Pathway to the Future:
Assessing Strategic Priorities for Clients of FS R&D Mission Area

John Barnwell & Richard Guldin
Dir. Government Relations & Senior Research Fellow
Society of American Foresters
Objective of the Project

• Assess the strategic priorities of clients, stakeholders, and partners for research by FS R&D
  – Current priorities
  – Looking ahead 10 years
Why Now?

- New FS Strategic Plan just issued
  - Obj. G: *Advance Knowledge*
- Time of transition in FS R&D leadership & scientist cadre
- SAF sees forestry as evolving
  - Changing global markets & policies
  - New & different science/technology needs
- Former plans are outdated
  - 10 years since last R&D effort like this
  - 13 years since last NRC report
  - NAUFRP is redoing their 2006 plan
The View from Outside

• Many former clients feel disconnected from FS R&D

• Some question FS R&D’s
  – Relevance
  – Productivity
  – Accountability
  – Transparency

• Bottom Line: Support for the broad R&D program has waned
What We Hope to Achieve

• Leverage SAF’s leadership in the community of interests to create “listening opportunities”
• Gather information about research needs & assess opportunities across the entire forest sector
• Re-connect clientele with FS R&D leaders at national & regional levels
• Build broader and deeper support for FS R&D program and its contribution to the FS Strategic Plan
How Will We Do It?

• Structured interviews
  – Key interest groups
• Focus group discussions
  – In Washington, DC
  – Around the U.S.
• Synthesize what we hear
• Handoff results to FS R&D leaders
  – Use results to craft R&D’s contribution to FS Strategic Plan, Obj. G: *Advance knowledge*
  – Build deeper & broader foundation of support for agency programs
Structured Interviews

• Beginning with key national clients
• Listening to their current impressions of FS R&D programs
• Refining points to discuss in focus groups
• Sensing other groups to engage
Structured Interviews

- Already met with
  - NASF @ their annual convention & winter board mtg.
  - NAFO
  - Sustainable Forestry Initiative
  - Federal Forest Resource Coalition
  - U.S. Endowment for Forestry & Communities
  - NAUFRP @ SAF Convention & winter board mtg.
  - American Forest Foundation
  - American Forests
  - Pinchot Institute for Conservation

- More interviews are being scheduled
Focus Groups

- Nine day-long meetings planned
  - One in D.C.
  - Eight around the country
- Invitations jointly from SAF & R&D
- Doing early thinking about
  - When (April to June 2016)
  - Who to invite
  - Where to meet; easy access
  - How to organize
  - Facilitation assistance
Invitees – Science Users

• Total number based on “small group” conceptual approach (4 to 5 small groups)
• Local members of national interests
• Regional interests
• NFS & S&PF
• Local & regional SAF leaders
• Others in room
  – Facilitator(s)
  – Observers & note takers
Questions?
What have we heard so far?

- Adaptation and scale (both geo-spatial and temporal) are increasingly important issues
  - These are “big” concepts that need additional focus in the R&D program
- Translation of science is an issue
  - Bringing the findings down to information land managers can understand and use
- Synthesis of science is needed
  - E.g., summarize the last 30 years of research on managing spruce-fir forests
What have we heard so far?

• Forest products research focus debated
  – Should FS R&D be doing research that leads to incremental progress/incremental efficiency gains? **OR** Should FS R&D be doing research on potentially disruptive issues/technologies that would be “game-changers?”
  • E.G., Southern pine plywood and OSB glues...
• With all the recent leadership retirements, NGOs have lost track of who the leaders are
  – Not unexpected because many positions aren’t yet filled
Concept for 6-hour program

8:30 - 9:00  Welcome, Safety Msg, Introductions
9:00 - 9:30  Introduce the Project
9:30 – 9:45  Break
9:45 – 10:45 Small Group Exercise #1 + Reports Out
10:45 – 11:45 Small Group Exercise #2 + Reports Out
11:45 – 12:30 Catered Lunch
12:30 – 13:00 Summary & Reflections on the Morning
13:00 – 14:00 Small Group Exercise #3 + Reports Out
14:00 – 14:15 Break
14:15 – 15:15 Small Group Exercise #4 + Reports Out
15:15 – 15:45 Summary & Reflections on Afternoon
15:45 – 16:00 Closing Remarks & Thank Yous