Forests for Tomorrow: Addressing U.S. Policy Challenges

Summary Report of a National Conference

Convened by the
National Commission on Science for Sustainable Forestry

Washington, DC
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A program conducted by the
National Council for Science and the Environment
"Improving the scientific basis for environmental decision making"

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INTRODUCTION

The Commission's Mission, Experience and Perspective

The National Commission on Science for Sustainable Forestry (NCSSF) is a diverse body of leaders from academia, industry, government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that was created in 2001 to improve the scientific basis for sustainable forestry practices in the United States.

The Commission's first task was to identify critical gaps in scientific knowledge. Then it commissioned more than 40 research projects to develop knowledge to fill those gaps. These efforts have produced information and tools of high technical quality and great relevance to the needs of policymakers, forest managers and practitioners.

However, as NCSSF began to review and consolidate the results of the work it sponsored, barriers to implementing these results continued to surface. Although NCSSF was created to focus on science, it became clear that the primary deterrent to sustainable forestry in this country isn't a lack of scientific knowledge, but rather the increasing inadequacy of the nation's existing forest policies. The Commission concluded that the United States urgently needs to develop an integrated public-policy framework for our nation's forests.

No coherent policy for U.S. forests exists today. Instead, the nation has a "crazy quilt" of single-purpose laws and years of case-law precedents, some of which are applied in contradictory ways. As we try to maintain forests under this policy patchwork, an overwhelming array of simultaneous changes continues to affect the ability of forest ecosystems to sustain all the benefits they provide to society. Without a new basis for public policy that links current scientific knowledge more directly and effectively to sustainable forestry, we will continue to face the same problems in the future.

Why Was the Conference Convened?

The Commission's recognition of the need for policy changes led to a twofold impetus for convening the NCSSF "Forests for Tomorrow" conference. First, the Commission hoped to provide a forum on "neutral ground" for the forestry community to come together, share ideas and build a basis for future collaboration. A secondary motive was to determine how NCSSF could help advance policy solutions to the challenges faced by U.S. forests in the course of its final eight months of existence.

The primary goal of the conference was to share ideas and deepen thinking on challenges facing U.S. forests and responses to those challenges and to frame options for next steps to move policy forward.

NCSSF is committed to supporting constructive action. All Commission members were actively engaged in the conference and met for an additional half-day of discussion to examine key areas and actions identified by the larger group at the "Forests for Tomorrow" conference.

The Conference Agenda

Tuesday, May 20

8:00 - 9:00 Breakfast - Meeting check-in
9:00 - 9:30 Welcome, introductions and agenda
9:30 -10:00 NCSSF overview and meeting goal

Session I: Identifying Challenges
10:00 -11:30 Challenges: six table breakouts
11:30-12:00 Plenary: table reports
12:00 -1:00 Lunch

Session II: Framing Responses
1:00 - 3:00 Idea generation: three mixed-sector breakouts
3:00 - 4:00 Vetting: three breakouts by sector
4:00 - 5:00 Plenary: voting on next day's focus
6:00 - 7:00 Cocktail hour
7:00 - 8:00 Group dinner

Wednesday, May 21

8:00 - 9:00 Breakfast
9:00 - 9:30 Plenary: recap and orientation

Session III: Preparing for Next Steps
9:30 - 12:00 Next steps: three breakouts
12:00-1:00 Lunch
1:00- 1:45 Plenary: report on next steps
1:45 - 2:30 Wrap up and adjourn

SESSION OVERVIEWS

Session I. Defining Major Challenges

The first session of the conference focused on challenges that U.S. forests face. The Commission provided a draft list of six challenges to help jump-start the discussion. The participants at each table were asked to add, delete, modify or amend the list as they saw fit. Once the list was deemed complete, each participant was asked to share an anecdote or illustrative example to illustrate the challenges being discussed. Two or three examples were chosen from each table to report back to the entire group in a plenary summary session. A recorder at each table provided a written record of the discussion, and two recorders took notes on the plenary summaries.

