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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

State Foresters Denounce President's Proposed Budget
Severe cutbacks threaten America's forests

Washington D.C., February 5, 2008 – The National Association of State Foresters (NASF) reacted angrily to elements of the Bush Administration's proposed FY09 budget released yesterday, which includes historic cutbacks of State and Private Forestry (S&PF) programs within the U.S. Forest Service. Two-thirds of the forestland in the United States resides in the hands of private or state ownership. The drastic reduction of funding for S&PF programs threaten vital forestlands that improve air and water quality, provide essential wildlife habitat, reduce global warming and enhance the quality of life for all Americans.

Since 1911, state forestry agencies and the U.S. Forest Service have partnered to assist private landowners in achieving some of the most successful forestland conservation in the nation's history, thereby increasing the level of public benefits that are produced from these lands.

"This partnership has been the essence of what this Administration has lately touted as 'Cooperative Conservation.' However, these outrageous budget cuts put our tradition of partnership in jeopardy, and could have disastrous effects on the forest resource," said Leah MacSwords, NASF Vice President and Kentucky State Forester.

"NASF urges Congress to again illustrate its commitment to State and Private Forestry programs by restoring funding to S&PF programs," said Kirk Rowdabaugh, NASF President and Arizona State Forester.

In a tight budget climate, federal funding for state and private forestry is a wise investment. It supports cost-effective programs that yield high benefit for a low investment by providing financial and technical assistance for wildland fire management, slowing the spread of exotic insects, plants and diseases, and imparting numerous environmental benefits that belong to all Americans.

For more than a year, state foresters have worked with the Forest Service to improve the focus and delivery of S&PF programs and maximize positive outcomes. This dramatic reduction in funding threatens to undermine the results of these efforts on the ground.

NASF's recommended funding figures for several key program areas represent a common-sense response to the fundamental needs of the forest resource. The President's proposed budget is a reduction of nearly sixty percent from current S&PF funding levels, with some priority programs being slashed as much as eighty percent.

Said Maryland State Forester Steven Koehn, "This budget undermines the very mission of the Forest Service, in that it neither cares for the land, nor serves the people."

The National Association of State Foresters is comprised of the directors of state and territorial agencies and the District of Columbia. Through public-private partnership, NASF seeks to advance sustainable forestry, conservation, and protection of forestlands and their associated resources.

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