

**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE FORESTERS**  
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The Honorable Conrad Burns, Chairman  
 Subcommittee on Interior and Related Agencies  
 Committee on Appropriations  
 United States Senate  
 Washington, DC 20510

**TESTIMONY ON FY 2007 APPROPRIATIONS**

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**Before U.S. Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior and Related Agencies**

**INTRODUCTION**

The National Association of State Foresters (NASF) is pleased to provide testimony on the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) budget request for Fiscal Year 2007. Representing the directors of state forestry agencies from all fifty states, eight U.S. territories, and the District of Columbia, our testimony centers around those program areas most relevant to the long-term forestry operations of our constituents. State and Private Forestry programs multiply the public benefits of federal funding by leveraging in-kind contributions through cost-share programs and matching funds from states. These programs assist private landowners in providing society with such public benefits as clean water, wildlife habitat, carbon sequestration, and flood control. Wildland Fire Management supports essential State and Private Forestry and federal programs that address wildland fire.

Our recommendations include restoring funding to our top three priorities (State Fire Assistance, Cooperative Forest Health Management, and Urban and Community Forestry) and discussing other opportunities for Congress to further the advancement of sustainable management on both public and private forestlands nationwide.

<b>NASF Funding Recommendations for USDA Forest Service in FY 2007 (in millions)</b>			
	<b>2006 Enacted</b>	<b>President's Proposed 2007</b>	<b>Proposed 2007 NASF</b>
<b>State Fire Assistance</b>			
State and Private Forestry	\$32.9	\$27.0	\$35.0
Wildland Fire Management	\$45.8	\$29.1	\$55.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$78.7</b>	<b>\$56.1</b>	<b>\$90.0</b>
<b>Cooperative Forest Health Management</b>			
State and Private Forestry	\$46.9	\$34.6	\$48.0
Wildland Fire Management	\$9.9	\$4.6	\$10.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$56.8</b>	<b>\$39.2</b>	<b>\$58.0</b>
<b>Urban and Community Forestry</b>	<b>\$28.5</b>	<b>\$26.8</b>	<b>\$36.0</b>
<b>Forest Inventory and Analysis</b>			
Research and Development	\$59.4	\$59.3	\$60.0
State and Private Forestry	\$4.6	\$0.0	\$5.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$64.0</b>	<b>\$59.3</b>	<b>\$65.0</b>
<b>Forest Stewardship</b>	<b>\$34.2</b>	<b>\$33.9</b>	<b>\$37.0</b>

## **STATE AND PRIVATE FORESTRY PROGRAMS**

### **STATE FIRE ASSISTANCE (SFA)**

State Fire Assistance (SFA) provides crucial financial and technical assistance to states and local fire departments for wildland fire management. SFA helps to ensure preparedness of local resources, which serve as the first line of defense for their forests and communities. These fire fighting resources function as both “first responders” for local incidents and as “ready reserves” for large federally managed catastrophic fires. Further, SFA is the only federal program that currently provides funding for fuel reduction work on non-federal lands, regardless of their proximity to federal lands. It is also one of the few programs that helps communities develop Community Wildfire Protection Plans, which are an important component of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act. SFA also helps prepare states for dealing with non-fire emergencies, such as hurricane recovery and other all-hazard events.

SFA provides the flexibility to meet different state needs, which may include firefighting preparedness, firefighter training, fire suppression, and hazardous fuel reduction, Community Wildfire Protection Plans, as well as prevention activities. SFA is funded under both Cooperative Fire Protection (State and Private Forestry) and Wildland Fire Management in the Forest Service budget. Funds under State and Private Forestry are used to help states increase preparedness at the local level through training, coordination, and communication to local firefighters. Funding under Wildland Fire Management is used for both preparedness and hazard mitigation. Reducing these funds would seriously hamper the states’ ability to treat hazardous fuels on private lands and to work with communities to complete Community Wildfire Protection Plans.

NASF recommends increased funding for State Fire Assistance at \$35 million under Cooperative Fire Protection and \$55 million under Wildland Fire Management. Increasing funding for these line items will provide continued protection for local communities from catastrophic wildland fires, many of which originate on federal lands.

### **COOPERATIVE FOREST HEALTH MANAGEMENT**

The Cooperative Forest Health Management program provides funding assistance to address forest health issues on non-federal forestland. Cooperative Forest Health Management activities include prevention, detection, and suppression of damaging insects, diseases, and plants. Every year, the American public loses billions of dollars to damage by invasive species and the cost of insect and disease detection and control. To illustrate the extent of the cost, the potential losses from damage by one insect pest, the emerald ash borer, are \$25 million in ash timber and an additional \$20 to \$60 billion in street tree losses across the nation. The Cooperative Forest Health Management program assists in the development and application of new technologies that mitigate these forest health concerns and reduce public expenses. Forest pests know no land ownership boundaries and often move to and from federal lands. These funds, from both State and Private Forestry (S&PF) and Wildland Fire Management, are critical to the maintenance of healthy and sustainable forests.