The participants in this session identified ten major challenge areas:

1. keeping forested land as forest
2. addressing biodiversity in forestry practices
3. enhancing sustainability across ownership types
4. adapting to impacts of climate change on forests and wildlife
5. developing forest-based alternative energy sources
6. competing globally and maintaining rural economies
7. building a unified vision for the value of forests
8. fostering long-term perspective
9. communicating the importance of forests to quality of life
10. recognizing the public value of private forests

Discussion Summaries

1. Keeping Forested Land as Forest

Our forests are the source of a remarkable array of ecosystem services and commercial goods. Trends that threaten to diminish America's forestland base include:

- population growth that drives residential, commercial and industrial development
- changes in patterns of forest ownership and incentives for forest stewardship
- the lack of coherent policies that influence the values associated with forest ownership and intergenerational transfer of forestland.

Ironically, forestlands are most threatened in places such as suburban, urban and agricultural landscapes where forest ecosystem services are most needed.

***Examples**:*

> *Agricultural and tax policies currently have more impact on forests than forest policy does, with unintended consequences. Agricultural policies keep land prices high and create barriers to keeping forested land as forest.*
>
> *Actuarial studies of landowners in Louisiana indicate that 40% of privately held forestland in this region will change ownership over the next decade. This change in ownership is often accompanied by a trend toward smaller size resulting from conversion of forest to other land uses and subdivision into parcels.*
>
> *The fastest growing category of forestland ownership is 5- to 10-acre parcels.*

2. Addressing Biodiversity in Forestry Practices

Biodiversity is the basis for ecosystem services and all other forest values. Within the total forestland base, the allocation of forestlands among forest types and management practices is changing rapidly in many regions. There are opportunities and strategies to enhance biodiversity conservation and the provision of ecosystem services across the spectrum of forest types and management practices.

***Examples**:*

> *In the Southeast, the fastest growing categories of forest cover are deciduous hardwoods and intensively managed pine plantations.*
>
> *In the Coast Range of Oregon, public policy and management priorities on private lands have the potential to diminish the amount of early successional vegetation.*

3. Enhancing Sustainability Across Ownership Types

Sustaining the amount and quality of forests as well as the associated biodiversity and ecosystem services requires a landscape perspective. Full application of this perspective requires communication and collaboration across landscape, ownership and jurisdictional boundaries. Continuity between urban and rural forests must be a central feature of that perspective and the strategies that it engenders. Obstacles to communication and collaboration include conflicting incentives across the governmental hierarchy, conflicting agency mandates and vocabulary (management concepts, land-cover definitions) that reinforces conflict.

***Example**:*

> *Fire severity maps for the United States are based on a series of ideas at a larger spatial scale than the level of actual fire management activity.*

4. Adapting to Impacts of Climate Change on Forests and Wildlife

Climate change will reshape management contexts and elevate the importance of adaptive management. Connectivity of forestlands is essential for species to adapt and migrate in response to the effects of climate change on habitats. It will be important to maintain connectivity and large contiguous patches of forest across landscapes to facilitate the movement and survival of some species. Currently resource protection is mostly place-based, and more attention needs to be given to connections among places.

***Examples**:*

> *California offers the flexibility for parties to pay for the climate benefits of forests. This also helps to protect co-benefits such as increasing/preserving biodiversity and providing employment.*
>
> *A forestland owner who inherited 35,000 acres in Oregon split part of the land among heirs and sold the rest to real estate developers. Such actions decrease*

connectivity on the land, making it difficult for species movement and persistence, a problem exacerbated by stress from climate change.

5. Developing Forest-Based Alternative Energy Sources

Our nation needs clean, renewable, domestically produced energy. New technologies such as ethanol production from cellulose create a potential role for forests in meeting this need. This poses the opportunity to provide new sources of revenue to rural communities, but our knowledge of the ecological and economic consequences is limited. We need research to ensure that these technologies are both economically and ecologically sustainable.

