



Roundtable on Sustainable Forests

A Partnership for the Future

National Meeting – Action Strategy for the Future

October 14 and 15, 2009

The DuPont Hotel, 1500 New Hampshire Avenue, Washington, DC

Meeting Summary:

On October 14-15, 2009, the Roundtable on Sustainable Forests (RSF) convened a National Meeting in Washington, D.C. Fifty-two participants representing a broad spectrum of forest interests including, state, and federal government, non-governmental organizations, academia and the private sector, gathered to provide feedback on an action strategy for sustainable forests, including specific recommendations to undertake over the next two years. The [participant list](#) is posted on the RSF website. The [agenda for the meeting](#) is also posted on the RSF website.

The meeting objectives were to:

- Develop stakeholder support and momentum for implementing action steps to be taken in the next two years to improve conservation and sustainable management of the nation's forests based upon Draft II of the Sustainable Forests Action Strategy (SFAS) and the 2010 National Report Sustainable Forests (2010 National Report).
- Clarify the role of the RSF in preparation for the International Year of Forests in 2011 (IYF).
- Ratify RSF activities in 2010.

Welcome and Opening Remarks

Joel Holtrop, Deputy Chief, National Forest System, USDA Forest Service, thanked participants in advance for their involvement in the RSF, and asked them in their discussions at the meeting to consider how to utilize the 2010 National Report and the SFAS to move sustainable forestry forward in the next two years. Mr. Holtrop highlighted the importance of timing, given significant recent events including the USDA Secretary of Agriculture, Tom Vilsack's speech which laid out vision for America's forests and the USDA Forest Service. This vision closely aligns with the RSF and USDA Forest Service work and provides a unique opportunity to move forward, especially on some of the focal points of the Secretary's speech including water and resiliency of forests in relation to climate change.

Mr. Holtrop recognized the work of many stakeholders contributing to the draft 2010 National Report which was published in December 2008, and emphasized the more recent and substantial work of stakeholders to develop the draft SFAS, the intended focus of discussion at

the meeting. The National Meeting, Mr. Holtrop stated, would be an important step forward for the RSF and he encouraged participants to help determine the next best action steps towards making a difference in sustainable forest management.

Jim Hubbard, Deputy Chief for State and Private Forestry, USDA Forest Service, introduced Jay Jensen, USDA Deputy Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment. Prior to this appointment, Mr. Jensen served as Executive Director of the Council of Western State Foresters/Western Forestry Leadership Coalition. He also served as Senior Forestry Advisor for the Western Governors Association, where he was responsible for the biomass energy program. Before that, as lead forestry advisor for the U.S. House Committee on Agriculture, Jensen helped develop programs under the 2002 Farm Bill.

Mr. Jensen thanked Mr. Hubbard and the RSF, commending the group and meeting participants for all their efforts. A [copy of Mr. Jensen's remarks](#) are posted on the website. Mr. Jensen emphasized the magnitude of the work and challenges ahead including, invasive species, loss of working landscapes, wildfires, declining forest health across millions, and the overarching threat of climate change. He underscored the need for a clear and compelling vision for the future. Referencing USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack's visionary goals for the national forests, Mr. Jensen noted that the forests are vital to our nation's future and forest managers are key to sustaining forests and ecosystem services; the most critical forest ecosystem service being water. Forests, farms and ranches provide 87 percent of the surface water supply in the country. These ecosystem services are increasingly at risk.

Mr. Jensen suggested the shared vision for forests can begin with restoration, not only keeping them forested but restoring the structure and function of forest ecosystems that are able to deliver clean water. He recognized that sustainable forest management poses a daunting challenge that requires a strategic approach to climate change including adaptation and mitigation. To achieve this, land managers and owners need to work together across boundaries on a landscape-scale and all-lands approach.

Mr. Jensen highlighted the USDA Forest Service's significant role in an all-lands approach and noted that their mission extends beyond the National Forest System to sustaining the nation's forests *and grasslands*. In a similar vein, he observed that the RSF plays an important leading role in realizing this common vision through its partnership with the USDA Forest Service and work with diverse stakeholders to develop a broad agenda to protect all forested lands. The RSF has also taken a landscape – scale approach across ownerships, including private land owners who own a substantial amount of forested land in the U.S. The RSF has led the way by fostering healthy dialogue about sustainable forests among different interests across different land ownerships, thus contributing to better decision making on the ground. Further, he commented that the RSF has taken an all-lands approach in its work to advance sustainable forest management using the framework provided by the Montreal Process criteria and indicators (MP C&I). The trend data collected within this framework has provided the basis for dialogue about the health of the Nation's forests and was used as the basis of the stakeholder SFAS. Mr.

