

## **NASF Resolution No. 2007-7**

### **ORIGIN OF RESOLUTION:**

NASF Executive Committee

### **ISSUE OF CONCERN:**

Endorsing the Approach and Recommendations of the S&PF Redesign Board

### **BACKGROUND:**

Forests and the public benefits they provide are threatened at a scale and pace that are much larger and faster-moving than our current State and Private Forestry (S&PF) programs and delivery model are able to address. At the same time, the U.S. Forest Service has been repeatedly asked by Congress and other key leaders to increase the competitiveness of its S&PF programs, to focus and prioritize resources on issues and landscapes of national importance and, ultimately, to validate the relevance of continued federal investment.

In March 2006, the Deputy Chief for S&PF and the President of the National Association of State Foresters (NASF) began exploring whether or not it made sense to “reinvent” state and private forestry in order to better address current on-the-ground challenges as well as to demonstrate to Congress and others that an investment in state and private forestry is of value and importance to the American people.

In May 2006, the NASF Executive Committee gave its support to the development of a new S&PF approach that would consider changes in program delivery, staffing and organization, and funding allocation. This decision recognized that the current S&PF programs are neither sustainable nor designed in a manner that provides the assurance desired by decision-makers that the investments made will maximize net public benefit. The Executive Committee’s decision also affirmed that a redesigned S&PF program could provide the desired high level of return on public investment.

Presentations regarding this new effort were made at all three regional state forestry meetings held from May to July 2006. During the summer of 2006, state and federal staff worked to quantify both the threats to, and public benefits from, forests as a way to strengthen the case for change. All NASF members were polled regarding the threats and benefits related to forests in their jurisdictions as well as their recommendations on what should be done. This information was used to develop and refine a presentation on redesigning state and private forestry at the 2006 NASF Annual Meeting in Alaska.

The formal Redesigning State and Private Forestry effort began in earnest with the convening of an interagency Redesign Board in November 2006. Board members were chosen to represent both USFS and state forestry interests from all regions of the country and a variety of organizational types and responsibilities. At its first meeting, the Board established a purpose statement, nine guiding principles and five components of change as a framework for the new Redesign approach.

From November 2006 to the present, the Redesign Board has worked diligently, and in consultation with colleagues, partners and stakeholders, to design a new approach to state and private forestry. The purpose of this new approach is to “shape and influence forest land use on

a scale and in a way that optimizes public benefits from trees and forests for current and future generations.”

At the core of this new approach are the objectives of focus, priority and outcome. This means that S&PF programs and resources will be:

- Focused on addressing issues of national importance and on sustaining a diverse range of public benefits from trees and forests.
- Prioritized by using the best available technology and information to assess forest conditions and trends and to identify the best opportunities for investment toward meaningful change.
- Designed to achieve significant outcomes by emphasizing collaboration, innovative partnerships, and work at appropriate scales and by improving our ability to assess and demonstrate our impact on the ground.

The key components of the redesigned S&PF being proposed by the Redesign Board are:

- National Themes – A concise set of national themes will focus the investment of federal S&PF resources on issues, challenges and opportunities that are of national importance and which, if addressed, will lead to significant progress in providing diverse and sustainable public benefits from trees and forests.
- National Assessment – The national assessment will be a geospatial decision support system that is used to characterize forest conditions, trends and opportunities across the nation and to inform, along with the themes, national level priorities for investment of S&PF funding and resources.
- State Assessments & Response Plans – Each state and territory will work collaboratively with key partners and stakeholders to develop a comprehensive state forest resource assessment that identifies forest conditions on all ownerships, delineates high priority forest landscapes and outlines strategies for addressing critical issues and opportunities. Once this assessment is complete, the state or territory will develop an annual response plan through which they identify how they propose to invest federal resources (both competitive and non-competitive) to address priority issues consistent with the National Themes.
- Competitive Allocation – Beginning in FY 2008, an increasing percentage of S&PF funding will be allocated through a competitive process. The process will be informed by national guidance and implemented by joint USFS / state forestry teams in each of the three state forestry geographic regions. The competition will begin with 15% of the net available S&PF allocation. The Board proposes that the percentage of competitive funds be increased incrementally over the next five years, up to a total of 65%. Increases in competitive funding will be reviewed and determined annually.
- Demonstrating & Communicating Results – A three-tiered Annual Report Card will be cooperatively developed by NASF and S&PF personnel in order to better demonstrate and communicate how state and private forestry efforts contribute to public benefits for the American people. The Report Card will include: 1) visual demonstrations of progress (maps, charts, etc.); 2) a discreet set of performance indicators; and 3) use of success stories to personalize local accomplishments. The accountability framework established for this report card will eventually be used to streamline and/or eliminate redundant reporting requirements.
- Staffing and Organization – A Staffing and Organization work group has taken initial steps to develop a framework for assessing changes in organization and staffing that

might be needed to support the Redesign objectives. Emphasis will be on addressing the opportunities and needs identified in state assessments and response plans through a cooperative assessment of state and federal capacity. The analysis of federal capacity will be focused on those areas which enhance the capacity of multiple states to deliver desired outcomes.

- Integration of Federal Programs – As part of the Redesign approach, efforts will be focused on identifying and pursuing opportunities to integrate the delivery of complementary federal programs, such as those delivered by the Natural Resource Conservation Service, toward mutually beneficial goals and outcomes. Members of the Redesign Board have presented the above components of change at the spring 2007 state forestry regional meetings and have widely circulated these concepts for comment by both internal and external partners. All comments received were used to inform the discussions of the Redesign Board.

The Board expects to finalize the development and monitor implementation of these concepts in the coming months. The initial year of Redesign implementation should be considered a learning opportunity for all involved. Once all of the initial concepts are fully formed, the Board will transition its responsibilities to a new interagency leadership team that will take on the long-term monitoring and implementation of the Redesign approach.

**RESOLUTION:**

In recognition of the current status of S&PF programs and the desire of the USFS to modify its approach to facilitating the delivery of desired outcomes, the membership of the National Association of State Foresters resolves to:

- Offer thanks to USFS S&PF Deputy Area for engaging NASF up-front in the process to strengthen S&PF and for recognizing the fundamental role played by the states in achieving the outcomes desired from a federal investment in the public benefits derived from our non-federal forests.
- Offer thanks to the participants in the Redesign Board for the tremendous time and effort they have put into developing a new approach for state and private forestry.
- Endorse the approach taken by the Redesign Board along with the components of change that they have recommended.
- Commit to working with the USFS, state forestry colleagues and other partners to effectively implement the initial phase of the Redesign approach.
- Commit to continuing development of the components of change, monitoring implementation of the Redesign approach, facilitating annual review and implement changes as needed, working to encourage progress in sustaining forests in all States, Territories and the District of Columbia.

**NASF ACTION:**

(X) Approved

**DATE OF ACTION:**

September 19, 2007