***Examples**:*

The biomass energy plant being developed in Lakeview, Oregon, exemplifies efforts related to forest generated bio-energy production that can greatly improve the quality of life in rural communities.

The "Fuels for Schools" program is another such effort, but it uses wood as a fuel to generate energy without conversion to biomass-based energy or cellulosic based ethanol.

6. Competing globally and maintaining rural economies

Many rural communities have limited access to forest-product markets. To meet this challenge, regulatory and market-based policies must focus on both local and regional levels. Regions should be defined in cultural and economic terms, and new coalitions must be developed to exploit new markets.

***Example**:*

Tax policy has led to the disintegration of timber growing and forest-based manufacturing. These barriers to investment cut off an important source of capital in the global marketplace.

7. Building a unified vision for the value of forests among stakeholders

Stakeholders in the future of forests comprise a diverse community that too often focuses on differences (such as viewpoints regarding specific forest practices) rather than common interests (such as keeping forests as forest). Neither the forestry community nor the wider public has a central motivating vision of our need for forests. We need a common understanding of principles of sustainable management and how to achieve them.

***Examples**:*

The propensity for conflict among forest stakeholders has led to the widespread perception of the forestry community as a dysfunctional sector.

"Not seeing the forest for the trees" has created unintended consequences. For example, conflicts over fish and logging in eastern Oregon have negatively im-

pacted local economies, and green-building policy in Maryland has excluded all timber grown in the state.

8. Fostering a long-term perspective

Sustainable forest stewardship must be based on a long-term perspective. However, incentives for new ownership classes such as timber investment management organizations (TIMOs) and real estate investment trusts (REITs) focus on short-term goals, discouraging investment in monitoring and research. Current federal budgeting policy for fire response prevents proper long-term planning.

Examples*:*

Federal income-tax policies unintentionally drove publicly traded, vertically integrated forest products companies (companies that owned both land and mills) to divest their timber holdings because under existing tax policies such companies are taxed at a higher rate.

Urban sprawl and development pressures continue to lead to high land prices, creating a marketplace where selling large forested landholdings is more profitable in the short term.

9. Communicating the importance of forests to quality of life

Consensus on actions to conserve forests depends on a common understanding of how forests affect our lives, and the public lacks that understanding. We need education, especially for urban populations, focused on the connections between forests and quality of life issues such as air, water, energy, health, recreation and climate.

Examples*:*

Bark beetle problems in Colorado have a major impact on water supply in Las Vegas.

Widespread wildfires in Colorado's mountains have had a negative impact on Denver's water supply.

Although scientists and others have been trying to communicate and promote ideas about sustainability and basic ecological concepts for many years, a disconnect still exists.

10. Recognizing the public value of private forests

Currently, incentives for private forest landowners to manage explicitly for sustained provision of ecosystem services are limited. Market values for such services as clean water, biodiversity or aesthetic beauty currently do not exist or are poorly defined. Too often, existing market incentives are not aligned well with long-term sustainable management.

Examples*:*

Federal appraisal standards do not recognize ecosystem values. A private landowner who has various credits (wetland, carbon) must still value land at timber value or "higher and better use" (HBU).

Removal of bottomland hardwoods for soybean production has led to a lost benefit of flood control in some areas.

Session II. Identifying Responses to Challenges

In this session, the participants generated and vetted responses to the challenges.

First, participants were broken into three mixed-sector (government, industry, NGO) groups and were asked to generate a list of possible responses to the ten challenge areas developed in the first session. They were asked to consider the strengths and weaknesses of each potential response. The recorders and discussion leaders for these breakout sessions met immediately after to combine the lists created in each of these three groups. The combined list served as a set of ballots for voting by all the participants at the end of the day.

In the second breakout in this session, participants were put into three different groups organized loosely by sector. Each group reviewed all the ideas generated in the previous session from the sector's perspectives to discuss what they are already doing, what they can support and where more dialogue is needed to make progress on the responses.