Funding for Cooperative Forest Health Management under Wildland Fire Management is used primarily for forest insect and disease mitigation in high hazard areas, such as forests at high

risk of fire or those recently burned and susceptible to insect and disease attack. Funding under State and Private Forestry provides states with support for prevention, detection, and suppression of harmful insects and diseases.

NASF recommends funding S&PF Cooperative Forest Health Management at the FY 2006 level of \$48 million to provide the tools needed to address forest health issues across the many non-federal forest types and ownerships in the United States.

NASF also recommends \$10 million to continue level support for Cooperative Forest Health Management under Wildland Fire Management to address forest health problems that increase the risk of catastrophic wildland fire. Cooperative Forest Health Management funds help states achieve the goals of the Healthy Forests Initiative by restoring healthy forests across ownership types.

#### **URBAN AND COMMUNITY FORESTRY**

The Urban and Community Forestry program provides technical and financial assistance to promote the stewardship of urban and community trees and forest resources. The program leverages existing local efforts that help urban areas and rural communities manage, maintain, and improve their tree cover and green spaces. Such efforts emphasize the vital connection between human and natural environments, and create social and aesthetic benefits. These efforts also reduce energy consumption, create healthier human environments, and reduce the prevalence and severity of flooding in our communities.

NASF worked with the Forest Service to develop a new allocation formula to distribute funding among the states and territories. This new formula more closely aligns state funding allocation with program goals and objectives.

NASF recommends funding the Urban and Community Forestry program at the FY 2003 level of \$36 million to enhance the quality of life for communities in urban and rural areas.

#### **FOREST INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS (FIA)**

The Forest Inventory and Analysis program provides crucial forest information to policy makers and land managers, enabling them to make informed decisions about our nation's forested lands. FIA data provides users with relevant information on the condition, extent, use, and health of forests across ownerships. Because of this benchmark accomplishment, FIA must continue to provide essential inventory data for addressing long-term forest management needs. Funding for FIA from State and Private Forestry is essential for supporting state inventory crews, an integral component of the program. NASF recommends funding FIA at \$60 million through Research and Development and \$5 million through State and Private Forestry, for a total of \$65 million. The program must continue to advance toward full implementation in all states. Together with a well-funded research program, FIA will continue to provide essential inventory data for addressing long-term forest management needs.

## **FOREST STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM**

The Forest Stewardship Program continues to serve as the primary program for promoting sustainable forest management on family forest lands. Since its inception in 1991, the Forest Stewardship Program has turned out 240,000 Stewardship Plans covering 30 million acres. By expanding the sustainable management of private forest land, the public receives an array of benefits including increased water quality, improved plant and animal habitat, carbon sequestration, and wood products that support local economies. NASF recommends increasing funding to meet the President's FY 2006 request of \$37 for the Forest Stewardship Program. We encourage efforts to better target the delivery of the Forest Stewardship Program in order to focus on priority resources concerns.

## **OTHER FEDERAL PROGRAMS**

### **FEDERAL WILDLAND FIRE MANAGEMENT**

NASF recommends continued funding of federal wildland fire management at the 10-year average. Funding is integral to rapid suppression of small fires before they grow into large and costly fires. The increasing costs of wildfires – due mainly to drought, fuel accumulation, and the rapid expansion of the wildland-urban interface – makes adequate suppression funding critical. We support continued funding for preparedness, fire operations, and hazardous fuels treatment on federal land, including the \$15 million provided under State and Private Forestry appropriations that may be used on non-federal land to protect communities at risk from adjacent USFS lands where hazard reduction activities are planned.

### **DOI CONSERVATION GRANT PROGRAMS**

NASF supports the Department of the Interior conservation grant programs for private landowners to manage their land for a variety of public benefits. Continued funding will ensure these programs remain viable.

## **CONCLUSION**

NASF seeks the Subcommittee's support for a Forest Service FY 2007 budget that will ensure the continued delivery of a broad range of public benefits from privately owned forest lands. Collaboration among stakeholders across the landscape – federal, state, and local government agencies, private landowners, industry, and non-profit organizations – is necessary to manage for the wide range of forest resources found on all ownerships and the values derived from those lands. Cooperative Forestry, State and Private Forestry (S&PF), and Wildland Fire Management provide these links. The federal share leverages private dollars and provides an important catalyst for collaboration in order to take the work far beyond the usual boundaries of federal land management.

We realize that the Subcommittee will be faced with some difficult funding decisions this year and will have to make sacrifices and tradeoffs to some programs. NASF encourages you to keep our priorities in mind when making these decisions.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide our testimony.