

Emerging Issues and Policies

USDA Forest Service

Northeastern Forest Resource Planners/GIS
Conference

September 13, 2006

Hannibal, Missouri

NFS Certification Assessments

- Forest Service is conducting “assessment of certification process”.
- Forests Being “assessed”:
 - Lakeview (OR) - Done
 - Allegheny (PA) - Done
 - Mt Hood (OR) – Doing
 - Chequamegon-Nicolet (WI) – Doing
 - Medicine Bow (WY) – 2007
 - National Forests in Florida – 2007

NFS Certification (cont.)

- Many are critical of FSC working with Forest Service.
- FSC cannot certify federal lands until separate standard has been developed.
- Preliminary assessment results –
 - Forest management - good
 - Research – good
 - Outreach – weak
 - Social/worker aspects – weak

Carbon, Carbon, Carbon...

- California Carbon Registry
- Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (seven states in Northeast)
- Delta Institute developing protocol for sale of credits from working forest lands (MI and IL)

Water, Water, Water

- Quality and availability
- Huge aquifers that supply major cities are shrinking.
- Less snow pack/glacial storage
- Federal courts will have to start addressing increasing deficits and unsustainable uses.
- Vegetation management/forestry could significantly mitigate.

Bio-fuels – A Wood Reactor?!

- Group claims to have developed technology for a wood reactor.
- Field operated unit breaks wood down into ash, charcoal and liquid fuel on site.
- Large DOE grant awarded to develop.
- Higgs says – Impossible!!

Other Emerging Issues

- **“Low impact” plantations** – finding that we have historically spent way too much producing fiber
- **Wall Street is becoming Green Street** – More companies touting environmental ethics and audited environmental credentials.

More Emerging Issues

- **Montreal process indicator revision**
- **NASF Letter/Position** – developing legislative language to “outline a national interest in sustainable forests”.
- **Forest Service publication – *Cooperating Across Boundaries: Partnerships to Conserve Open Space in Rural America***

Forestry in the 2007 Farm Bill

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What's Happened Since 2002?

- Budget Deficit
- Sense of urgency to achieve more energy independence
- WTO negotiations collapsed
- FLEP Flopped

What's affecting private forests?

- Intensively managed, short rotation plantations in southern hemisphere
- Large tracts of forest land for sale in U.S.
- Globalization of capital markets
- Major markets for U.S. wood products continue to disappear
- Development pressures, rising taxes and land values

What's affecting private forests?

- Fragmentation and parcelization
- Older landowners (half over 65)
- Threat of wildfire continues to increase
- Forest health continues to decline

Implications

- U.S. will become marginal timber producer.
- Retention of private forests will become more of a challenge.
- Need to develop additional incentives or alternative revenue streams for private forest landowners.

2007 Farm Bill Process

Where are We?

- Comment period and forums - Done
- Summarizing of comments - Done
- Field Hearings – Almost Done
- Development of Theme Papers

Recommendations for Farm Bill

- Focused, landscape-based, integrated, outcome-driven strategies
- Targeted support for renewable energy market development and applications
- Comprehensive state plans that link to national policy/strategies
- National wood utilization strategy
- Develop/stimulate markets for ecosystem services

Recommendations for Farm Bill

- Support community-owned forests
- Increase on-the-ground technical assistance
- A policy for our nation's forests
- Maintain existing programs
- Monitor outcomes
- Equitable distribution of assistance to farmers, ranchers and NIPFers

USDA Theme Papers Published

- Conservation and Environment
 - Rural Development
 - Risk Management
 - Energy and Agriculture
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Likely Aspects of USDA Farm Bill Proposal

➤ Improve Existing Programs

- Targeted landscape approaches to address specific problems (i.e. hypoxia in Gulf)
- Consolidate programs
- More conservation investment in working lands
- Increased investment in alternative energy sources

Likely Aspects of USDA Farm Bill Proposal

➤ **Cooperative Conservation**

- **Healthy Forest Partnership Act (USDA-DOI)**

➤ **Shift to Green Payments**

- **WTO-sanctioned income support**
- **Payments in excess of conservation practice costs are for public benefits realized**

Likely Aspects of USDA Farm Bill Proposal

➤ Private Sector Markets for Environmental Services

- Create demand
- Authorize development of standards for estimating/quantifying/valuing
- Authorize provision of investment capital to stimulate markets
- Aggregate suppliers

CRS Report – January 2006

- Likely to be Forestry Title
- FLEP- “Failure” to fulfill “promised” funding likely to influence debate/discussions
- Other Major Issues:
 - Invasive species
 - Wildfire protection
 - Developing markets for traditionally non-market services

So What Now?

- Probably not much until after the election and holidays
- Weight of Administration's proposal will likely depend on election outcome
- Congress will write in 2007 – so it appears we're on schedule after all.