The final Tuesday session brought all participants back into plenary for a vote. A list of 28 response items based on the results of the breakouts of this session was compiled and posted. Each participant was given three stickers and asked to place one next to each of the three responses they felt had the highest potential for progress in the next day's discussion. The ballot results are listed below in the order of the number of votes that each response received.

Possible Responses to the Challenges

1. Create markets for ecosystem services – 21 votes
2. Promote multi-stakeholder engagement in developing a unified vision for U.S. forests (balance water, air, energy, recreation, wood, etc.) – 18 votes
3. Empower local communities and decision makers – 13 votes
4. Facilitate cross-jurisdictional management and information-sharing capabilities– 13 votes
5. Revise tax structure – 12 votes
6. Invest in research and technology development for competitiveness and resilience – 8 votes
7. Increase funding for forestland conservation – 7 votes
8. Align fire-management policies with economic, environmental and social objectives, especially reconcile air-quality and fire policies – 6 votes

9. Accelerate investment in innovation in forest management, forest technology and forest conservation – 5 votes
10. Protect and promote forests with high conservation values (e.g. early successional, late successional, old growth, riparian) – 4 votes
11. Reconnect people to nature (e.g. getting kids in the woods) – 2 votes
12. Use climate planning to integrate – ecosystem services - forest, water, air, energy and wildlife – 2 votes
13. Provide incentives and education for small private forest owners and land trusts – 2 votes
14. Review and revise federal subsidies that affect forestlands – 2 votes
15. Diversify markets and forest-based businesses – 1 votes
16. Provide incentives for small landowner organizations (or small producer associations) to achieve economies of scale – 1 votes
17. Conduct national awareness effort/communication strategy to transparently educate the public on value of forests (e.g., national security, quality of life, etc.) – 0 votes
18. Revise land-use laws, ordinances and zoning – 0 votes
19. Enact no-net-loss forest policies – 0 votes
20. Develop common language and terminology (understandable by public) – 0 votes
21. Exempt forestland from foreign tax policy – 0 votes
22. Encourage certification – 0 votes
23. Implement wildlife monitoring in the Source Water Assessment Programs (SWAPs) and aggregate information across states – 0 votes
24. Clarify the purposes and expectations of federal forests – 0 votes
25. Promote wood manufacturing and utilization that reduces greenhouse gas footprints (e.g. increased local production) – 0 votes
26. Link appropriately scaled biomass utilization to restoration – 0 votes
27. Solve the problem of assured supply from federal lands – 0 votes
28. U.S. engagement in international forestry promoting environmental and energy policy – 0 votes

Note: The issue of lack of funding and allocation was discussed in great detail in many of the sessions, but it was not included on the ballot as a specific response because it cuts across many responses, requiring different solutions for various situations. Where possible, the intention was to encompass the issues of funding and allocation through discussion of action items for the various response areas.

Vetting: Sector Perspectives on Responses

Sector Group A: Governments

A recurring theme of the discussion in the government subgroup was the need to develop a national vision for sustainable forests. Such a vision needs to have common elements that local, state, regional, tribal and federal foresters can agree on and individualize in response to the needs of the sectors in which they work.

For this to happen the forestry community must have a larger voice in legislation. A Congressional Forestry Caucus would achieve such a goal, but public support would be necessary to form this caucus.

To gain public support, the forestry community must convince the public that forests are important to all the people of this country. The group suggested using storytelling as a way to relate forest issues to the general public. A participant asserted that that in the 1970s Santa Claus was the number one mythical creature that Americans related to and Smokey Bear was the second. The point was that the forestry community has lost touch with how to communicate with the public. A massive education campaign (analogous to Smokey Bear) was suggested to help the public understand and personalize the reasons forests are valuable. It was also suggested that the general public needs to understand that everyone has a role to play and a stake in developing sustainable forestry solutions.