Jensen then took a moment to recognize some of the on-the-ground examples of sustainable forest management fostered by the RSF, including: the Oregon Board of Forestry's use of the MP C&I; Maryland's Strategic Forest Lands Assessment; Wisconsin's adoption of a Forest Sustainability Framework; the Northeastern Area of the USDA Forest Service's State and Private Forestry and the Association of State Foresters implementation of a system to understand forest sustainability on a regional basis; and the Mount Hood National Forest systems-based approach to sustainability.

In closing, Mr. Jensen emphasized the ongoing leadership role of the RSF, and urged its leadership to partner with the Sustainable Water Resources Roundtable, stating that by working together, all of these entities can restore forests and waters in the U.S.

Following Mr. Jensen's keynote speech, participants posed a number of questions to the Under Secretary. Several participants asked about the aftermath from Secretary Vilsack's speech and the possible opportunities flowing from this vision, specifically the ability to institutionalize sustainable forest management within the government.

Mr. Jensen responded, saying the Agency has been working to address the challenges outlined in the Secretary's speech. The Agency's plans, which will be made public in November, will articulate a broad vision based on sustainability and greater pursuits on the ground. Mr. Jensen recalled that upon taking office, Secretary Vilsack convened all the senior executives in USDA and articulated his vision for transforming the culture and agencies within. His personal background and challenges, Mr. Jensen asserted, are part of what drives the Secretary's vision and engagement on sustainability issues and that these efforts will be undertaken to the fullest extent possible.

In responding to a question about the Department of Interior's (DOI) involvement on climate change and forests, Mr. Jensen noted that DOI has announced creating regional centers for climate adaptation; meanwhile the USDA Forest Service has had research centers for hundreds of years. He pointed out that early in the administration some directives went out to the field to begin aligning forest planning around climate adaptation. Mr. Jensen explained that USDA is working jointly with DOI and other departments, and that there would be efforts to develop joint action plans to have more tangible engagement points.

One participant asked how the MP C&I can continue to be infused across all federal agencies, especially given the different dynamics resulting from ownership patterns across the United States. Mr. Jensen stated the key to all of this is to apply the MP C&I at the local level, which will require involvement of federal and state agencies. Towards this end, USDA has had dialogues with counterparts at DOI to work on various issues and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is also turning out to be an important federal partner.

Responding to a question about raising visibility for the 2011 IYF, Mr. Jensen stated that the USDA would continue to take guidance from the Secretary's vision, and will invest energy on

developing next steps and follow-up points. He noted that 2011 is great timing to give visibility, and he looked forward to feedback on the Agency's next steps and how it can help promote engagement with the international year of forests.

One participant asked whether USDA could strive for greater synchronization on water. Mr. Jensen responded affirmatively, saying the USDA is developing a water strategy framework and determining how forests will integrate. He noted the engagement points are stepping and that action will happen at state and local levels.

A participant pointed out that from a conservation perspective, in urban affairs, the USDA Forest Service could play fundamental role in cooperation with agencies, and work on trilateral agreement.

Mr. Jensen referenced a Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and USDA meeting that had recently convened to address that topic. He noted the obvious intersection between urban forests and quality of life benefits.

Several participants asked for Mr. Jensen's thoughts on whether the MP C&I might play a role in the Secretary's potential plans to undertake a rule-making process for a New Planning Rule for Forest Management. The USDA, Mr. Jensen responded, is working on next steps based on the principles the Secretary laid out. Mr. Jensen acknowledged the Agency and land managers could have benefitted from updated plans over the years, especially on climate adaptation. He highlighted these issues have the attention of high level elected officials and emphasized the importance of robust collaboration to ensure plans translate on the field level.

Responding to a question about whether USDA planned to create a database to help identify and implement needed changes to manage forests sustainably, Mr. Jensen explained that a key part for an all - lands approach is to turn to states in particular and the infrastructure for data collection that they have built up. USDA is interested in developing some comparison points at the national level and is looking to support the existing work to ensure good decision-making across boundaries.

