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FORESTS AS PART OF THE SOLUTION TO CLIMATE CHANGE

National climate change policies can improve the contribution of the forest sector in reducing greenhouse gas levels. Policy decisions can make an impact in the near term by capitalizing on the potential of forests and wood to sequester carbon and increase the production of renewable energy. State forestry agencies have a significant stake in the outcomes of these decisions as they directly manage and protect millions of acres of state forests and assist private landowners in the management of nearly two-thirds of the forestland in the U.S.

THE ROLE OF FORESTS IN NATIONAL CAP-AND-TRADE LEGISLATION

NASF supports a national cap-and-trade program that recognizes forest offset projects and allows all types and sizes of forest landowners to participate. Possible forest offset activities include, but are not limited to reforestation of abandoned agricultural land, managing forests for forest products and/or avoiding deforestation.

Forest carbon projects have many co-benefits (e.g., providing clean air and water, wildlife habitat) making them more attractive than other types of offsets or technologies that may be used to reduce atmospheric greenhouse gases. To be credible, however, forest offset projects must guarantee reductions in atmospheric greenhouse gases and be verifiable (through periodic third-party review), enforceable and permanent.

Any comprehensive federal climate program should also specify who is eligible to claim credit for carbon sequestered in products and for the substitution benefits from wood products and biomass energy. Such credits could potentially be claimed by landowners interested in carbon friendly forest management on their forest lands.

THE ROLE OF FORESTS OUTSIDE OF OFFSET PROJECTS

NASF believes that is important that mechanisms in addition to offsets be found to reward landowners who are already storing carbon and practicing carbon-friendly management. State forestry agencies are in a unique position to help guide the development of these programs and assist in program delivery at the local level:

- **Increased funding for keeping forests as forests** through programs such as the Forest Legacy Program, Land and Water Conservation Fund and others.
- **Increased funding for efforts to reduce losses from fire, insects and disease.** Forests threatened by increasingly severe and widespread wildfires, insects and disease could release untold tons of carbon into the atmosphere.
- **Encouraging sustainable management of forests** to produce thousands of forest products, wood energy and the array of ecosystem services that flow from forests like clean air and water, wildlife habitat, and recreational opportunities.
- **Creation and funding of programs which allow for forest adaptation in the face of climate change.** Such efforts should include increasing the vigor of forests to withstand stress and encouraging species which are better suited to predicted climate regimes.
- **Development of a national wood energy program** to increase domestic production of renewable energy and provide family-wage jobs in rural communities.

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