Sector Group B: Industries

The challenge in developing a common forestry vision isn't merely how to articulate it, but how to make it operational. We must decide what kind of group can create and communicate the vision most effectively. A large-scale public information campaign is necessary to deliver the message that the highest and best use of existing forestland is to keep it forested. It should focus on broad benefits that the general public can easily grasp, such as clean air and water and renewable energy sources. Many people are completely unaware that they have both a role to play and a stake in developing effective sustainable forestry policy in the United States.

Policy priorities should include:

- developing a carbon management and accounting system
- protecting old-growth forests
- coordinating energy and water policy
- establishing sound fire policy

Perhaps most importantly, we must develop market values for ecosystem services and revise tax policies to eliminate unintended disincentives to keeping forested land as forests. Forest policy in the United States needs to become more holistic. A large variety of disjointed policies (e.g., agricultural, tax, energy) as well as planning frameworks (e.g., watershed, natural resource) currently affect forests in conflicting ways.

The forestry community consists of many diverse groups who worked separately in the past, but there is growing recognition that they share common interests that are greater than the differences that hold them apart. A coalition is needed to ensure that the challenges discussed and responses suggested at this meeting are addressed. To be successful, such a coalition needs both a concrete goal and an externally imposed timeline. The different groups within the forestry community must come together to identify common goals and work together to achieve them. If nothing else, these diverse groups should get together on a regular basis to educate one another about their activities.

Sector Group C: NGOs

Funding/Tax Policy

Tax policy and conservation policy should be aligned (e.g. state tax credits for conservation easements).

Funding for conservation with charitable dollars is masking underinvestment of public dollars. Public investment in forest conservation should be matched by philanthropic groups.

Information Sharing

We need a common information system (e.g. maps: USGS, PFT, City of Eugene, etc.) and if necessary should mandate a national standard.

Public Support and Involvement

We need to develop broader public support for conservation beyond the conservation community by emphasizing the important ways that rural landscapes relate to and support urban/suburban communities.

If we're going to create a vision, we have to create an implementation framework of structures and mechanisms. Vision must be tied to the implementation framework with collaboration at every step.

The vision must be broadened and communicated to stakeholders

Leadership and Action

Action is needed now, not ten years from now; otherwise much of our forested land will be lost. We need a leader, someone who is responsible for making things happen.

The Commission needs to identify what should happen in the next administration (first 100 days, first term). NCSSF should send a letter to the next U.S. President and Congressional leaders and transmit essential messages: forests are in trouble, public interests are at risk, policy action is needed now, etc.

Markets

We need full life-cycle carbon and other new markets in addition to existing forest values.

As we look at new markets we must include the broad range of services that forests provide – we need additional markets, not replacements. We need to do a full budget accounting of forests

We should focus on climate mitigation and water resources and develop market mechanisms in alignment with these elements. Market mechanisms must be grounded in ecosystem services because we can't separate them from delivery of forest products.

Selected Discussion Topics

Based on the participants' voting, the following six responses were selected as discussion topics that could be most successfully advanced by the conference participants:

1. Promote multi-stakeholder engagement in development of a unified vision for U.S. forests (balance air, water, energy, recreation, wood, etc.) – 18 votes

2. Create markets for ecosystem services – 21 votes

3. Empower local communities and decision makers – 13 votes

4. Facilitate cross-boundary management capabilities and increase ability to share information across these boundaries – 13 votes

5. Revise tax structure – 12 votes

6. Invest in research and technology to develop competitiveness and resilience – 8 votes

Session III. Framing Next Steps for the Community

Session III involved three mixed-sector breakout groups, three Commission-member "listeners" and three recorders. Groups remained in their assigned room for the duration of this exercise. The listeners rotated from room to room accompanied by their assigned recorders. In each breakout group, the listeners presented two of the six responses selected by the entire group in the voting session the previous day and listened to the group's ideas of next steps to move these responses forward.

Once the listeners had been to each breakout group with their assigned discussion topics, they synthesized the ideas of each group over lunch and then presented these summaries to the entire meeting in the final plenary session. This information is presented below.

Promote multi-stakeholder engagement in development of a unified vision for U.S. forests (balance air, water, energy, recreation, wood, etc.)

