



A CENTURY OF SHARED STEWARDSHIP: STATE FORESTERS AND THE FOREST SERVICE



For more than a century,

partnerships have been at the heart of state forestry agencies' work to conserve and protect our nation's forests.

State and private forests make up sixty-six percent — over 520 million acres — of the forested acreage in the United States. State forestry agencies in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and eight U.S. territories work hand-in-hand with private landowners to manage and protect these forests. The federal government is directly responsible for the remaining third held in public trust.

Jurisdictional boundaries between state, private, and federal forests are hard to miss on a map — but for forest pests, disease, and wildfire — those boundaries that are so clear to us, simply don't exist.

Pests and unwanted fire move freely between forest types, to and from different ownerships, up and down watersheds, and under the right conditions, travel tremendous distances, leaving millions of dead and compromised trees in their wake every year.

This is why forest managers need cross-boundary partnerships: to mitigate boundaryless threats. These partnerships aren't easy — in fact, they can be quite difficult to forge, maintain, and repair — but we know, after many decades of incremental progress and set-backs, they're the only way we can protect and conserve America's forests and trees.

In recognition of the United States Department of Agriculture's renewed commitment to strengthening its collaborative relationships, and at a time when our forests need cross-boundary partnerships more than ever, state forestry agencies have developed this document to express their vision for shared stewardship.



A CENTURY OF SHARED STEWARDSHIP: STATE FORESTERS AND THE FOREST SERVICE

Perhaps no partnership has been more important in the history of U.S. forestry than the partnership between state foresters and the USDA Forest Service.

State forestry agencies and the USDA Forest Service share the same fundamental goal — healthy, resilient, and productive forests — and the same core responsibility — to protect, conserve, and enhance forests. Since the early 1900s, Congress has recognized and reinforced this natural government-to-government partnership for America's forests with landmark legislation.

Just six years after the USDA Forest Service was created, Congress established federal support for state forestry agencies with the Weeks Act of 1911. By then, 25 states already had state foresters and the Forest Service's Office of Private and State Conservation was three-years-old.

In 1924, with the Clarke-McNary Act, Congress authorized additional technical and financial assistance to states for wildfire control and the production and distribution of seedlings for post-fire reforestation.

Subsequent legislative milestones — namely the Cooperative Forest Management Act of 1950, the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978, and the 1990 Farm Bill — further strengthened cooperative forestry programs and solidified state forestry agencies as the source of technical and financial assistance for private forest landowners and local governments.

Today, state forestry agencies lead in supporting forest management on all lands by delivering State and Private Forestry programs and through collaborative national initiatives.

Working together to meet shared goals and responsibilities was essential a century ago, and still is today.





KEEPING AMERICA'S FORESTS WORKING AND PROVIDING PUBLIC BENEFITS

Working forests are central to sustaining the economic, ecological, and social well-being of communities *large and small, nationwide* through the jobs they support and the benefits they provide, including wildfire risk reduction, clean air and water, wildlife habitat, and outdoor recreation space.

- The **Forest Stewardship Program** supports state forestry agencies in their work to empower private landowners with the information they need to sustainably manage their forests. Forest Stewardship Plans encourage active and sustainable forest management that provides forest products, wildlife habitat, clean water and air, renewable energy, and recreation.
- State forestry agencies conserved over 2.6 million acres of working forestlands in 2018 with permanent conservation easements and fee acquisitions supported by the **Forest Legacy Program**. In implementing the Federal Forest Legacy Program, state forestry agencies spend an additional \$40 million each year to purchase fee titles and conservation easements that protect critically important lands across the country.
- With **Urban and Community Forestry Program** funding, state forestry agencies provide critical technical and financial assistance to more than 8,000 local governments annually to help them establish and manage their community forests.

State forestry agencies, at a minimum, match the funds appropriated through the UCF program, but more often triple or quadruple leverage federal funds with state and local dollars.

In 2018, for instance, over 40 states provided a total of 830 grants to municipalities to protect, enhance, and conserve community forests. These grants, totaling \$4,312,474 in federal dollars, were leveraged by state and local funds to cover \$47,675,601 in project costs — that's a 10:1 match.

