

The following policy statement was adopted by the NASF membership in [NASF Resolution No. 2005-7](#).

POLICY STATEMENT:

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE FORESTERS

**Forest Utilization & Marketing to Support Sustainable Forestry:
Creating a New National Strategy**

October 2005

Introduction

Forest utilization and marketing (U&M) assistance is integral to adequate long-term maintenance of forest health, improved forest management, and the ability to address priority issues and problems that affect all areas of forest resource management. The success of work in areas of forest resource management such as stewardship, forest health, urban and community forestry, wildland fire management and watersheds depends in part on effective U&M.

The practice of sustainable forestry involves the convergence of many forces, one of which is the utilization of products generated by the management of the forest. Although not necessary in absolute terms, the existence of economic value from the products derived from managing the forest provides several important public benefits include economic (e.g., support for rural economies, value-added manufacturing, support for forest-based recreation); ecological (e.g., incentives to maintain undeveloped forest land, addressing invasive species, disincentive to high-grade forests, reducing reliance on fossil-fuel based products); and social (e.g., address wildland-urban interface issues, provide settings for forest-based recreation, reduce reliance on foreign sources for energy).

The infrastructure that supports U&M expertise and development is eroding, threatening the ability of forests to continue to provide the full range of ecological, economic and social benefits into the future. Further, the issues facing both our forests and forest-based industries are changing in significant ways. Therefore, it is time to revisit the national strategy for utilization and marketing of forest resources in light of the role it can and should play in sustainable forestry.

Listed below are the priorities the USDA has stated for 2003-2008. U&M is an important tool that will contribute to successfully addressing the listed priorities.

Priorities and Outcomes Anticipated to be addressed in a New National Program and Strategy for Forest Utilization and Marketing:

Broad USDA National Priorities for 2003-2008:

1. Reducing the risk from catastrophic fire;

2. Helping meet energy resource needs;
3. Reduce the impacts from invasive species;
4. Improving watershed function;
5. Improve organizational effectiveness; and
6. Strengthening rural economies.

Expected Outcomes Derived from USDA National Priorities

1. Improved forest health and economic opportunities for local economies derived from utilizing excessive fuel buildup in western states.
2. Improved forest health and increased national energy self-sufficiency by utilizing forest-based biomass.
3. Improved forest stewardship and management through improved markets for all types of forest biomass.
4. Solutions for wood utilization issues caused by insect and disease outbreaks in the both the natural and urban forests.
5. New market development and assistance for traditional forest industry affected by the emerging global forest products economy.
6. An increased awareness of forestland value for utilization will produce increased protection of watersheds.
7. New rural economic opportunities resulting from utilizing the increased predominance of low-value, small diameter, and under-utilized trees on all land ownerships.

Why Undertake a Strategic Plan for U&M Now?

The Health and Benefits of both the Forest and the Rural Economy Rely on Markets for, and Proper Management of, the Forest Resource: Without maintaining markets for all products derived from the forest, rural economies fail to reach their potential, and forests can not be adequately managed for health, protection, products, and other values. For example, there is opportunity for U&M assistance to reach many rural populations that are unaware of the potential for creating new markets for forest products at the local level. In addition, U&M assistance can enhance the ability of established forest industry of all sizes to develop potential, improve operating performance, and improve global competitiveness. Forest utilization by all sizes and types of users is often the backbone of rural economies throughout the country. **Federal and state assistance can stimulate and assist in increasing the public's active assistance in the sustainable management of forests in rural America.**

Forest U&M Assistance Transcends Other Forest Resource Programs: It has been clearly demonstrated that forest U&M is an important and critical adjunct to forest health, forest stewardship, urban and community forestry, wildland fire management, and other areas of forest resource management. U&M assistance solves problems and acts as a catalyst in these program areas. **Although forests will always remain and provide a basic level of benefit, forest utilization assistance works to upgrade the value of this major American resource.** There is strong potential to continue developing various types of partnerships and assistance for these major program areas.

"A National Resource" of Forest Service/State Forest Utilization Specialists at Risk: Planning the future of the nation's forest U&M program is critical to maintaining a core level of utilization expertise at the state and federal levels. Although many states continue to recognize the importance of forest U&M expertise by committing resources for at least one staff specialist, the capacity of federal State & Private Forestry specialists at the Technology Marketing Unit (housed at the Forest Products Laboratory) and other areas within the Forest Service are at risk due to funding shortfalls. Forest Service specialists will dwindle at a steady pace unless both a plan and a commitment are made to support maintenance of this critical staff. The loss of this highly specialized expertise will eliminate valuable Forest Service support for state specialists throughout the country. Losing capacity in the West will slow or halt recent efforts to assist both National Forest and private forest managers in developing utilization opportunities for biomass being removed as a result of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act and due to insect infestations and other forest conditions. Together, the Forest Service and state partners are the only public organizations with the mission to focus on these issues at a national and state level.

Dissemination of Forest U&M Research: An adequate Forest U&M Program presence at the state and federal level is essential to adequately provide transfer of valuable technical information, knowledge, research, and products provided by the National Forest Products Laboratory in Madison, Wisconsin, various Forest Research Experiment Stations, and academic institutions around the country. A high level of investment in research and development provides this information, but the "on-the-ground" benefit being derived from this investment is only a fraction of its potential. State partner utilization specialists are also critical to bringing market opportunities made available by the USDA Foreign Agricultural Service and the Department of Commerce to entrepreneurs who can produce the desired public benefits. To meet their full benefit and potential, federal government program efforts need to be carried to potential users by trained experts with ties to, and expertise in, forest utilization.

Recent Historical Background:

In a September 1991 resolution, NASF strongly supported "the refocusing of State and Federal Utilization and Marketing Programs under a broad national strategy." A program and strategy for refocusing federal and state forest utilization staff expertise called "Forest Products Conservation and Recycling" (FPC&R) served as the impetus for the NASF resolution.

The FPC&R national program and strategy recognized priority issues of national importance and outlined goals and strategies to address them. The strategies drew upon and redirected the already existing talents, experience, and expertise at the

staff level of USDA Forest Service State & Private Forestry (S&PF), the S&PF Technology Marketing Unit staff housed at the National Forest Products Laboratory, as well as USDA's partners in the states (e.g. state forest products utilization & marketing specialists and forest products extension personnel). One of the major benefits of the national program and strategy is that it clearly organized and articulated the problems and actions needed to address them. The plan's clear presentation facilitated a common understanding and coordinated effort for those interested in moving a forest utilization program and strategy ahead in Congress.

With the benefit of NASF's resolution and subsequent support from the Forest Service, the new program and strategy moved ahead as a sub-program of the Economic Action Program (EAP). However, EAP is no longer viewed by many in both the Administration and Congress as filling a critical need. This underscores the necessity of critically evaluating the U&M needs affecting this nation's forests and the communities they support.