

## **Forest Resource Coordinating Committee 2015 Annual Report**

### *Introduction:*

Established in Section 8005 of the Food, Conservation, Energy Act of 2008 (Act) (Pub. L. No. 110-246), the Forest Resource Coordinating Committee's purpose is to provide direction and coordination of actions within the Department of Agriculture, and coordination with State agencies and the private sector, to address the national priorities of private forest conservation, especially non-industrial private forest landowners, for multiple values and use as well as public benefit.

The Committee was fully appointed in 2013 and consists of twenty members who represent the Forest Service, Natural Resource Conservation Service, Farm Service Agency, National Institute of Food and Agriculture, State Foresters, State fish and wildlife agencies, private forest landowners, forest industry, conservation organizations, land-grant universities, private forestry consultants, State technical committees, Indian Tribes, and conservation districts.

### *Summary of Work in 2015*

The Committee's 2015 objectives were:

1. Attain Department of Agriculture feedback on their recommendations
2. Develop a communication and outreach strategy to engage entities in the protection, conservation, and enhancement of private forests
3. Foster Committee development through presentations on strategic thinking and political savviness.

The Committee submitted their first set of recommendations to Secretary Vilsack in April 2014. To ensure their recommendations meet the Department of Agriculture's expectations, Committee members representing private forest landowners, academia, conservation organizations, State Foresters and forest industry met with Under Secretary Bonnie on August 3, 2015. During the meeting, the members discussed the Committee's mission, recommendations and future direction. Under Secretary Bonnie noted that as diverse individuals who can reach consensus they are a powerful tool for the agency. He encouraged the Committee to:

- Use success stories and on-the-ground examples to draw in other entities and their support, especially federal partners, influential offices, external groups and key individuals, to represent their issues. Use these coalitions to create links to other efforts and make on-the-ground outcomes that assist private forest landowners.
- Package Committee recommendations in targeted one-pagers, framed with the appropriate context for the audience. Align recommendations with current administration priorities such as climate change. Provide further clarity and research on the recommendations. Use the

recommendations to reinforce effective USDA programs, make existing programs more effective by identify gaps or effective restructuring.

- Focus on five key issues: climate change, water (quality, quantity, release timing), tax policy (property, capital gains, estate tax), markets/green buildings, and wildfire. Keep efforts focused at the policy and programmatic level.

The Committee used Under Secretary Bonnie's feedback, as well as input from policy and political experts, to develop a communications strategy for engaging new and existing entities. In particular, members broke up into four work groups to create targeted outreach strategies for the following audiences:

- USDA Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment ,
- USDA Under Secretary for Farm and Foreign Agriculture Service & Under Secretary for Research, Education, and Economics
- Joint Chiefs for NRCS and Forest Service
- Partners

The in-person Committee meetings were also used for Committee professional development. Professionals with knowledge and experience in strategic thinking, political savvy, and coalition building gave presentations and lead discussions to increase the members' ability to collaborate with external partners to increase support and influence for implementing their recommendations.

# Keep Forests as Forests

**PROTECT  
PRIVATE FORESTS**

Forest Health and Conditions

**CONSERVE  
PRIVATE FORESTS**

Forest Inventory and Analysis

**ENHANCE PRIVATE FORESTS**

Meaningful Landowner  
Engagement and Participation

We can Keep Forests as Forests by setting goals and implementing programs for protecting, conserving and enhancing private forestlands. Private forestlands, and their owners, are the foundation of our nation’s wealth in natural resources. Forests provide clean water and other ecosystems services, biodiversity, and recreation opportunities.

**FOREST HEALTH AND CONDITIONS**

**Wildfire suppression financing.** Find a solution to the way that we fund wildfire suppression so that USDA and the DOI will be eligible to access 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 meet its mission. Agencies could use freed-up funding to improve forest resiliency and expand restoration treatments on public and private lands.

**Address forest health and resiliency, especially climate change and invasive pests.** Recommend that USDA prioritize investments in private forest landowner programs that take a broad view to forest health and resiliency. Support for the Forest Stewardship Program and Forest Health Monitoring Program would enable state forestry agencies to supply valuable technical assistance to forest landowners on a landscape scale.

**Implement State Forest Action Plans and State Wildlife Action Plans, particularly as they relate to protecting forests from climate change and invasive pests.** Recommend that actions identified in these plans can be advanced through programs within the USDA or funding from the USDA. These plans can enable cross-boundary program delivery. States were obligated through the Farm Bill to develop Forest Action Plans, identifying risks and developing strategies to manage and reduce threats to forest and ecosystem health. USDA programs should be aligned to assist states in implementing these objectives.