Community forests comprise 39% of the nation's tree cover and collectively provide \$18.3 billion in cost savings annually by reducing air pollution, energy use, and greenhouse gases. The UCF program provides state forestry agencies with critically important tools, like STEW-MAP and Urban Tree Canopy, that allow them to map these forest resources and substantially improve management outcomes with greater collaboration and targeting of limited resources.

State forestry agencies are not only leaders in conservation, but conveners of often highly diverse groups and interests. Since the beginning of Tree City USA in 1976, state forestry agencies have worked closely with the Arbor Day Foundation to evaluate candidates for the program and promote its importance.

In 2017, **3,554** Tree Cities — home to just under **47%** of the U.S. population — reported planting **817,507** trees and spending just under **\$1.2 billion** on urban forestry management that year.



State forestry agencies encourage communities managing and developing local community forestry programs to hire or support professional staff. In 2018, states reported that 5,832 communities now employ or retain through written agreement the services of professional forestry staff, which amounts to over \$400 million in annual payroll.

Also in 2018, states recorded that:

- **5,253** local entities of government had active, professionally-developed community forest management plans.
- **9,121** local entities of government had adopted ordinances or policies on planting, protecting, and maintaining community forests.
- **7,268** local entities of government reported having a local advocacy/advisory organization that are formalized or chartered to advise and/or advocate for the planting, protection and maintenance of community forests.
- **1,579,409** volunteer hours, valued at nearly \$39 million, were donated to support local community forestry programs.

State forestry agencies also support UCF Advisory Councils that have diverse membership, including representatives of governmental agencies, industry, academic institutions, and nonprofit, volunteer, and community-based organizations. These state councils play key roles across the country in leveraging federal funds and delivering on-the-ground technical and financial assistance.

TACKLING THE THREAT OF WILDLAND FIRE TOGETHER

In addition to being responsible for wildfire protection on 1.52 billion acres of forests,

range, and grasslands, **6,026 out of the 8,080**

state personnel mobilized through the National

Interagency Coordination Center in

2018 were sent to respond to

wildfires burning on federal lands.



The State and Volunteer Fire Assistance Programs are the fundamental federal mechanisms that assist states and local fire departments in responding to wildland fires and conducting management activities that mitigate wildfire risk. These programs help train state and local first responders, as well as equip them with the tools they need to put wildland fires out efficiently and safely.

- In FY 2018, **State Fire Assistance program** funding benefited 12,829 wildland-urban interface communities by contributing to hazardous fuels treatments on over 234,000 acres and supporting the development of 3,882 wildfire risk assessments and 2,873 community wildfire protection plans. SFA program dollars also helped to train state wildland firefighters, who are the first responders to more than 80% of wildland fires in the U.S. — whether on state, federal, or private lands.
- The **Volunteer Fire Assistance Program** provides financial support critical to building adequate capacity for wildland fire response in rural areas. Adequate capacity is critical to reducing wildfire risk to residents, property, and firefighters. In FY 2018, the VFA program helped 13,959 communities train 21,868 firefighters, expand or organize 48 fire departments, and purchase, rehabilitate, or maintain nearly \$11 million in equipment.



State forestry agencies provide wildland fire training to

over 57,000 local fire department personnel each year.

State foresters and the Forest Service also work together to prevent, mitigate, and suppress wildfires through the Cohesive Strategy.

- Additionally, state forestry agencies utilize the **Federal Excess Property Program** and the **Firefighter Property Program** to increase firefighting capacity in rural communities, as well as federally supported technological platforms that facilitate orderly and timely sharing of wildland fire resources and personnel to effectively manage wildland fire across jurisdictional boundaries.
- The **Smokey Bear Campaign** is the longest running public service announcement campaign in United States history. Since its inception 75 years ago, it's been co-managed by state foresters and the Forest Service.



PROMOTING FOREST HEALTH ACROSS ALL LANDS

State forestry agencies are charged with protecting and conserving state and private forestlands, but because forest threats like pests and wildfire know no boundaries, all of America's forests benefit from their work.

