

Forest Resource Coordinating Committee

Advisory Group to the Secretary of Agriculture

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*Non-industrial Private Forest
Landowner*

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April 7, 2014

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

On behalf of all members of the Forest Resource Coordinating Committee, we submit our initial set of recommendations to improve private forestland throughout the Nation. These recommendations are both urgent and practical first steps to help improve private forestland management for the benefit of all Americans. We respectfully ask for your support, and the continued efforts of the Department of Agriculture, to carry out these first steps.

We would be happy to discuss any of the recommendations with you. Additionally, we are available to provide assistance on other private forestland issues. At the present time, we are diligently working on a second set of recommendations for your review. We look forward to continuing to serve the USDA and America's private forests.



James E. Hubbard
Deputy Chief, State & Private Forestry
FRCC Chair



Tammie Perreault
Non-industrial Private Forest Landowner
FRCC Vice Chair

Report to the Secretary of Agriculture - April 2014
Forest Resources Coordinating Committee
Recommendations

Alignment of Delivery Systems

Formally align USDA programs with State Forest Action Plans and State Wildlife Action Plans to maximize conservation values and ensure programs target states' forestry and wildlife conservation priorities.

State-level resource planning efforts include extensive public involvement processes and integrate multiple resource objectives to implement USDA programs.

Maintain State and Private Forestry programs, including the Forest Stewardship Program, that engage all woodland owners, and especially those not yet active in forest management and conservation.

The major role that State and Private Forestry programs play in private landowner education is recognized in State Forest Action Plans. Maintained funding of these programs is critical to their success.

Establish and provide funding for additional programs that assist state forestry agency delivery of tools, approaches, and other services for engaging woodland owners and tracking progress and impacts over time.

It is essential to provide an effective means for forestry information delivery that provides private forest landowners with opportunities for engaging in and benefitting from local, regional, and landscape-scale programs. Examples of cooperative multi-agency landowner service initiatives include the Florida Land Steward Program and USDA ONE in Wisconsin.

Forest Conditions

Provide access by USDA and the Department of Interior to federal disaster and emergency funding for wildfire response and suppression costs.

Excessive costs related to wildfire suppression diminish the ability of the Forest Service to fund other programs that improve forest resiliency and expand restoration treatments. We applaud USDA's leadership in forwarding the Wildfire Disaster Funding Act.

Prioritize USDA investments in private forest landowner programs that promote forest health and resiliency.

Private forest landowners are the foundation of our nation's wealth in natural resources. Keeping forests as forests must be a national priority. Programs that support long-term health and sustainability of forest ecosystems, particularly in the face of invasive pests and climate change, are critical.

Forest Inventory and Analysis

Provide full support for the core FIA program, including inventories, analyses and reports on a 5 year schedule. The FRCC supports and is willing to assist as needed in the revision of the FIA strategic plan through the establishment of a blue ribbon panel.

The FIA program is the nation's only comprehensive forest inventory system for assessing the health and sustainability of the nation's forests across all ownerships. This data has been essential to making sound forest management and policy decisions as well as investments in new and expanding markets for over 75 years and is now more important than ever.

Landscape Scale Conservation and Management

Continue to invest in landscape-scale conservation and management programs, such as the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program and the Chiefs' Joint Landscape Restoration Partnership.

Apply lessons learned from these efforts to implement an all-lands approach and to establish best practices that inform a competitive grants program that supports locally-driven, locally-relevant, landscape-scale efforts, and incentivizes effective partnerships among landowners, government entities and communities at meaningful scales.

Increase coordination and collaboration among regulatory and land management agencies at all levels and internally to leverage existing programs and resources, as well as state and regional plans [Forest Action Plans, Wildlife Action Plans] to support landscape scale conservation and management.

In the face of increasing threats to the health of our forests, it is critical to work within and across institutional and geographic boundaries to operate at a landscape-scale to most effectively conserve, protect and enhance our nation's forests.

Markets

Maintain and enhance programs that develop and expand market research and infrastructure opportunities for private forest landowners.

USDA programs that provide market opportunities for private forest landowners are critical to sustaining working forests as well as local communities and economies. The USDA's continued investment in research to position wood as a green building material improves markets for wood products. Efforts to increase federal and private construction with wood products and expansion of programs, such as those currently available through USDA Rural Development, for wood product utilization are necessary to ensure retention of current markets and provide increased potential for new and developing markets to support healthy private forests.