These goals are well-aligned with the USFS Strategic Goals for 2015-2020: “Sustain our Nation’s Forests, Deliver Benefits to the Public, and Apply Knowledge”.

**FOREST INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS**

**Maintain full support for a rigorous core FIA program, including inventories, analyses and reports on a regular schedule.** The FIA is a comprehensive forest inventory system that assesses the health and sustainability of the nation’s forests across all ownerships. This data is essential to making sound forest management and policy decisions. It is a key in planning investments in programs such as Forest Legacy and the Conservation Reserve Program, for evaluating potential new and expanding markets including carbon, and in assisting state extension programs in understanding audience needs.

**MEANINGFUL LANDOWNER INVOLVEMENT**

**Engage forestland owners, especially those not yet active in forest management and conservation.** Maintain programs such as State & Private Forestry’s Forest Stewardship Program to insure the wide range of ecosystems services provided by private forests continue. FSP covers critical gaps not addressed by larger NRCS landowner assistance programs.

**Improve customer service and operational efficiency** by aligning forest information delivery systems across geographic and agency jurisdictions and by establishing cooperative multi-agency landowner service initiatives similar to models in Florida and the Upper Mississippi watershed.

**Continue USDA investment in programs that sustain private forests through:**

- Market research and technology transfer such as the Wood To Energy grants;
- Forest products development including the green building initiative;
- Increasing general public awareness of the role of private forests and their importance;
- Marketing and promotion of forest products.

## FOREST RESOURCE COORDINATING COMMITTEE MEMBERS & STAFF

FRCC Members represent Non-Industrial Private Forest Landowners, the Forest Industry, Conservation Organizations, Land Grant Universities, Local, State, and Tribal Agencies, and Federal Agencies:

**Leda Chahim**, Government Affairs Director, Forterra Northwest, *Seattle, Washington*

**James Ford**, Limited Resources Landowners Education & Assistance Network, *Newnan, Georgia*

**Dan Forster**, Director, Wildlife Resources Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, *Social Circle, Georgia*

**James Houser**, V.P., Forest Resource Management Division, Farmers National Company, *Jacksonville, Texas*

**David Hoge**, Conservation and Environmental Programs Division, USDA Farm Service Agency

**James Hubbard**, FRCC Chair and U.S. Forest Service Deputy Chief for State and Private Forestry

**Buddy Huffaker**, President & Executive Director, Aldo Leopold Foundation, *Baraboo, Wisconsin*

**Bryan Hulka**, Forester, Weyerhaeuser Company, *New Bern, North Carolina*

**Tony Kramer**, Acting Regional Conservationist-Northeast, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

**Mike Lester**, Colorado State Forester, *Fort Collins, Colorado*

**Rob Olszewski**, Private Forest Landowner, *Marietta, Georgia*

**Mary Jeanne Packer**, FRCC Vice Chair and Mapleland Farms, *Salem, New York*

**Tammie Perreault**, Owner/Manager, Two Cats Timber Tree Farm, *Olympia, Washington*

**Bettina Ring**, Virginia State Forester, *Charlottesville, VA*

**Doug Rushton**, Thurston Conservation District, *Tumwater, Washington*

**Steve Sinclair**, Vermont State Forester, *Montpelier, Vermont*

**Bonnie Stine**, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, *Monticello, Florida*

**Tribal**, vacant

**Luis Tupas**, Deputy Director for Bioenergy, Climate and Environment, USDA National

Institute of Food and Agriculture

**Tamara Walkingstick**, Associate Professor/Extension Specialist, University of Arkansas, *Perryville, Arkansas*

### STAFF

**Andrea Bedell-Loucks**, Designated Federal Officer and Assistant Director of Cooperative Forestry

**Scott Stewart**, Alternate DFO and Forest Legacy Program Manager

**Laurie Schoonhoven**, Committee Coordinator and Sustainability Specialist

### FOREST RESOURCE COORDINATING COMMITTEE PURPOSE

“Provide direction and coordination of actions within the USDA, and coordination with State agencies and the private sector, to effectively address the national priorities for private forest conservation, protection and enhancement with a specific focus on owners of non-industrial private forest land” (*FRCC Charter as filed July 16, 2015*).

### FORESTLAND OWNERSHIP IN THE UNITED STATES

Fifty-six percent of the 751 million acres of forestland in the United States is privately owned. Of this private forestland, 62 percent is owned by families and individuals in what we call “family forests.” The remaining private forestland is owned by corporations, conservation organizations, clubs, Native American tribes, and others. (*Who Owns America’s Forests? NRS-INF-06-08*).