



SOUTHERN GROUP OF STATE FORESTERS POLICY PRIORITIES

The Southern Group of State Foresters provides a southern perspective on public policies that influence the management of private, non-industrial forestlands in the region. While individual members have an agency responsibility to their respective states, SGSF develops unified positions that guide federal policy and collective direction among the states and territories.

Policy priorities focus on measures that promote the perpetuation, protection, and sustainable management of southern forests through services to landowners, communities and allied organizations. Current emphases include:

- Sustaining the long-term social and economic values of forestland
- Maintaining forestland as an integral part of the southern landscape
- Protecting forest resource values
- Incorporating forest management into national policies for renewable energy and climate mitigation

The following is a summary of policy initiatives and strategies by area of emphasis.

Promote resource management strategies that sustain the long-term social and economic values of forestland

Develop appropriately balanced state and federal policies that promote the long-term capacity of forests to provide multiple use values

- Support effective development and incorporation of State Assessments and Strategies into state and federal forest resource policy
- Promote adequate funding, interagency coordination and organizational support for forestry related Farm Bill programs
- Support applied research efforts of the USFS Southern Forest Research Station including expansion of the Forest Inventory and Analysis Program
- Support appropriate Clean Water Act provisions that protect forested wetlands and related hydrologic functions
- Promote effective best management practices (BMP) policy for protection of water quality
- Promote effective coordination with state and federal wildlife management agencies on shared priorities for game as well as non-game species

- Advocate programs and services that promote restoration of high priority native forest ecosystems
- Support adequate funding and effective technology transfer capabilities for Forest Stewardship and Rural Forestry Assistance Programs

Support existing and promote the development of new markets for forest products and forest resource benefits (ecosystem services)

- Support public and/or private payments to landowners for providing ecosystem service benefits
- Encourage tax law provisions that promote investment in forest management
- Facilitate existing forest market infrastructure and support development of new sustainable market opportunities

Promote the retention and potential expansion of forestland as an integral part of landscape management and conservation

Promote policies that minimize the occurrence and adverse impacts of loss, fragmentation and parcelization of forestland

- Promote tax laws that perpetuate and expand forestland
- Support repeal or modification of estate tax provisions that currently discourage ownership and maintenance of forestland
- Support adequate funding and effective implementation for Cooperative Forestry programs: Forest Legacy, Community Forest and Open Space, and Urban and Community Forestry
- Promote comprehensive interagency and private sector partnerships to encourage large scale landscape-level conservation of forestlands
- Promote policies that encourage incorporation of forest management considerations in state and local government growth management strategies

Support programs and policies that provide for the effective maintenance of forest health

Establish and maintain effective fire prevention and suppression capabilities

- Secure adequate funding for State Fire Assistance and related state-federal wildfire programs
- Promote utilization of the Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment
- Extend federal wildfire and controlled burning liability protection to state forestry agencies
- Support establishment of appropriate policies for smoke management and air quality control standards for prescribed fire
- Support funding and strategies that promote research and implementation of Wildland Urban Interface initiatives

Promote effective strategies for the detection, treatment and restoration of impacts associated with insect and disease infestation, invasive plant species and catastrophic weather events

- Promote efficient implementation of the Emergency Forest Restoration Program
- Support adequate funding for USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service regulatory activities to control invasive plant species
- Promote practical and effective application protocols for forest pesticides
- Support adequate funding for the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Forest Health Program
- Support establishment and expansion as necessary of initiatives to monitor, prevent, and eradicate invasive plants that pose risks to native forest ecosystems
- Encourage effective and efficient interagency coordination with the Federal Emergency Management Agency in disaster planning and recovery

Promote the role of private forestlands and tree cover as an essential component of renewable energy strategies and management of greenhouse gas emissions

Develop programs and policies that promote production of renewable energy through sustainable management of forestlands

- Support utilization of the Farm Bill definition for “renewable biomass” as the standard for federal policy in the Renewable Electricity and Renewable Fuels policy
- Promote programs and funding that provide appropriate standards for sustainable management and utilization of woody biomass
- Facilitate implementation of Farm Bill programs and other initiatives that promote utilization of woody biomass
- Support funding and program initiatives that promote energy conservation through urban and community forestry activities

Promote the role of private forestlands in climate mitigation and adjustment policies

- Support inclusion of forest management activities as qualifying for offset provisions under cap-and-trade policy or other programs that encourage climate mitigation practices
- Establish incentive and assistance programs to support climate adaptation measures