

## Strategies for Increasing Diversity and Inclusion at SAF Meetings

Forestry and natural resources by their very nature tend to attract individuals who enjoy nature and perhaps choose the profession for the promise of solitude in the woods. This is a challenge for our profession and for SAF, because maintaining a vibrant membership requires us to engage with people. The newest SAF working group, Diversity and Inclusion, has some strategies that will help local and regional chapters, divisions, and state societies include diverse new members.

Why do we need strategies for making meetings more welcoming? Although society encourages individuality, in a group setting people want the sense that they belong. Imagine coupling the relative “introverted-ness” of foresters with youth, gender, and/or other factors that can single someone out at a meeting (e.g., the only person of color or the only person with multiple tattoos or piercings). Sometimes people with these characteristics can be leery of attending professional society meetings or, if they’ve attended and had a bad experience, they choose not to speak up and share ideas at meetings or choose not to volunteer for or accept leadership roles. Differences may be greater between individuals who move to a rural area from an urban area and vice versa. Our local SAF chapters will need to be welcoming for foresters from urban and rural backgrounds, with and without tattoos, and including diversity of gender and race/ethnicity.

We all stand to benefit from looking for common values—our love of forests—and engaging one another through that connection. Practicing forestry will be very challenging in the century ahead, as changes converge: invasive species, increased drought, changes in fire severity and frequency, and changes in the range of insects. Our ability to respond to these changes will be strengthened as we widen the perspectives we include in our professional society. Our profession will also gain acceptance from the public at large as we look more like the public at large.

Even if your initial reaction to someone is, “Wow, that’s someone different,” the very fact that they are in a forestry job or at an SAF meeting means that you have something pretty important in common with them. We can build on the common interest.

### Tips and Techniques

Here are several strategies that SAF members can use to increase diversity within our membership and make meetings more welcoming:

Be aware of people, including those of different gender and race/ethnicity, working in the broad spectrum of forestry who are no longer or not yet coming to the local SAF meetings. Make a special effort to invite them to attend. Make a phone call, send an e-mail, or drop by their office, especially if it would be their first interaction with SAF.



A scene from the 2016 SAF National Convention. Photo by Josh Zytkeiwicz, www.focallflame.com.

Be intentional about your programming and aware of the growing depth and breadth of the forestry profession. Do your offered programs have the unintended consequence of focusing on “traditional” topics (often known as “dirt forestry”)? Think about the broader spectrum of forestry-related issues in your area and the professionals involved, including attention to diverse potential players. Ask what topics are you missing, and who are you overlooking? Is there a topic you haven’t thought about that would bring new people and ideas to your meetings?

In addition to broadening your potential topics for meetings, think about using the programming as an opportunity to invite new or potential members to offer programs, content, and/or field tours.

Start your meetings with a secular opening appropriate to the professional nature of the event. Focus on professionalism and known common ground—what a beautiful setting you are in, the fabulous (or dismal) weather, or the topic(s) that brought everyone to the particular meeting.

When new people attend, welcome them in the same way you do long-term members: If you shake hands when you see an old friend, do the same to new members; if you ask them what’s been up lately, do the same with newcomers. Be aware of cultural differences, but know that in a quasi-business setting it is acceptable and encouraged to shake hands in greeting, regardless of gender.

If the gathering is small enough, invite everyone to introduce themselves. This takes the spotlight off newcomers and also gives them some insight into who else is in the room. Ask everyone to share something a little beyond name and company: What was your biggest forestry challenge this month, for example, or something that helps engage and interest everyone at the meeting. This is excellent for all members—many of whom change jobs or employers rather frequently these days.

Notice who is and is not talking during group discussions. Is it a certain

subgroup or a specific person? Create inclusive conversation and facilitated group discussions to abbreviate the usual talkers and integrate the nontalkers. Do this with open-ended questions (e.g., what? how?) to redirect discussion and speakers. (“John, that is an interesting approach to fuel reduction. Maham, what are your thoughts on fuel management?”)

Body language speaks more than words. Who’s at the table? Using the most space at the table? Leaning in? Showing

facial or hand expressions while listening? Who’s not? Make it a point to get feedback from those with disengaged body language after the meeting. And then, listen carefully. Try to do this in a way that doesn’t shine a spotlight, but rather engages.

During the social period and meeting, watch group dynamics, wallflowers, and the body language of individuals. If the new member(s) seem, isolated, make

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## What’s That I Hear?

### SAF Podcasts Take You Beyond the Articles

SAF’s podcasts extend the life of journal articles and take listeners behind the scenes with the leading voices behind the literature. Podcasts for select articles published in *Forest Science* and the *Journal of Forestry* are posted open access alongside the parent article. Use them in the classroom or on a hike to lend more mileage to complex scholarly content, making it more accessible to the practicing or future forester.

