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America's trees and forests get boost in Interior spending bill
State Foresters support increased federal funding for critical programs

Washington DC, November 3, 2009 – Trees and forests across the nation will benefit from the 2010 appropriations bill passed by Congress and signed by President Obama over the weekend. A \$4.6 billion boost for the Department of the Interior and the U.S. Forest Service budgets includes a 16% increase for the Forest Service's State and Private Forestry programs, which help state forest resource professionals deliver vital assistance to forest landowners and communities to manage, protect, and improve their forests and green spaces.

Federal investment in all forests—particularly the 400 million acres of forest lands in state and private ownership—is important to keep forests healthy and producing essential public benefits, including clean air and water, wildlife habitat, recreational opportunities, renewable energy, wood and paper products, and climate change mitigation.

“State Foresters believe that forests, as a strategic national resource, are every bit as vital to the public good as healthcare, schools, and roads,” said NASF president and Maryland State Forester Steven W. Koehn. “This increased federal investment in America's forests from Congress and the President will help ensure that the public benefits forests provide continue to improve the quality of life for all Americans, today and into the future.”

The 2010 appropriations bill supports critical federal forestry initiatives serving some of the nation's most at risk lands including:

\$71 million for Forest Inventory and Analysis, which measures, monitors and maintains crucial forest information, enabling policy makers and land managers to make informed forest management decisions.

\$110 million for State Fire Assistance, which assists states in their wildland fire management efforts to ensure that on-call firefighter resources are available as a ready reserve.

\$60 million for Cooperative Forest Health Management, which supports early detection and slowing the spread of damaging insects, plants and diseases to reduce forest loss and risk to wildfire.

\$30 million for Urban and Community Forestry, which helps communities establish and manage local urban and community forestry resources where 80% of Americans live—in our cities and towns.

\$29 million for Forest Stewardship, which promotes sustainable forest management on privately owned lands.

\$79 million for Forest Legacy, which protects private forest lands from conversion to non-forest uses.

The 2010 appropriations bill also establishes a new approach to budgeting for costly wildfires by incorporating the concept of the Federal Land Assistance, Management and Enhancement (FLAME Act) that the House passed earlier this year. The Forest Service and the Department of the Interior will now be able to tap into reserve accounts to cover the costs of large or complex wildfires when the annual budgets for suppression are exhausted, reducing the need for the agencies to transfer funds from vital programs and services to pay for wildfire suppression.

"This appropriations bill is a step forward in recognizing the value of trees and forests to the economic and environmental health of the nation. This is a nonpartisan issue all can support," said NASF executive director Jay Farrell.

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. NASF seeks to advance sustainable forestry, conservation, and protection of forest lands and their associated resources.

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