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State Foresters Support Increased Federal Funding for Sustainable Forestry, Wildfire Protection
Other critical program areas still suffer from inadequate funding

Washington DC, May 18, 2009 – State Foresters were pleased with federal support for the nation's forests as demonstrated in President Obama's proposed FY2010 budget released earlier this month. The president's first budget included \$306 million for the U.S. Forest Service's State and Private Forestry (S&PF) program, a \$40 million increase over the 2009 omnibus for the agency. State and Private Forestry programs leverage the capacity of state agencies to provide vital assistance to forest landowners and communities to manage, maintain, and improve their forests and green spaces.

The budget includes needed funding for fire suppression within the Forest Service and Department of the Interior as well as provides for the creation of a discretionary reserve fund in the event that the suppression dollars are exhausted before the end of fire season. In recent years, fire suppression costs have skyrocketed while funding for prevention has decreased, and the agencies have been forced to pull hundreds of millions of dollars from other critical resource work to fund catastrophic emergency fires.

While this show of support is appreciated during austere budget conditions, the National Association of State Foresters (NASF) cautions that other critical program areas such as Forest Stewardship and Urban & Community Forestry continue to be underfunded. Forest Stewardship is the primary tool for promoting sustainable forest management on family forestlands and is vital to supplying locally produced energy feedstock that improves the health of our forests, create jobs and offers energy security. Urban & Community Forestry provides assistance to communities in establishing and managing local urban and community forestry resources where 80% of Americans live—in our cities and towns.

Federal investment is necessary to help all forests respond to pressing challenges—particularly on the 400 million acres of non-federal forest lands—while continuing to provide clean air and water, wildlife habitat, recreational opportunities renewable energy, traditional forest products and a number of other public benefits.

“There appears to be an ongoing failure to appreciate the symbiotic relationship between federal and state partners in our responsibility to care for the nation's forests,” said NASF President and Kentucky State Forester Leah W. MacSwords. “No one ever questions why the federal government should set aside money to keep our water safe and our air clean. Our forests are a strategic national resource that is every bit as essential to the public good as other environmental priorities.”

NASF has developed appropriations recommendations for a number of priority forestry programs where targeted federal funding can serve as a cost-effective solution to meeting national needs for renewable products, energy, and environmental benefits that mitigate climate change impacts. See www.stateforesters.org for more information.

The National Association of State Foresters is comprised of the directors of forestry agencies from the fifty states, eight U.S. territories and associated states, and the District of Columbia. Through public-private partnership, NASF seeks to advance sustainable forestry, conservation, and protection of forest lands and their associated resources.

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