[www.eforester.org/Main/Library/JOF/Podcasts.aspx](http://www.eforester.org/Main/Library/JOF/Podcasts.aspx)

## LUMBER

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can come into the US. It's on the negotiating table," said Sanders.

Some observers have suggested that higher prices for Canadian lumber will add a significant amount to the price for a new home in the US. Sanders said the price difference would be insignificant.

"It really is miniscule," he said. "The difference with a tariff in place is less than 2 percent, and I've heard some people say that it would add less than \$300 or \$400 [to the cost of a new home]. In the big scheme of things, it's not going to influence the decision to buy a home."

Lloyd Irland, president of The Irland Group ([www.irlandgroup.com](http://www.irlandgroup.com)), a consulting firm based in Wayne, Maine, says the situation is more complex in his state.

"What's distinctive about Maine is that we have an unusually high number of logs from northern Maine going into Canada, which are then manufactured into lumber and, for the most part, come right back into the United States." Irland sees both positive and negative views of the duty in Maine.

"From what I gather, some Maine forest-products companies are saying that it's good for them, that it will enable them to increase production or to expand. But the mills on the other side of the border are not so excited about it, and I think some of the [Maine] landowners who are shipping logs to the Canadian border mills are going to see their customers at a significant disadvantage now."

Irland noted that J.D. Irving, a Canadian company that has a mill in northern Maine, will pay a much lower duty on exports of lumber into the US—3.02 percent—than other Canadian exporters. Much of the timber J.D. Irving processes in Canada comes from its own land, rather than provincial government Crown lands.

"There are signs that the negotiators recognize that this is a complex situation, that the same duty rates might not apply to all companies," Irland said. "That makes it hard to foresee what's going to happen—to see how the particular circumstances here in Maine will be reflected in the decisions by the trade agencies, both on the countervailing duties and antidumping duties."

Irland suggested that a permanent countervailing duty averaging about 20 percent across the board would encourage lumber producers in Europe and other areas to send more of their products to the US.

"There are lumber producers in Europe who are running at less than capacity right now, and they have really high-quality wood. They're now saying, this [duty] is good for us, this is the best thing that's happened to us in a long time," said Irland, who added that German spruce lumber was available at a lumberyard a few miles from his home in central Maine during the housing boom in the early 2000s.

"What has happened repeatedly in the past is that we have had countervailing duties," said Irland, "but now we have a new wrinkle, that there's going to be consideration of an antidumping duty. With both duties in force, the parties will have an incentive to negotiate." **FS**

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it your business to bring them into the discussion and get their reaction to the speaker or field tour. Engage them without singling them out.

After the meeting, follow up with new or returning members by asking what they thought, what they would like to see in future programming, and what it would take to have them come again. And, most important, thank them for coming.

### A Two-Way Street

It is important to remember that inclusion is a two-way street, and new members should also consider what they can gain by becoming active members. Those of us who have attended professional meetings for decades have gained and formed valuable relationships when we worked hard to focus on common values and interests with our new colleagues. As a new member, find out which of the regulars shares your curiosity about markets, old barn boards, biomass, birding, wildflowers, kayaking, or geocaching, to cite a few examples. If you don't ask, you won't know. If you have an idea for a future program, share it with the leaders. If you have an idea for the icebreaker question for the next meeting, share it. Don't assume that what you experienced as a slight was intended in that way—it's only through preparing this paper, for example, that some of us learned that in some parts of the country it was once considered bad form to initiate a handshake with a woman.

Inclusion is not easy. For the forestry profession to persist in a fast-changing and urbanized world, we will depend upon our collective commitment to embrace diversity and inclusion in our professional lives and in our professional society. Success in attracting members to our workplaces or SAF meetings may in the short term seem challenging as we navigate through differing life experiences and cultural backgrounds. Conversations may need to include difficult topics, such as how policies affect the inclusiveness of the profession and the professional society. Commitments from all members, especially leaders, and formal training may be necessary to reach a shared future that is truly inclusive.

As SAF members and foresters, we have the luxury of working in some of the world's most beautiful settings. We have the responsibility to care for those settings and provide products and services that people need. It's a pretty special role, and many people in our lives don't understand or appreciate what we do. If we all approach SAF meetings focused on our very special common ground, we can strengthen the profession and our own careers together.

This article was written by members of SAF's Diversity and Inclusion Working Group. See [tinyurl.com/lkfyv25](http://tinyurl.com/lkfyv25). **FS**

*Editor's note: An icebreaker question at a recent SAF chapter meeting was, "What's the strangest thing you've ever found in the woods?" The answers—meth labs, marijuana farms, and even dead bodies—were fascinating.*

## POLICY

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Court, which declined to review it in October of 2016.

