and can ensure rapid deployment of federal funds and job creation at the local level. NASF supports the House-passed version of the stimulus package (H.R. 1), which provides the necessary flexibility for state agencies to put thousands to work completing "shovel-ready" activities on non-federal forests such as:

- Developing clean, renewable wood energy systems in communities left vulnerable to price uncertainties in home heating and energy costs.
- Reducing the threat of wildfire by removing hazardous fuels on the highest priority acres as defined by states and local communities.
- Restoring non-federal forest ecosystems through suppression of insect and disease outbreaks, reforestation, and restoration of watersheds and streams.
- Conducting urban tree inventories and health assessments, plant trees, respond to threats of insects and diseases, and remove and utilize infested trees.

To ensure the greatest number of jobs are created, funds allocated under S&PF authorities must be available for a full range of projects and not be limited by project type or geographic region. Further, cost-share requirements often accompany funding received through cooperative programs under S&PF. Since most states are currently facing budget shortfalls, federal stimulus funds should not be tied to matching requirements in order to make the most immediate impact.

The National Association of State Foresters is comprised of the directors of state and territorial forestry agencies and the District of Columbia. Through public-private partnership, NASF seeks to advance sustainable forestry, conservation, and protection of forest lands and their associated resources.

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