Developing a comprehensive, consensual, novel vision for sustaining U.S. forests probably is both unnecessary and impossible, but developing a framework for thinking about forest policy, along with a statement on the importance of forests and concrete tasks that are needed, is highly desirable and urgent. Several visions for U.S. forests recently have been constructed through collaborative multi-stakeholder engagement (e.g. The National Association of University Forest

Resources Programs, the National Association of State Foresters, the Seventh American Forest Congress, and NCSSF). These visions should be collated and revised to develop a unified framework with concrete goals built on existing efforts (e.g. Farm Bill, Seventh American Forest Congress).

The framework can be advanced and used most successfully through incorporation with larger issues, specifically climate change, wildlife conservation and community values such as clean air, clean water, clean energy and public health. The framework should be reviewed through geographically specific processes at all levels of governance. Communities with strong forest connections will be particularly important in shaping and using the framework.

A leadership group should be formed with permanent existence, support and location to guide and support the construction and use of the framework. The specific goals that the framework supports should be communicated to political campaigns, and a Congressional Forest Caucus should be convened. The framework should be placed in the largest possible context of local to global concerns. The NCSSF statement on "Forests for Tomorrow" reviewed at the meeting is an appropriate vehicle for describing the elements of the framework.

Invest in research and technology to develop competitiveness and resilience

Both private and public investment in research is dwindling, and decreased competitiveness in the global market may result in insufficient investment in research and technology. We also need to invest in research and technology on how to enhance the resilience and biodiversity of our forests in face of environmental challenges such as climate change, invasives and deforestation.

Beyond the inherent need for greater funding, we need better research management to use available funds more effectively. Research should address practical issues, be monitored more effectively and do a better job of utilizing and disseminating existing data. Increased investment in the social sciences, especially when linked to the life sciences, is paramount. We must communicate potential positive outcomes of research more clearly.

In addition to investing in research, we need to assess current research investment in the public sector to eliminate federal projects and subsidies for projects that are more appropriate for private-sector support. Also, we should speak with a more coherent and collective voice to obtain more generally available research funding from sources such as the National Science Foundation. Production should be dispersed, focusing at the community level. We should break down interdisciplinary barriers to allow integrated research and more complete solutions. We must look beyond silviculture focused on fiber production toward providing better ecosystem services.

Empower local communities and decision makers

If we are to move forward with successful collaborative approaches, local communities must have decision making authority. Collaborative efforts that involve communities, local stakeholders and local decision makers should have decision making as well as advisory roles and should share responsibilities and benefits. This will require a systematic reevaluation of federal land-management agencies' authority and their policies, with explicit emphasis on rural development, so long as it is consistent with protecting biodiversity and other environmental values.

Federal support is needed to provide high-quality information, technical support and money. Targeting additional federal money to community engagement, process and development would also allow communities to become involved and provide leverage for private investment. This new approach will require a clear commitment and should not be viewed as experimental.

Facilitate cross-boundary management capabilities and increase ability to share information across these boundaries

For landscape-scale approaches to conserving biodiversity through sustainable forestry, we need to mandate common metadata ("data about data") and mapping standards across federal agencies. This will involve collecting and synthesizing information that could be used in cross-boundary cooperative land management. This is a prerequisite for outcome-based, large-scale planning and implementation.

Numerous cross-boundary management and information-sharing efforts are currently underway across the country, and we need to inventory current and recent government and non-government approaches. This inventory should identify possible hindrances to successful collaboration to create better policies and regulations. The inventory can also synthesize and critically analyze past efforts to look for common threads and best management approaches. These efforts will require increased flexibility, especially with respect to federal budgetary allocations to allow spending according to priority needs.

We must consider regional differences (land tenure, cultural differences) and recognize that a technique that is successful in one region may not succeed in another. It is important to understand that, as the scale of cross-boundary management efforts increases, the purpose and focus should narrow to ensure success.