- The **Forest Health Management Program on Cooperative Lands** supports a portion of state forestry agency efforts to restore forested landscapes and improve their long-term health and resilience. This program's modest funding is allocated by formula and is generally used by state forestry agencies to supplement pay for technical staff who coordinate the prevention, detection, and control of tree-killing insects and disease. In all states, Cooperative Forest Health program dollars go straight to the highest national priority projects identified in state Forest Action Plans.

- The **Forest Inventory and Analysis Program** is the most comprehensive national forest inventory system in the world. FIA data is used to document forest health and the spread of non-native insects and diseases, monitor wildlife habitat, gauge wildfire risk, and assess rates of land use change.

As part of the most recent 2016 FIA Survey, state forestry agencies surveyed 7,154 base forest plots, which is about half of all the plots surveyed that year. Without the FIA “forest census,” forest managers, landowners, and policy makers would be unable to effectively make informed, economical, and sustainable management decisions.

- **Landscape Scale Restoration Program** projects enable state forestry agencies and their partners to address the most critical forest health and wildland fire priorities identified in each state’s Forest Action Plan.
- State forestry agencies work directly on federally managed forests to improve forest health through **Good Neighbor Authority**, a provision of the 2014 Farm Bill that has since been reauthorized with the 2018 Farm Bill.

With Good Neighbor Authority, state forestry agencies enter into agreements with the Forest Service and implement critically important forest management projects on national forests that otherwise wouldn’t occur.

The scope of these projects ranges considerably. Some are focused on mitigating damage caused by invasive species or building staff capacity necessary to conducting forest inventories. Others include commercial thinnings, restoring wildlife habitat, or protecting public safety with road, bridge, and trail maintenance.

By the close of 2018, state forestry agencies had completed 82 GNA projects on over 54,000 acres of federal lands and had an additional 120 projects in progress. On average, state forestry agencies complete this critical work for about \$110 per acre.

Annually, state forestry agencies:



To date, state forestry agencies have set approximately **90,000 traps** as part of the Gypsy Moth “Slow the Spread” program



In 2017, state forestry agencies surpassed all their targets and treated **595,285** acres for invasive pests, **263,985** acres for native pests, and **80,985** acres for invasive plants for a combined total of **940,285** acres treated.





STATE FORESTRY AGENCIES: THE BOOTS-ON-THE-GROUND FOR AMERICA'S FORESTS AND TREES

State forestry agencies have long been the nation's boots-on-the-ground for managing forests and delivering forestry assistance. And while state foresters place great value on cooperative support, the scale and scope of their efforts go far and beyond federal programming.

Across the country, state forestry agencies contribute significant non-federal, state resources to deliver a variety of programs and a multitude of services. Collectively, state forestry agencies:

- **Directly employ 26,880 individuals**, including 7,850 trained foresters and 12,280 wildland firefighters, who provide significant expertise, national capacity, and on-the-ground delivery of forestry and wildland fire management
- **Provide wildfire protection on 1.5 billion acres** (including 1.1 billion acres in state and private ownership), that in 2018, cost them a total of \$1.9 billion
- **Deliver state and federal fire department assistance programs**, that in 2018, provided grants and equipment to 18,235 local fire departments and training to 57,810 local firefighters
- **Provide access to state and local fire and emergency response resources**, which in 2018, included 93,656 firefighters, 91,940 fire engines, 2,851 dozers, and 620 aircraft
- **Serve as the primary source of forest management assistance** for 56% (448 million acres) of the nation's forestlands, which are privately owned.
- **Actively manage 75 million acres** of state-owned forests, spending over \$450 million per year on average to achieve unparalleled health and resiliency
- **Provide upwards of 270,000 technical assists annually** to forestland owners on topics ranging from forest management, tree health, and soil and water conservation, to prescribed fire use and wildlife habitat creation
- **Produce an average of 170 million tree seedlings** a year for the restoration of native forest ecosystems
- **Protect drinking water sources originating on forestlands** — which account for over 50% of the nation's supply — through state forestry agency developed best management practices. State forestry agencies spend over 33 million dollars on water quality protection annually and consistently achieve a 90 percent BMP compliance rate or higher on average



State forestry programs support a tremendous economic engine for the United States. Nationwide, privately-owned forestland generates **2.4 million** jobs, **\$98.7 billion** in payroll, and **\$281 billion** in timber sales and manufacturing shipments annually. In addition, privately-owned forestland contributes **\$81.3 billion**, or 4.6 percent of the total manufacturing GDP.

