Alaska

State & Private Forestry Fact Sheet

Investment in State's Cooperative Programs:

Program	FY 2006 Final	FY 2007 Estimate
Cooperative Lands - Forest Health Management	241,320	241,320
Cooperative Lands - Forest Health Management - National Fire Plan	225,000	225,000
Forest Land Enhancement	187,921	0
Forest Legacy	642,367	9,000
Forest Stewardship	540,000	533,000
State Fire Assistance	644,000	644,000
State Fire Assistance - National Fire Plan	517,312	504,000
Urban and Community Forestry	198,000	198,000
Volunteer Fire Assistance	129,690	130,000
Volunteer Fire Assistance - National Fire Plan	266,310	266,000
Total	**3,591,920**	**2,750,320**

State and Private Forestry Cooperative Programs provide technical, educational and financial assistance to landowners, resource managers and communities with a primary goal of maintaining and improving the health, sustainability and productivity of Alaska's urban and rural forests and related economies. These programs are delivered to our customers through a partnership between the State of Alaska, the USDA Forest Service and in cooperation with many other private and government entities. State and Private Forestry Programs:

- Increase cost effectiveness through the use of partnerships in delivery;
- Increase values through sustained productivity of forests;
- Are voluntary and use non-regulatory approaches.

Key Issues:

- Wildland fire remains a threat to many "at risk" communities as evidenced by a spruce bark beetle epidemic that impacted 4 million acres. 11 million acres burned statewide in 2004 and 2005. The Kenai Peninsula "All Lands/All Hands" approach will be increasingly employed statewide to plan and prioritize hazardous fuels treatments with a focus on the wildland/urban interface (WUI).
- Invasive species are a growing threat to Alaska's forested ecosystems, including non-native plants, terrestrial and aquatic organisms, insects and pathogens. Many invasive species such as orange hawkweed, spotted knapweed, Japanese knotweed, and amber-marked birch leaf miner are present in isolated locales. Partnerships such as the new statewide Invasive Species Working Group are forming to increase our ability to detect and rapidly respond to new infestations of species from all taxa.

- Climate related forest health problems have already been documented in Alaska (i.e., spruce bark beetle attack, Alaska yellow-cedar decline, and record wildfire seasons). More research and understanding of climate change is needed so forest managers and partners can develop strategies to address this issue, which affects the extent and severity of the wildland fire and invasive issues.
- Alaska's villages are in need of renewable energy opportunities to supplement heating and power. Woody biomass is readily available from milling residues in Southeast and as a by product from hazardous fuel treatments in South Central and Interior which could be used as a source of energy. An example is the Craig Wood Energy Project, a large “chip fed” wood heat system, will be constructed in 2007.
- Cost effective reforestation after timber harvest in the boreal forest is a challenge and will need to be addressed as harvests for wood energy are conducted.

Forest Facts and Accomplishments:

Selected Facts		FY2006 Accomplishments	
Population	626,932	Stewardship Plans Prepared (current year) (Each)	85
Acres of Forest Land	129,000,000	Acres Under Stewardship Plans (current year) (Acres)	18,796
Acres of Nonindustrial Private Forest Land	35,875,000	Acres Under Stewardship Plans (all years) (Acres)	3,396,694
Number of NIPF Landowners	17,000	Acres of Multi-resource Practices Implemented on NIPF (Acres)	626
Acres of Federal Land Under State Fire Protection	105,000,000	Volunteer Fire Departments Assisted (Each)	50
Acres of Private Land Under State Fire Protection	900,000	State Fire Communities Assisted (Each)	34
Number of Rural Fire Departments	256	Coop Forest Health Acres Protected (Acres)	693
Number of Cities And Towns	349	Forest Legacy Project Acquisition (Acres)	80
Forest Based Employment	1,900	Urban Forestry - Participating Communities (Each)	8
Economic Impact of Forestry (by rank)	5	Urban Forestry - Volunteer Assistance (Days)	322
State Forestry Budget (All Sources)	14,240,000		