A participant asked whether USDA might consider developing a manual to highlight the importance of urban forests to communities and outline urban forestry concerns and management practices. Mr. Jensen noted there had been several conversations at USDA about pursuing strong urban initiatives in order to reconnect people to the land.

In his concluding remarks, Mr. Jensen acknowledged the need for greater intergovernmental agency coordination across national, state and local levels. Further, he posited, federal agencies should empower people and networks that are already engaged and successfully managing forests.

Approach Taken to Draft the SFAS

Jim Hubbard, USDA Forest Service introduced Nadine Block, American Forest & Paper Association and Eric Norland, National Institute of Food and Agriculture to provide an overview of the approach taken to draft the stakeholder SFAS. A [copy of the PowerPoint](#) for this presentation is posted on the RSF website.

Ms. Block explained that, following the stakeholder review of the Draft 2010 National Report on Sustainable Forests in spring 2009, RSF leadership continued to deliberate about the content and ways to use the Draft National Report. They recognized that the Draft National Report provided insights on forest trends and focused on data - rather than what needs to be done based on the data. Some felt there was a need to do more with the data and the information on trends, and proposed that participants of the RSF Core Group draft a companion document to the National Report, the stakeholder SFAS, in which they would identify significant trends, highlight key challenges and opportunities, and recommend priority actions that stakeholders could take over the next 2 years. Core Group participants engaged in the drafting process included: Michael Buck, National Association of State Foresters; Graham Cox, Audubon New York; Ruth McWilliams, Catamount Lodge & Forest LLC; Donald Outen, Baltimore County, Department of Environmental Protection and Resource Management; Guy Robertson, USDA Forest Service; and Al Sample, Pinchot Institute for Conservation. Katie Fernholtz, Dovetail Partners also participated in the drafting process.

Ms. Block reviewed highlights from the strategy, noting that the Draft 2010 National Report identified key trends of forests in U.S. including: decline in forest health, increases in forest conversion to other uses, continuation of forest fragmentation, increases in timber growth versus harvest, and increasing dependence on private lands for timber. The SFAS outlines these challenges and identifies some opportunities to address them such as, different models for ownership and collaboration, tools that are available as well those that are needed, environmental services and markets, and enlightened leadership and increased community capacity.

The goal of the recommendations, Ms. Block explained, was to outline a few things that could be accomplished by stakeholders in the next two years. Recognizing that other coalitions or potential partners may be able to help the RSF in these efforts, the RSF convened this National meeting to gather feedback on whether the SFAS is a good starting point, and how the recommended actions might be undertaken.

Eric Norland explained that an outreach strategy was developed in parallel to the SFAS drafting process to augment stakeholder knowledge, input and support of the draft SFAS in preparation for the October National Meeting. In doing so, the RSF hosted three webinars and also asked for input via email on the first draft. The second draft developed based on that feedback.

Following a review of the approach employed for the report's development, Jim Hubbard introduced Michael Buck, Sustainable Forests Coordinator, National Association of State Foresters, who provided a comparison of the first and second drafts, as well as an overview of the eight recommendations in the second draft. A [copy of the PowerPoint](#) for this presentation is posted on the RSF website. Mr. Buck cautioned the group that some of their discussion would focus on lands owned by other people who were not present at the meeting. He noted one purpose of this RSF meeting was to gather a diverse set of stakeholders to discuss the draft SFAS, a document presented as the starting point for discussion, and establish a set of agreed upon actions that can be taken by stakeholders in the next two years. He pointed out that widely supported priority and action items more readily gain the attention of policymakers and leaders.

Turning to compare the first and second drafts of the SFAS, Mr. Buck explained that, based on the stakeholder feedback described by Eric Norland, the authors removed some of the text which provided the context for the recommended actions, and added language on a number of topics including: consideration of private property rights, references to ongoing programs and efforts; and leveraging existing initiatives. Mr. Buck noted several additions including tax policy and diversified markets recommendations. He then reviewed the following eight recommendations and asked participants to provide feedback and develop action items for each of the recommendations:

1. Identify and conduct economic valuations of the nation's priority forested watersheds.
2. Support forest inventory and forest health monitoring activities.
3. Enact dedicated funding sources for wild land fire suppression.
4. Heighten awareness of forests benefits with a focused communication campaign.
5. Develop and support a portfolio of pilot landscape level sustainable forests projects in all regions of the country.
6. Develop a targeted outreach strategy and tracking system for local governments to characterize the status of local forest protection through land use mechanisms.
7. Carry out a focused analysis of the impact of tax policies to sustainable management of private forests in the United States
8. Maintain and diversify markets that allow sustainable forest management.

