

2010 Statewide Forest Resource Assessments and Strategies

USDA Forest Service
Northeastern Area
State and Private Forestry



Addressing key forestry issues and shared management goals

Description: The Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008, often referred to as the *Farm Bill*, requires each State to complete a Statewide Forest Resource Assessment and Strategy to be eligible to receive funds under the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act. The Strategies ensure that U.S. Forest Service and State programs focus on shared forest resource management priorities to achieve meaningful outcomes. In a joint memo, the National Association of State Foresters and the U.S. Forest Service agreed that the State Forest Resource Assessments and Strategies “provide a historic opportunity for the State agencies and the Forest Service to work together to advance their shared resource management goals.” In 2010, State forestry agencies nationwide worked with key stakeholders to develop assessment and strategy documents for their State.

Key Issues:

A regional summary of State Forest Resource Assessments and Strategies¹ for the Northeast and Midwest highlights the most common forest and forestry-related issues and goals:

- Keeping forests as forests
- Forest ecosystem health and productivity
- Urban and community forest health and sustainability
- Water, biodiversity, recreation, and other ecosystem services
- Forest products industry and markets
- Sustainable forest management across all ownerships
- Climate change
- Wildfire threats to forests, public safety, and property
- State and private capacity for forestry
- Awareness of and support for forests

Accomplishments:

All 20 State forestry agencies in the Northeast and Midwest and the District of Columbia completed their Statewide Forest Resource Assessment and Strategy in 2010. As part of the process, States considered the U.S. Forest Service State and Private Forestry National Priorities: (1) conserve and manage working forest landscapes for multiple values and uses, (2) protect forests from threats, and (3) enhance public benefits from trees and forests. States identified forest resource conditions and trends, key forest-related issues, and priority landscape areas, then identified strategies and the resources necessary to implement them. The U.S. Forest Service, Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry provided technical support to help States meet the Federal requirements. Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry and the Northeastern Area Association of State Foresters collaborated to provide regional guidance for the State Assessments and Strategies, and all three branches of the Forest Service provided support and assistance.

Key steps in the process included:

Stakeholder involvement: State forestry agencies consulted a wide range of stakeholders to develop their Assessments and Strategies, including the State Forest Stewardship committee, State wildlife agency, State Natural Resource Conservation Service technical committee, State Urban and Community Forestry council, universities, forest industry groups, woodland owner associations, conservation and recreation organizations, and Federal land management agencies.

¹A regional-level summary of the 2010 Statewide Forest Resource Assessments and Strategies in the Northeast and Midwest is available at <http://www.northeasternforests.org/FRPC/> (click on “State Forest Resource Assessments & Strategies and Regional Summary”).

Review of existing plans: States commonly consulted or integrated existing plans into their Statewide Forest Resource Assessment and Strategy, including the State Wildlife Action Plan, Community Wildfire Protection Plans, State and Private Forestry Program-specific plans, a prior or existing statewide forest plan, Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, and State climate or greenhouse gas plan.

Identification of priority areas: Every State used Geographic Information System (GIS) technology to some extent to identify priority areas where forestry program outreach and activity will be emphasized. The number of priority area maps included in each State Assessment ranged from 1 to 27. Some States displayed all of their priority areas on one composite map, while others displayed them on separate maps for each State issue or each of the three State and Private Forestry National Priorities. In addition, some States included priority areas based on the existing boundaries of a named area.

Identification of multistate priorities: States identified more than 70 multistate priorities across the region. Roughly two-thirds of the multistate priorities are specific landscape areas, such as the Upper Mississippi Watershed and the Chesapeake Bay. The remaining multistate priorities, such as invasive insects and plants, or sustaining forest industry, could best be addressed through collaboration among multiple States. Roughly one-third of all the multistate priorities extend into areas outside of the 20 Northeast and Midwest States.

Determining resources needed: States commonly cited these resources for implementing their State Forest Resource Strategy: State, Federal, and private funding; State and Private Forestry (S&PF) program staff; and partnerships. S&PF Programs were often identified as important for implementing State Strategies. Most States also noted that resources to implement their State Forest Resource Strategy are limited.

Future Direction:

Beginning in Fiscal Year 2011, States will turn to their State Forest Resource Strategy to guide their projects and activities during the year. Priority landscapes and issues will be focal points for collaboration, while the assessment and strategy process itself will lead to more focused, effective forest conservation and management across the landscape.

To address shared management priorities, all three branches of the U.S. Forest Service are providing support and assistance to State Forestry agencies as they implement their strategies. For example, at the regional level, the NAASF, U.S. Forest Service, and other partners are collaborating to 1) use S&PF Programs, including Federal funding and assistance, to help States implement their strategies; 2) develop a strategy to fill data gaps for future assessment updates; and 3) pursue cohesive, comprehensive, landscape-scale conservation. In addition, “lessons learned” will be a valuable resource as required updates to the State Forest Resource Assessments and Strategies are discussed.

The State Forest Resource Assessments and Strategies are available at <http://www.forestationplans.org>.

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