Revise tax structure

Taxes are often disincentives for continued use of forests as forests. Retaining our current forestland base will require increasing cash flow to forestland owners. One way to create cash flow and incentives is to reform tax structure.

Tax-structure reform must begin with a centralized, comprehensive understanding of how the tax structure affects forestlands. This understanding must be comprehensive enough to inform forest stakeholders of current tax laws across governance levels, among states and at the federal level.

This knowledge base must include a clear analysis of how decision-making is affected by the timing of "taxable events" (incentives, credits, deductions). All forestland owners should have access to annual updates to tax laws.

Equitability is a significant issue in tax reform. Due to the diversity of forestland owners with varying objectives, tax incentives that reduce loss of forestland must be diverse, and flexibility will be important in determining the appropriate reforms to make.

Create markets for ecosystem services

A second way to retain current forestland is to create ecosystem service markets, but the lack of fully developed markets is a problem. We will need a support structure as markets are developed.

The first step in building ecosystem markets is to develop knowledge of potential markets through research while investigating existing international markets. A centralized knowledge base will provide information for policymakers about opportunities and difficulties in developing these markets.

Many organizations are working to develop ecosystem services, but the lack of a central organization linking these groups hinders their ability to share knowledge and experience that will advance market opportunities. Connections and communication must be established along with the research and investigation process.

As ecosystem services incorporate public values that are often difficult to quantify, we must utilize financial, regulated and surrogate markets. While these markets are being developed, there must be a mechanism to provide equitable payments to all stakeholders, as forestlands vary in size and ability to provide ecosystem services.

Federal and state lands provide ecosystem services to states and will influence the functionality of markets. Interactions of public and private land and inherent differences in these lands will require markets that are comprehensive enough to capture these differences and their varying roles within the markets.

Increasing and diversifying funding for conservation easements can be a highly effective way to protect the full array of ecosystem services. Increasing federal and state funding for easements will benefit the public and can significantly empower local communities.

COMMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS

After the "Forests for Tomorrow" conference adjourned, the Commission met for a half-day to discuss the outcomes. As a result of these discussions and input from conference participants, the Commission members added specific recommendations to the original NCSSF "Forests for Tomorrow" statement. (Please see separate Statement document.)

Many conference participants strongly encouraged the Commission to share their statement broadly – both within the forestry community and with a wider national audience. In the next eight months, the Commission plans to distribute the statement to various groups and governmental bodies in addition to doing briefings on Capitol Hill. They hope the "Forests for Tomorrow" conference served as a catalyst for other parties to advance additional ideas to move this issue forward.

A successful ongoing dialogue process can lead to a comprehensive and integrated forest-policy framework that will remain dynamic and responsive to future environmental, economic and social changes.

As a result of the conference, the Commission recommends the creation of:

- A Presidential Commission on Sustainable Forests
- A Congressional Forest Caucus and forest committees or programs in the National Governors Association and regional governors' associations
- A National Council on Forests that will serve as a broadly based coordinating organization to guide a multi-year policy reform process.

The Commission recommends that these groups carry out the following actions:

- develop a framework for action based on a set of principles that can guide the creation of coherent federal and state forest policies and capture the diverse perspectives of various stakeholders
- conduct a top-to-bottom review of international, federal, state and local tax policies that affect domestic forests
- formulate federal agency policies to facilitate greater local planning and actions across public and private forest ownerships at the landscape scale
- promote investment in research and technology to enhance both global competitiveness of domestic forest products and ecological resilience of forests to climate change
- create stronger integration of forested watersheds into water resource planning and development of incentives to maintain and enhance watersheds that provide water for human consumption and economic development
- create a comprehensive approach to the use and effects of fire in forests that integrates prevention and control of wildfires, use of prescribed fires and impacts of resulting smoke as an element of air quality
- develop new, more holistic approaches to communicating forest values to the public and the media

As we move toward the end of the first decade of the 21st Century, our nation's forests face an array of challenges to their ability to sustain all the values, services and products that they provide to our society. We must successfully address those challenges if we are to sustain these benefits for future generations.

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