[Full draft of the SFAS](#)

Following Mr. Buck's presentation, participants engaged in discussion and had an opportunity to ask questions. One participant inquired as to why the strategy outlines actions over a two-year timeframe. Mr. Buck explained that the recommendations were based on existing programs, and that it is important to outline a starting point and near-term timeframe to facilitate action. He also pointed out the relevance and timeliness around the IYF in 2011. Participants also inquired about the communication and collaborations strategies tied to each of the recommendations and potential action items. Acknowledging the need for both, Mr. Buck noted that the specific actions tied to each of the recommendations had communication and outreach components, as well as opportunities for collaboration with existing initiatives.

After question and answer session on Mr. Buck's presentation, participants remained at their tables and engaged in small group discussion to familiarize themselves with the content of the draft SFAS and decide upon which action area to focus on for the second breakout session. Participants were asked to consider: the rationale behind the approach and criteria used to make recommendations; whether the recommended actions strike an appropriate balance between actions that are significant and achievable, and the feasibility of garnering support of the diverse forest community; any suggestions for other actions to include in the draft SFAS; and important aspects of forests sustainability, interests or perspectives are not adequately reflected in the second draft. [See Appendix A for Breakout Group Reports]

Refining Areas for Action

Participants reconvened in plenary session to review the results of the breakout sessions and identify which recommendations might be removed from the SFAS, and what additional recommendations might be added. It was generally agreed that the third action item encompassing dedicated funding for wild land fire suppression, was adequately addressed in other settings. Additional action areas identified by the group included:

1. A communications and collaboration strategy for each of the recommendations;
2. Developing better ways to address forest health deterioration;
3. Addressing the urban/rural forest interface;
4. Devising a strategy for working better with private landowners; and
5. Setting indicator trends.

Following the review of results, participants were asked to indicate which three of these five additional items were most important to include in the SFAS. The group clearly identified the new recommendation of "Addressing the urban/rural forest interface". Based on the results of this discussion, eight topics were identified as the focus of the second set of breakout session discussions, as follows:

1. Identify and conduct economic valuations of the nation's priority forested watersheds.
2. Support forest inventory and forest health monitoring activities.
3. [*this recommendation was not discussed because stakeholders felt it was already being addressed*]
Enact dedicated funding sources for wild land fire suppression
4. Heighten awareness of forests benefits with a focused communication campaign.
5. Develop and support a portfolio of pilot landscape level sustainable forests projects in all regions of the country.
6. Develop a targeted outreach strategy and tracking system for local governments to characterize the status of local forest protection through land use mechanisms.
7. Carry out a focused analysis of the impact of tax policies to sustainable management of private forests in the U.S.
8. Maintain and diversify markets that allow sustainable forest management.
9. [*New recommendation*]Integrate Urban Forestry Concepts and Techniques in Federal Initiatives Aimed at Sustainable Communities and Green Infrastructure.

Participants then separated into a second set of breakout sessions to discuss and develop proposals for implementing one of the eight recommended actions. Each group identified actionable items for their selected recommendation. [See *Appendix B for Breakout Group Reports*]

The third and final breakout group discussion was dedicated to testing the action plans developed in the second set of breakout sessions. Two individuals, including one Core Group author, remained at the table assigned to the recommendation they discussed during the second breakout session. Their job was to provide an overview of the action plan for their chosen recommendation to other interested participants. Other meeting participants were released from their tables and asked to spend an hour learning about and commenting on two of the eight recommendations. The group then heard overviews of the action items identified for each of the eight recommended topics.

Review of Feedback on Action Items:

The second day of the National meeting began with highlights from the previous day's discussion on the SFAS recommendations from Co-Chair, Jim Hubbard, USDA Forest Service. Mr. Hubbard noted the previous days' discussions often focused on the question of 'who is going to do the work?' He pointed out that the history of the RSF is rooted in individuals and entities stepping up and working together to pursue actions towards sustainable forest management.

Michael Buck presented the revised changes and additions to the recommendations, explaining that the goal is to use these recommendations as a platform to push the agenda forward and focus on achievable steps within the next two years. Responding to some participant questions about next steps for revising the Draft, Mr. Buck explained the Core Group would review the input and one of the authors from each topic discussion would integrate the feedback into a third draft. Additionally, participants then had an opportunity to volunteer to be part of the drafting committees for each of the nine identified recommendations. [See *Appendix C for a list of Volunteers*].

