



National Association of State Foresters Recommendations to the Biden-Harris Administration

Meaningful, landscape-scale forest restoration doesn't happen without collaboration across ownership boundaries. It is spurred and strengthened by the support of a determined executive, and underpinned by federal financial support largely conveyed through the USDA Forest Service's State and Private Forestry (S&PF) mission area.

Investments in S&PF programs and a shared commitment to working across jurisdictions ensure a holistic "all lands, all hands" approach to forest management. From Forest Service technicians to municipal arborists to state field foresters, together we can work across all land ownerships—federal, tribal, state, and private—to mitigate the most pressing threats America's forests face.

If adopted, the following recommendations would ensure our forests continue to play their all-important role in the environmental, social, and economic health of our nation.

TARGET FEDERAL FUNDING TO MEET IMMEDIATE STATE FORESTRY NEEDS

Provide an additional \$500 million to state forestry agencies for S&PF implementation to build capacity and partnerships, continue federal program implementation under state budget shortfalls and jump start rural economies through forestry work. This funding should go directly to S&PF programs or state forestry agencies through block grants with the added flexibility of (1) three- to five-year spending authorities and (2) waived or reduced state match requirements. Additionally, for the next two years, funds for the Landscape Scale Restoration (LSR) program should be reallocated to the four S&PF base programs LSR's funding originated from.

Once received by state forestry agencies, these supplemental federal funds would go directly to build capacity and partnerships that further priorities identified within each state's Forest Action Plan. Forest Action Plans offer practical and comprehensive roadmaps for investing federal, state, local, and private resources where they can be most effective in achieving national conservation goals.

ACCELERATE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COHESIVE STRATEGY

Wildfires in the West may be top of mind, but managing wildfire is a national challenge. Without an increase in coordinated forest management, wildfires will continue to pose a threat to our nation's forests and communities. Fortunately, we have most of what we need to fight wildfires before they start:

In Forest Action Plans, state forestry agencies identify priority areas nationwide for wildfire mitigation work. The Wildland Fire Leadership Council is ready and able to convene the stakeholders responsible for implementing the National Cohesive Wildfire Management Strategy. There is a shared understanding among public health and environmental agencies that prescribed fire smoke emissions pose less risk to human health than mega-emissions from uncontrolled wildfire. Good Neighbor Authority projects, many of which are mitigation-based, are proven to boost wildfire resiliency in federal forests.



The prioritization of fuels reduction work is complete. The organizational capacity for accelerated mitigation work is in place. There is an understanding that fuels treatments are necessary and proof they are effective. It's time to get to work:

- **Fully implement the “wildfire funding fix.”** Funding that was supposed to be freed up by the “fix” never materialized. It's time for these funds to be spent mitigating wildfire risk.
- **Commit to sustained and unprecedented off-budget, federal investments in wildfire mitigation.** There has never been a successful “on-budget” fix to address wildfire risk in a meaningful way. It's time to go big with long-term investments in active forest management and prescribed fire.



SUPPORT STATE-BASED SOLUTIONS DRIVEN BY FOREST ACTION PLANS

- The complexity of managing America’s forest resources requires state-based approaches. State forestry best management practices are a shining example of state-based solutions achieving national outcomes for water quality.
- NASF’s report, “A Century of Shared Stewardship: State Foresters and the Forest Service,” illustrates how the federal-state forestry partnership can continue to enhance national capacity for active forest management and wildland fire protection.
- Considered collectively, state forestry agencies’ Forest Action Plans constitute the most comprehensive strategic plan for America’s forests.
- State-based approaches to shared stewardship have bolstered on-the-ground outcomes nationwide with over 30 formal agreements with USDA.



INVEST IN FOREST-BASED CLIMATE SOLUTIONS

Strengthen the Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) Program. FIA is relied on to provide data on the state of the nation’s largest carbon sink—our forests. Additional federal funding is needed to expand FIA’s data collection and support more carbon-related data needs and statistical research capacity.

Strengthen the Role of Resources Planning Act (RPA) Assessments. The RPA assessments and supporting technical reports constitute a trove of valuable information presently underutilized by stakeholders. Additional funding would accelerate this forest carbon-related research.

Strengthen the Role of Forests and Forest Programs. NASF’s 2020 policy statement on climate change offers recommendations for increasing carbon storage, promoting the use of forest biomass for energy, and establishing greater emphasis on climate change mitigation in federal program implementation.



MAKE ORGANIZATIONAL IMPROVEMENTS

- Ensure vacant and acting federal positions are filled permanently and in a timely manner.
- Renew the charters of (1) the National Urban and Community Forestry Advisory Council, (2) the Forest Resource Coordinating Committee, and (3) the Forestry Research Advisory Council.
- Restore NRCS to the USDA Natural Resources and Environment Mission Area, where the Forest Service is housed, to best align federal forestry and conservation efforts.