Program Highlights:

Forest Health Protection

This program provides a wide range of forest health related technical and financial assistance to forest landowners and resource managers. FHP staff provide the primary forest entomology and pathology expertise in the state and conduct activities such as integrated pest management, technology development, annual insect and disease surveys, forest health monitoring and pest suppression on forest insect, disease, and invasive plant problems. Through a successful partnership with Alaska Cooperative Extension Service forest health early detection and technical assistance continues to be provided to the public resulting annually in over 14,000 public contacts and more than 100 educational presentations and displays were delivered statewide. A biological control action is underway to control the spread of the amber-marked birch leaf miner. This effort requires a high level of cooperation between several federal, state and Canadian personnel. The first release of the bio-control agent (parasitic wasp) was conducted in 2004, additional releases occurred in 2005 and 2006. Prevention, other control measures and monitoring efforts continue and are intensifying. The Region completed an Invasive Species Strategy for “all taxa”. Along with our partners recognition of the invasives issue, a statewide Alaska Invasive Species Working Group was

formed. The statewide Alaska Exotic Plant Inventory Clearinghouse (AKEPIC) database rose from a total of 37,000 records in 2005 to over 43,400 points taken at over 9,900 sites in 2006. Although still not completely understood, the cause of yellow-cedar decline appears to be related to climate change and specifically the spring freezing root injury in open canopy forests characterized by reduced snowpack.Yellow-cedar decline has been mapped on approximately 500,000 acres across an extensive portion of southeast Alaska

Cooperative Fire Protection

Alaska's state and private land base is more than 135 million acres. Fire protection on these lands is the responsibility of the State of Alaska. Of the state's 626,932 people, about 49% of them live outside municipal boundaries or in communities of less than 10,000 people. These people depend upon the state and rural and volunteer fire departments for Wildland fire protection. Funds are provided by the federal government through Cooperative Fire Programs and the National Fire Plan (NFP) to address critical fire management needs in state and private fire protection responsibility areas. Assistance is provided in three specific program areas: State Fire Assistance (SFA), Volunteer Fire Assistance (VFA), and Federal Excess Personal Property (FEPP). In 2006, $665,900 of State and Private Forestry funds (SPCF) and $361,000 of NFP funds (SPS2) were granted to the state to support fire preparedness and suppression efforts. This year, 50 rural and volunteer fire departments received $131,000 of Volunteer Fire Assistance funds and $269,000 of NFP Volunteer Fire Assistance funds. These funds benefited 34 rural communities across the state. Alaska's first statewide National Fire Plan Coordinator was hired through a cooperative agreement among the Division of Forestry, Alaska Fire Service/BLM, Kenai Peninsula Borough, and Forest Service. The Coordinator is leading and facilitating interagency implementation of the All Lands/All Hands Action Plan, focusing on reducing the risk of wildland fire to communities, is working with other governmental enities to adopt an "All Lands/All Hands" approach in other areas of Alaska and coordinating statewide FIREWISE activities. To reduce the risk of catastrophic wildland fire on the Kenai Peninsula in 2005 and 2006, the "All Lands/All Hands" agencies (eight) together treated 5,900 acres of high priority hazardous fuels and completed ten Community Wildfire Protection Plans for 24 communities.

Forest Legacy

The Forest Legacy Program (FLP) provides land purchase services to private landowners to protect environmentally important forest lands threatened by conversion to non-forest uses. FLP is implemented through a partnership between the Alaska Region, the State of Alaska Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation, and nongovernmental and nonprofit organizations. In 2006, the Alaska Region received notification that University of Alaska and Alaska Mental Health Land Trust property are eligible for the Forest Legacy Program. In addition, the Alaska program closed on the Gorman property (80 acres) located in the Wood-Tikchik State Park area near Dillingham. The state plans to close on the Diamond Creek project (275 acres) and the Agulowak River Conservation Easement (1,183 acres) in FY 2007.

