National Priorities
Louisiana Forest Action Plan
2015 Addendum

The 2008 Farm Bill, under Title VIII – Forestry, amends the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978, to include the requirement that each state develop a long-term, state-wide assessment and strategies for forest resources. These assessments and strategies focused on three national priorities:

- Conserve and Manage Working Forest Landscapes for Multiple Values and Uses
- Protect Forests from Threats
- Enhance Public Benefits from Trees and Forests

1. **Conserve and Manage Working Forest Landscapes for Multiple Values and Uses**

**Action: Promote Forest Stewardship**

The Louisiana Office of Forestry Staff has been challenged to promote the Forest Stewardship program throughout the state. With over 80% of Louisiana’s forest land being privately owned, a great opportunity exists to educate, encourage, and assist landowners in multi-use forestry practices. A large number of forest landowners have proven to be unaware of the option to manage their property as a whole rather than the sum of separate parts. State forestry personnel as well as private consulting foresters assist with creating functional management plans to include all land use types and landowner objectives.

**Response:**

As a result of the increases effort, Louisiana Forest Landowners are becoming better educated about the benefits of forest stewardship. They are receiving information on the effects of a given management practice on other land uses. Concepts such as fragmentation, wildlife corridors, and sustainability have a profound meaning as they and others are being considered in management plans. Working relationships among State employees, private
consultants, and landowners have moved to new levels. A uniform Stewardship Plan Writing program has been customized and made available for use by any interested entity. The program has been accepted and approved by other State and Federal agencies to satisfy land management plan requirements.

The end result of these efforts is that a comprehensive Forest Stewardship plan is available to any landowner desiring one. Consequently, the overall number of Forest Stewardship plans written annually in Louisiana continues to increase.

Action: Promote Prescribed Burning

Over the past few years, the use of fire as a forest management tool has become significantly more difficult. Issues from air quality to smoke danger have plagued the use of prescribed burning. Lability costs have driven contractors out business causing further difficulties with conducting burns. As a result, fewer acres are being control burned each year. This situation creates greater forest fuel loads and adversely impacts management practices resulting in greater fire danger and loss due to wildfire.
Response:

The Louisiana Office of Forestry staff members participate in the Louisiana Prescribed Fire Counsel. This organization is comprised of Federal, State, private, and non-profit agencies. The purpose of the counsel is to educate the general public, offer information to resource professionals, and promote the use of prescribed fire in forestry, agriculture, and marsh environments.

In addition to the Louisiana Prescribed Counsel, the Louisiana Certified Prescribed Burner program was established to create consistency in the use of prescribed burning and provide training and certification to program participants. Louisiana Office of Forestry staff work collaboratively with State University representatives to develop and deliver the program to interested individuals.

The end result of these efforts is an increase in the knowledge, understanding, and skill of Louisiana prescribed burners, to realize a decrease in the annual number of wildfires caused by improper prescribed burns, and to decrease the threat of wildfire by promoting prescribed burning. Ultimately, the desired outcome would be to increase the use of prescribed burning to promote the health and vigor of Louisiana forest lands.
2. **Protect Forests from Threats**

**Action: Promote Wildfire Danger Awareness**

As a member of the Southern Group of State Foresters (SGSF), Louisiana is included in the SGSF Wildfire Risk Assessment (WRA) project. This computer portal allows the user to simulate the risk to a given area by manipulating pertinent variables. Wildfire threats are increasing, as are the values at risk in fire-prone landscapes. Fragmentation of state forestland and urban development make fire management more complex than ever before. Louisiana Office of Forestry staff members work with fire department personnel, parish landowner association members, high school and secondary education professionals, etc. to disseminate information and resources designed to inform the public about the risks associated with wildfire.

**Response:**

The WRA application has been used to inform state legislators of the need for funding wildfire detection and suppression efforts in Louisiana. It has also been made available to municipal planners for the purpose of developing emergency response plans.

Through programs such as Firewise, Louisiana citizens are becoming better informed about ways to protect themselves and their homes from the threat of wildfire. As greater numbers of families move into forested areas, this effort becomes increasingly valuable in promoting safety.
**Action: Wildfire Detection and Suppression**

The Louisiana Office of Forestry provides the only means of wildfire detection and suppression in the state. The Louisiana Office of Forestry utilizes fire patrol aircraft as the means of wildfire detection and tractor-plow units in suppression efforts. Equipment and personnel are staged at various locations across the state to provide timely response to wildfire.

**Response:**

As a result, key personnel review procedures and equipment placement regularly to ensure that the best possible service is available to the citizens of Louisiana. Scheduled maintenance and training are part of a routine to ensure that equipment and crew members are up to date and ready for service.
Action: Response to Insect and Disease Threats

The Louisiana Office of Forestry monitors forestland for potential damage from insects and disease. In addition, information and education programs as well as public awareness efforts are utilized throughout the state. Program Directors coordinate with counterparts from other states and with other Louisiana state agencies to provide the latest information, prevention measures, and response to insect and disease threats.

Response:

Program staff from the Louisiana Office of Forestry uses several means of monitoring potential insect and disease problems. Aerial surveys, trapping programs, and imaging are all sources of monitoring. Training opportunities and coordinated response efforts allow specific areas of interest to be handled from a greater perspective. Theater spots, billboards, and printed documents are some of the ways messages are distributed in state wide campaigns.
3. **Enhance Public Benefits from Trees and Forests**

**Action: Promote Public Awareness and Outreach Programs**

Louisiana Office of Forestry Employees are involved at many levels of interaction with the public concerning forestry related issues. The activities range from presentations to school age children to forest landowner field days. The topics range from tree identification to water quality. With over 48% of Louisiana’s land area covered with some forest type, and trees being Louisiana’s #1 agricultural crop, it’s vital for Louisiana citizens to know just how important trees and forests are to our state.

**Response:**

Louisiana Office of Forestry employees serve as members, advisors, and officers for numerous organizations across the state. The Office is represented at numerous functions promoting forestry and forest products. Information about how properly managed forests and landscapes protect water quality, reduce storm water runoff, conserve energy, and enhance economic development in urban areas is delivered through these venues.