Providing individual and family woodland owners assistance is essential to

protecting the 1.4 trillion board feet

of standing timber they own.

To protect these forest resources, state forestry agencies provide hundreds of thousands of technical assists to these landowners every year. Seventy-five percent of this assistance is paid for by the state alone.





In large part due to guidance from state forestry agencies, private landowners were granted **\$84 million** through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program in 2016 to plan and implement forest stand improvements.

State forestry agency expenditures in 2018 totaled \$3 billion, including \$1.9 billion in fire suppression, prevention, and mitigation. On average, state forestry agencies spend 80 percent of their annual budgets providing services to private landowners and local governments. This means that three out of every four dollars spent by state forestry agencies directly benefit lands not owned by the state.

One of the drivers of sustainable forest management on private lands is state forestry agency-prepared stewardship plans. In 2018, state forestry agencies developed 13,000 forest stewardship plans covering more than 10 million acres, the majority of which address areas designated as 'high-priority' in state Forest Action Plans. They also assisted 8,550 local governments with planning and caring for their communities' tree canopies, which are also an important consideration addressed in Forest Action Plans.

29 states operate tree seedling nurseries and **30 have seed orchards**

They spend over **31 million dollars** per year on this function

Produce over **170 million seedlings** for reforestation

Ship over **40,000 separate orders**

70 different species were listed among the **top 5 species** for each nursery

FOREST ACTION PLANS: OUR ROADMAP TO SHARED STEWARDSHIP



Just as the threats to forest health are boundaryless, so are the benefits of active forest management.

Because state forestry agencies understand the cross-boundary nature of the benefits and threats to forest health, they have developed Forest Action Plans to guide and prioritize management across all the forested acreage in their respective states — including acreage managed by the federal government and owned by tribes and local governments.

Considered together, state Forest Action Plans provide a nationwide, strategic model for allocating scarce resources to the most pressing forestry issues, with the greatest level of coordination.

State foresters, the **59 men and women** who lead state and territorial forestry agencies, see Forest Action Plans as the vehicle for the continued shared stewardship of America's forests.





The components of Forest Action Plans allow for the best path forward for shared stewardship.

- **All Forest Action Plans share the same basic anatomy.** With comparable features, these plans can be considered together as one comprehensive assessment of America's forest resources across all lands — public, private, rural and urban. **No other plan or group of plans is as comprehensive — and therefore suitable as a national guide for investments in forest management — as Forest Action Plans.**
- **All Forest Action Plans include actionable prescriptions for targeting resources efficiently.** State forestry agencies ensure the validity and determine the priority of these prescriptions with local expertise, the best science available, and extensive public input. In the years of work that go into developing these plans, state forestry agencies hear every voice possible and consider every data set available. **Forest Action Plans are the most inclusive strategic plans for forest management that exist.**
- **All Forest Action Plans maintain priorities and methods of management that are geographically specific.** Regional differences in management priorities and methods are intrinsic to Forest Action Plans and crucial to the efficacy of the plans' prioritization of resources. **When Forest Action Plans guide national investments in forest management, those investments address diverse geographic needs defined by the geographies themselves.**

State forestry agencies can help achieve greater outcomes on all lands for all Americans with shared decision-making and priority-setting.

And with Forest Action Plans at the foundation of shared decision-making and priority-setting for the management of America's forests,



Limited resources can be shared and used more efficiently for greater effect.



No one forest type, state or region, management priority, or ownership will receive more or less than its fair share of resources.



State foresters will be equal partners in the continuous improvement of federally supported programs and the development of widely applicable and shareable tools and strategies for forest and wildland fire management.



Federal agencies will recognize and respect the many differences among states and grant them maximum discretion and flexibility as they formulate their individual responses to the “invitation of shared stewardship.”

Once state forestry agencies and the Forest Service are empowered to work with all landowners to make decisions and set priorities for forest management *together*, America's forests will not only be healthier and more productive, Americans will be safer and better off.



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE FORESTERS