Senator Daines has since promoted changing the law to overturn the ruling, which he has said cripples the Montana forest industry and prevents USFS from reducing fuel loads around Montana homes.—submitted by Donald Radcliffe SAF's Henry Clepper Forest Policy Intern.

## LETTERS

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lack of transparency with respect to SAF's annual budget and deviations therefrom. As Bob Loiselle writes, "It's all about transparency these days, and here SAF comes up lacking." He reminds us of a college dean who conducted all of his business on a glass-top table. It was this dean's position that by doing so everything was transparent and nothing was done under the table.

SAF's Board of Directors and its CEO have a fiduciary responsibility to the membership to show that they are providing excellent stewardship of members' financial resources. An equivalent of a glass-top table would be for the membership to have constant access to a detailed budget somewhere on the website. Budgeted income and expenses and deviations therefrom should be posted monthly or quarterly. We need to know where those missing millions of dollars have been spent and the returns from those expenditures. This is standard policy for most groups and should be for the Society of American Foresters.

As we were drafting this letter, we learned that the Board at its last meeting approved measures to post its financial statements and budgets on the SAF website, as well as to audit the expenses from the Grosvenor property sale [see page 2]. While we applaud this measure, we want to be sure that these actions are implemented.

We have contacted our district Board member to express our concern and have been assured that he is taking these matters seriously. We encourage all SAF members to do exactly the same. Find out who your current Board member is and call or e-mail him or her to demand fiscal accountability and transparency from our professional organization. Responsible, ethical behavior is part of our Society's beliefs, and it should be part of our financial practices. Let's all demand it from our CEO, our Board of Directors, and the House of Society Delegates.

**John E. Gunter**

**Deborah Gaddis Gunter**

Marion, IL

### White Ash Not Resistant to EAB

Nice work on the invasives edition of *The Forestry Source*. I have a correction to report in the "Emerald Ash Borer: Still Spreading, but Progress in Treatments" article, which states that New Hampshire does not have EAB, when it most certainly does. It was first detected in Concord, in

2013 and has since been found in other areas in southern and central parts of the state. Just ask the Canterbury Shaker Village where it used to manage for white ash to use in basketmaking. Today, the museum's forester has been working to remove most, if not all, of it due to EAB.

I'm also not so sure about Sadof's comment about white ash being "relatively resistant." We have plenty of evidence to the contrary here in the Catskill region of New York, and logging activity is picking up (even in recently cut stands) to stay ahead of the spread, and state agencies have recently expanded the quarantine to virtually half of the state. Since white ash is by far the most dominant ash species we have here, where there's EAB, white ash is dying and it's going fast. By the third year [after infestation], the woodpecker "blonding" starts to resemble the orange one might find in Scotch pine. The timber becomes incredibly dangerous to work around due to the lack of moisture in the tree, and there is a lot of breakage in the tops. Eradication efforts are impossible, but we're doing what we can.

**Collin Miller**

Downsville, New York

*Miller is a watershed forester with the New York City Department of Environmental Protection.*

*I introduced an error when I wrote that EAB has not been detected in New Hampshire; however, the insect has not been found to date in Vermont, according to [www.emeraldashborer.info](http://www.emeraldashborer.info). I checked with Mr. Sadof about the effects of EAB on white ash, and he said that "The vast majority are killed. Only a few survive." I apologize for these errors.—Steve Wilent*

## RT7

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log, and the device flew out of my hand, hit a sapling, and landed on duff. This mishap caused no apparent harm to the RT7. This also highlights the value of carrying a tablet in a case with a stout strap, if only for the purpose of having both hands free when crossing logs. Handheld offers an RT7 case and shoulder strap as separate accessories; such products are also available from third parties.

As you might expect, the RT7 weighs a bit more than a typical tablet: about 1.4 pounds (650 grams) including the battery, a bit heavier than Samsung's Galaxy Tab E's 1.1 pounds (490 grams). The RT7 also is about twice as thick as the Galaxy. Nonetheless, it fits well in one hand and has a textured case that is less slippery than on some devices, such as my iPad Mini. Its size and weight are another reason to invest in a case and shoulder strap; holding any rugged tablet for long periods can be hard on the hands.

Overall, the RT7 is well-built, solid hardware and comes with a mature operating system familiar to many foresters. The bottom line is whether the ruggedness justifies the price: \$1,149. For the same money, you could buy a half-dozen Samsung or other brand of nonrugged tablet. Which is the best option? Your call. **FS**