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USDA NATURAL RESOURCES
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UPDATE

from the
Joint Forestry Team
August, 2008

The purpose of the Joint Forestry Team is to make recommendations that result in coordinated interagency delivery of forestry and conservation assistance for working forests, farms, and ranches. Team participants seek to find ways to improve the sustainability of the nation's forests in order to provide optimum levels of public benefits and ecosystem services (from Team Charter, approved November 19, 2007)

Progress to Date:

- Meeting of Executives and Joint Forestry Team, March 25, 2008: Top leaders from NASF, NACD, NRCS, and USFS met with the Joint Forestry Team to discuss ways to address barriers to delivering forestry-related conservation assistance. Key Team actions from the meeting that are underway:
 1. Revise and finalize new national MOU to specifically address five barriers:
 - a) The availability of technical expertise and assistance to private non-industrial forest landowners is insufficient to meet the need;
 - b) There is a lack of integration of planning and other administrative issues between the Parties, making it difficult for private landowners to participate in forestry and conservation programs;
 - c) Funding devoted to forestry and agroforestry is inadequate and inconsistent;
 - d) The Parties speak different technical/organizational languages, which suggest a need for improved communication; and
 - e) Forestry is not a priority for many State Technical Committees.
 2. Establish a new task group that will recommend ways to integrate Forest Stewardship and NRCS Conservation Plans. Team to be co-led by Bruce Wight (NRCS) and Karl Dalla Rosa (USFS) with members Charles Holmes (AL), Rob Ethridge (MT), Kurt Atkinson (OK). Objectives:
 - a) Create a national core template for integration;
 - b) Learn about and describe what works in different state models;
 - c) Coordinate NRCS and USFS spatial accomplishment and plan-writing applications (Customer Service Toolkit and Web-DET).
- Second Annual Joint Forestry Leadership Meeting, November 29, 2007: The Joint Forestry Team charter was approved by the NASF and NACD Presidents and NRCS and USFS Chiefs. The Team presented the results of a poll of State Foresters, State Associations of Conservation Districts and State Conservationists. Recipients of the second annual Two Chiefs' awards were announced. The awards recognize exemplary employees or officials from our four organizations who have worked collaboratively to support conservation and forest stewardship.
- Joint Forestry Team Meeting, September 2007: NACD joined the Joint Forestry Team. The 12-member team (see page 2) has five objectives:
 - 1) Understand barriers to providing coordinated interagency assistance;
 - 2) Identify opportunities to remove barriers;
 - 3) Recommend actions to leadership;
 - 4) Report on team activities to respective agencies/organizations;
 - 5) Evaluate and/or incorporate feedback



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- Joint Leadership Conference Call, June 2007: The Joint Forestry Team members were announced by USFS Chief Gail Kimbell, NRCS Chief Arlen Lancaster, and NASF President Austin Short. USDA Secretary Mike Johanns stated his support for the initiative and gave an update on the 2008 Farm Bill.
- First Joint Leadership Meeting, December 2006: NASF, NRCS, and USFS leaders broke into work groups to discuss ways we could work more effectively together to address resource concerns on working lands. Group recommendations were summarized into five categories: Program Coordination; Technical Coordination; Outreach and Education; Marketing of Ecosystem Services and Energy; and Watershed Assessment and Planning. The recipients of the first Two Chiefs' Partnership Awards were announced.

Next Steps:

- Collaboration on State-wide Assessments and Strategies for Forest Resources, August 2008: A joint letter will be signed by the NASF and NACD Presidents and NRCS and USFS Chiefs and distributed to leaders of our four organizations encouraging collaboration with State forestry agencies on these new plans, consistent with Section 8002 in the new Farm Bill.
- Approval of new NASF-NACD-NRCS-USFS MOU: Signing ceremony is planned for September 29, 2008, at the NASF meeting in Hyannis, MA.
- Integrating NRCS Conservation Plans and Forest Stewardship Plans: A report from the new task group is expected in fall 2008.
- Meeting of Executives and Joint Forestry Team planned December 8, 2008. Topics will include MOU and Farm Bill implementation, team priorities for 2009.

Joint Forestry Team:

- NASF Alec Giffen, State Forester, Maine Forest Service
Bob Harrington, State Forester, Montana DNRC – Forestry Division
John Burwell, Oklahoma Dept. of Agriculture - Forestry Services
(staff support: Jake Donnay, Director of Forest Policy)
- NACD Charles Holmes, Chair, NACD Forest Resource Policy Group
Johnny Sundstrom, NACD Legislative Affairs Committee
Dr. Orval Gigstad, NACD Forest Resources Committee
(staff support: Ralph Thier, Western Issues Specialist)
- NRCS Andree DuVarney, Branch Chief, Conservation Technical Assistance
Bruce Wight, National Agroforester, National Agroforestry Center
Joyce Swartzendruber, Maine State Conservationist
(staff support: Andy Mason, National Forester)
- USFS Ted Beauvais, Asst. Director of Cooperative Forestry
Gretta Boley, Forest Supervisor, Kisatchie National Forest
Peggy Polichio, Deputy Director of State and Private Forestry,
Intermountain and Northern Regions
(staff support: James Melonas, Cooperative Forestry)