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State Foresters Applaud USDA Secretary Vilsack's 'All-lands' Approach to Nation's Forests

Washington DC, August 25, 2009: In a recent letter to U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack, the National Association of State Foresters (NASF) applauded the new vision he shared for America's forests during an August 14 address in Seattle. State Foresters have a long history of working cooperatively with the Forest Service and were pleased to see the secretary recognize that the agency's responsibilities extend well beyond national forests and urge more visible support for the agency's state and private role:

"While all forests are environmental and economic assets for the nation, nonfederal forests shoulder a disproportionate burden in terms of development threats and offer far greater opportunities to generate rural wealth as working forests," wrote NASF Executive Director Jay Farrell. "Increased federal investment focused on these forests through Forest Service State & Private Forestry and other USDA programs is a sound investment for the nation. Federal support for nonfederal forests will increase the scale and pace of the forest stewardship work required to achieve the collective vision you have outlined."

The "all-lands approach" outlined by Vilsack reinforces important priorities for State Foresters. Forests held in state, local and private ownership hold enormous potential to contribute to national goals for producing domestic renewable energy, repairing a recessing economy, and combating climate change.

The Secretary emphasized the vital role that forests play in ensuring clean and abundant water. State Foresters employ forest resource professionals that serve landowners and administer water quality best management practices (BMP) programs that help deliver clean drinking water in every county in the nation. The Secretary's remarks also recognized the role that private sector markets play in generating rural wealth, facilitating forest management, and keeping forests forested. NASF is committed to working with USDA and the Office of Ecosystem Services to develop new markets that help conserve working forests.

"NASF is pleased to join the USDA in this shared vision for an 'all-lands approach'," said NASF President and Kentucky State Forester Leah W. MacSwords. "A commitment to trees and forests from the Obama administration will go a long way in improving the management of this strategic national resource we tend on behalf of future generations."

The National Association of State Foresters is comprised of the directors of forestry agencies from the fifty states, eight U.S. territories and associated states, 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. For more information, visit www.stateforesters.org.

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