

Report to the Secretary of Agriculture
Forestry Research Advisory Councilⁱ
October 2016ⁱⁱ

Forests have been a strategic natural resource to our nation since its founding through the goods and services they provide. Societal, economic, and environmental pressures on our forests continue to intensify making investments in their wise use, protection, and management even more important to maintaining their natural functions, sustainability, and benefits to society. USDA forestry research results guide decision-making and improve our understanding of these complex systems and our dependence on them. In that regard, the FRAC recommends the following research priorities to help inform current and future generations.

Enhance USDA extramural and university research capacities in forestry

The FRAC remains deeply concerned about the diminishing capacity for forestry research at the nation's academic institutions and reiterates its previous recommendations that have not been sufficiently addressed. Specifically, we again recommend that:

- NIFA should utilize its higher education competitive grant programs to provide graduate student fellowships in forest science disciplines with critical shortages.
- Funding for the McIntire-Stennis program be increased to \$50 million per year to train a diverse cadre of scientists that will respond to expanding threats to the nation's forests.
- Amending the McIntire-Stennis legislation to include the 1994 land grant colleges should be a priority for the next Farm Bill. Increased funding recommended above will accommodate this expansion.

Expand Forest Service Research and Development capacity and funding

The USDA Forest Service R&D budget is inadequate compared to the urgent need for research. FRAC recommends:

- Work with Congress to adopt alternative wildfire funding mechanisms. Wildfire suppression spending is eclipsing mission critical research. It is imperative to end the use of the ten-year rolling average to drive fire budgeting and end fire borrowing.
- Restore Forest Service contributions to Joint Fire Science Program and return the JFSP line item to Wildfire Management. Joint Fire Science Program has long history of fostering sound science to help create resilient landscapes, respond safely and effectively to wildfire, and build fire-adapted communities.
- Increase USFS R&D budget to no less than 10% of the total agency's budget by FY2020, to meet urgent needs, e.g., climate change, ecological integrity, insects and disease through expanded research capacity.
- Invest in social science research beyond rural sociology and economics to better understand how forests address human needs and values.
- Continue research on forest products and technology that enhances energy efficiency, carbon sequestration, and community and rural vitality.
- Move quickly to fill the many open R&D executive and national program lead positions.

ⁱ*The members of the Forestry Research Advisory Council (FRAC) are: John D. Alexander, Nicole D. Cavender, Kevin C.K. Cheung, Alexander (Zander) Evans, Alex Finkral, Myron F. Floyd, Lance Holter, Shibu Jose (Vice Chair), Henry (Gene) Kodama (Chair), Adrian D. Leighton, Deborah McCullough, Cassandra Moseley, Eric Norland, Shannon B. Ramsay, Ronald R. Reed, Carlos Rodriguez-Franco, Robert L. Smith, Glen R. Stanosz, and Charles (Buck) Vandersteen.*

ⁱⁱ*The Council met in Washington, DC on February 23-24, 2016 and October 12-13, 2016.*