



The National Association of State Foresters' Priorities for the 2018 Farm Bill

In the 2018 Farm Bill, the nation's state foresters urge Congress to take the following actions to accomplish five overarching goals:

Strengthen the connection between state Forest Action Plans and federal forest management:

Highlight the importance of state Forest Action Plans by focusing Landscape Scale Restoration Program funding on the highest national priorities identified in those plans. Also, encourage federal forest management agencies to utilize a portion of the hazardous fuels program to support cross-boundary fuels reduction work in priority areas identified in the states' Forest Action Plans.

Expand opportunities to utilize Good Neighbor Authority by allowing the reconstruction, repair, and restoration of forest roads.

Instruct NRCS to recognize state-approved Forest Stewardship Plans, developed according to Forest Stewardship Program guidelines, as equivalent to the requirements laid out in the NRCS CPA-52 evaluation form.

Authorize \$10 million in funding (in addition to annually appropriated federal funds) to support 10-year updates to state Forest Action Plans.

Amend the authorities and budget allocations for the U.S. Forest Service's Forest Stewardship Program (FSP) and Urban and Community Forestry (UCF) Program to reflect the priorities set out in each state's Forest Action Plan.

Protect forests from threats:

Direct the U.S. Forest Service to develop budget targets in coordination with the state foresters for insect and disease projects and extend the deadline for priority projects to utilize the Healthy Forest Restoration Act EA/EIS processes.

Provide for expedited National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) reviews of forest management projects undertaken on federal lands at high risk for wildfire to protect adjoining private and state lands.

Incorporate comprehensive wildfire funding reform language to facilitate a congressional solution to this issue.



Grow community trees and support for forestry:

Establish a five-year national private lands reforestation initiative - with either an income tax credit or deduction incentive for participating landowners - targeting resources to areas of the country experiencing rapid forest loss and/or devastating wildfire, insect, or disease. The areas most in need of these funds have been identified in the states' Forest Action Plans.

Establish a green infrastructure tree planting and maintenance program for communities to improve air and water quality; reduce storm water flooding, water treatment costs, and consumer energy costs; and enhance property values, public safety, and quality of life.

Expand and diversify forestry markets:

Support measures that expand the utilization of urban wood and tall timber buildings and ensure woody biomass receives the same incentives and tax advantages as other renewable energy sources.

Support federal procurement policies that favor domestically produced wood and paper products and equally recognize all forest certification programs operating in the United States.

Include language allowing agencies to set aside cancellation-ceiling funds and requiring any excess stewardship payments first be used to satisfy outstanding cancellation-ceiling liabilities.

Enhance state and private forest management:

Establish a USDA interdepartmental working group to review existing and identify new funding mechanisms for critical state-led water quality programs.

Institute a federal tax credit, instead of a deduction, for property tax paid on forestlands enrolled in the Forest Stewardship Program (FSP) or covered by a management plan.

Remove the "two-thirds" acreage limitation for forest lands enrolled in the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP).

Support forestry in the Conservation Title, namely through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), and the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP).

Include language authorizing landowner reimbursement for the cost of developing and implementing Habitat Conservation Plans, Safe Harbor Agreements, and/or Candidate Conservation Plans.