Urban and Community Forestry

The Forest Service, through a partnership with AK Division of Forestry, provides communities technical, financial, educational and research services so they may plant, protect and maintain community trees and forests. In FY 2006, the state received $198,000 from the Forest Service. Volunteers donated more then 1,930 hours and state personnel provided more than 1,368 seat hours of training. AK has 458,661 people living in communities with the potential to have community forestry programs. Of these, 390,514 (85%) are residing in communities that have managing or developing community forestry programs. Currently, AK has six Tree City USA communities and three Tree Line USA utilities. In 2006, AK hosted the Pacific Northwest Community Tree Conference, provided three scholarships for municipal employees to attend the Municipal Foresters Institute and financially supported

three public employees to take the International Society of Arboriculture Certified Arborist Exam. The City and Borough of Juneau and Juneau Urban Forestry Partnership updated the tree inventory and entered the data into the city's GIS. The Juneau Urban Forestry Partnership sponsored Arbor Day events, and published a self-guided tour pamphlet, "Juneau Tree Walk", and a "Guide to Downtown Trees". Anchorage TREErific secured a grant to purchase tools, hoses, tree gators, and other materials for use in tree planting and maintenance. It sponsored monthly educational presentations and maintained plantings. Homer Tree Stewards held an Arbor Day planting, and bought pruning and safety kits for maintaining street trees. The Sitka Tree and Landscape Committee organized volunteer planting and maintenance events and developed a brochure, "Right Tree Right Place", to distribute with utility bills.

Forest Stewardship

In Alaska, the Forest Stewardship Program is delivered by the State of Alaska, Division of Forestry. During 2006, one Alaska Native Corporation completed a Forest Stewardship Management Plan covering 17,152 forested acres. Forest Stewardship plans were prepared and signed by 84 individual Alaska landowners totaling 1,644 forested acres. Forest Stewardship planning grants were awarded to 6 ANCSA corporations covering 1,270,000 acres and obligating $188,000. Three of these corporations are located in the Interior and have an objective to develop wood energy from their forest resources. Statewide, 660 individual ownerships now have Forest Stewardship Plans covering 40,008 acres, much of which is in the WUI. Forest Land Enhancement Program (FLEP) was first implemented in 2003 to provide cost-share reimbursement services to non-industrial private forest landowners in order for them to protect, maintain, enhance, or improve forest and watershed health, diversity, productivity and sustainability, resulting in public benefit. In 2006, forty-three landowners enrolled in the FLEP program, obligating $479,646 in cost-share assistance for treating 907 acres. In FY 2006, twenty-two FLEP projects were completed with previous years' funds covering 627 acres at a cost of $202,516.

Alaska Wood Energy Development Task Group (AWEDTG)

In October 2004, the AWEDTG formed to explore opportunities to increase the utilization of wood for energy and biofuels production in Alaska. A Memorandum of Understanding established the group, signed by fourteen government entities and non-profit organizations, including the Alaska Energy Authority; Alaska Village Initiatives; Denali Commission; Juneau Economic Development Council; National Renewable Energy Lab; State of Alaska, Department of Natural Resources, Division of Forestry; U.S. Forest Service, Alaska Region and Pacific Northwest Research Station; USDA Farm Services Agency; USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service; USDA Rural Development, Alaska; USDI Bureau of Indian Affairs, Alaska; USDI Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Alaska State Office; and the University of Alaska Fairbanks Cooperative Extension Service. In 2006, the Task Group issued a Request for Statements of Interest for feasibility studies on thermal wood heat pilot projects. Twenty-four applications were received, of which twelve were provided feasibility studies. The results of the feasibility studies are almost completed and should be available spring 2007. Ground breaking for the Craig Wood Energy Project took place August 2006 with a completion date of fall 2007. The new wood boiler in Craig will heat two schools and the aqua center saving the City $50,000 in fuel the first year. Plans for 2007 include another round of Request for Statement of Interests for feasibility studies and the acquiring of additional funding to purchase at least 10 "stick fed" wood heat systems to be constructed in rural communities.

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