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UPDATE

from the
Joint Forestry Team
October, 2008

The purpose of the Joint Forestry Team (JFT) 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:

- Approval of new NASF-NACD-NRCS-USFS MOU, September 29, 2008: The NASF and NACD Presidents and NRCS and USFS Chiefs signed a new MOU at the NASF meeting in Hyannis, MA. The MOU includes 17 joint actions and 47 individual agency actions aimed at strengthening cooperation among the parties in the delivery of forestry-related conservation assistance to private landowners. The Executives also signed a letter (with Department of Interior) that recommends joint actions at the regional, state and local level to improve communication with landowners about wildland fire activities.
- 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 agreed to:
 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 JFT task group that will recommend ways to better coordinate/integrate Forest Stewardship and Conservation planning assistance to landowners. The task group is co-led by Bruce Wight (NRCS) and Karl Dalla Rosa (USFS) with members Charles Holmes (AL), Rob Ethridge (MT), Kurt Atkinson (OK) and others to be named. Task group 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.



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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 new 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:

- Third Annual Two Chiefs' Partnership Award nominations requested by November 28, 2008. For more information contact: James Melonas, jmelonas@fs.fed.us, or (202) 205-1382.
- Task Groups Developing Recommendations to Integrate Planning Assistance and Tools: The new JFT "integrating plans" task group meets in late October with recommendations expected by December, 2008. Another task group is examining the feasibility of sharing data between NRCS's Customer Service Toolkit and USFS's Web-DET.
- Meeting of Executives and Joint Forestry Team, December 8, 2008. Topics include MOU and Farm Bill implementation, team priorities for 2009, and announcement of 2008 Two Chiefs' Partnership awards.

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, Forest Resources Policy Group
Johnny Sundstrom, Legislative Affairs Committee
Dr. Orval Gigstad, Forest Resources Policy Group
(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, National Forests in Mississippi
Peggy Polichio, Deputy Director of State and Private Forestry,
Intermountain and Northern Regions
(staff support: James Melonas, Cooperative Forestry)