RSF 2010 Work Plan

In moving to discuss the RSF 2010 fiscal year work plan, Peter Gaulke, NEPA, Strategic Planning & Sustainability, USDA Forest Service, asked participants for feedback, emphasizing that the RSF will need to continue its work in order to foster progress on the action items participants have identified. He pointed out that it is important to remember that simply advocating that work is accomplished, in itself requires work. Participants provided some feedback on the work plan, highlighting the need for additional tools to maintain communication and momentum amongst RSF members. Specifically, the Communications and Outreach Working Group (COWG) has additional resource needs for tools such as websites, webinars and social media. Suggestions also included further collaboration with existing initiatives, broadening RSF participation and possibly capitalizing on volunteer support by

developing RSF workgroups to focus on specific topic areas. Broadening participation might include the involvement of skeptics in addition to supporters, to gather more diverse feedback on the challenges to sustainable forest management.

Role of the RSF in Planning for 2011 International Year of Forests (IYF)

Jim Hubbard, USDA Forest Service, invited participants to brainstorm about activities the RSF could undertake or help galvanize for the IYF in 2011. One participant mentioned the next technical advisory committee would discuss actions and strategies for the Montreal Process in 2011. A representative from the USDA Forest Service, Cindy MacArthur introduced herself as the coordinator for the IYF, and stated she looks forward to working with RSF members to help coordinate efforts.

Transitioning to discuss the IYF in the context of Communications and Outreach Work Group, Graham Cox provided a report out from the COWG's meeting. Mr. Cox relayed a number of ideas: developing eleven indicator trends to identify for the IYF; linking with private companies to utilize brand recognition of animal-mascots such as the Geico gecko, the Aflack duck and others to create a public message to elevate the IYF; developing a web link for RSF and IYF activities to circulate to NGO newsletters; reaching out to media such as National Geographic, the Smithsonian magazine or nature channels to develop a report on the state of national forests; positioning the RSF website as the 'go-to' resource for forest information, status and IYF information; and utilizing Web 2.0 technology to expand into social media outlets and engage younger generations. Responding to this report out, participants also offered up additional ideas and highlighted other potentially complimentary initiatives. Several participants reiterated the need for an interactive website in order to enable greater RSF participation and ongoing discussions. Another participant suggested creating a starter kit for sustainable forest information that could be widely distributed to forest organizations across the US.

Forest Stakeholder Updates

As a final session activity, participants were invited to provide announcements and updates about the work they are doing on sustainable forest management. Stakeholder activities included work on urban and agriculture forests, a number of state and regional collaborative initiatives, non-governmental outreach and education projects, watershed and forest efforts and mechanisms to engage and educate private landowners.

Guy Robertson, USDA Forest Service – update on finalizing 2010 National Report
[No Notes]

David Morman, Oregon Department of Forestry, provided an update on the Oregon Board of Forestry – a seven person board overseeing general forest policy in the state. The Board endorsed 19 indicators of sustainable forest management (SFM). The Board has developed and revisited its mission statement and goals it wants to propose these in a public review draft. The

Board is testing the idea of taking the roundtable forest dialogue to the state level. For more information, visit: www.orwgon.gov\odf\board.

Andy Mason, Agriculture and Urban Forests, provided an update on the Agriculture & Urban Forest prospectus his group is developing to include in the 2010 National Report on Sustainable Forests.

Tim Smith, Sustainable Water Resources Roundtable – Water model
[No Notes]

Ann Walker, Western Governors Association, announced that the group would hold its first in-person meeting with the Forest Health Advisory Committee. The group currently has participation from 14 state foresters, 28 state agency folks, and 20 NGO groups, and DoD, USDA, DOI FS, and the Inter-tribal Timber Council.

Logan Yonavjak, World Resources Institute, introduced the Southern Forests for the Future project, a three year effort focused on protecting southern US forests. The objective is to educate the public, NGOs and policymakers about what is happening on the ground, trends and how can these be addressed. For more information, visit: www.seemyforest.org

Tom Jacobs, Manhattan Metro Green Project, introduced a regional plan called ‘metro green.’ The project has 14 jurisdictions that passed protection of riparian acres in the metro community. The group is revising the region’s long-range transportation plan as well. The planning process has been an opportunity to develop a regional sustainability plan. This plan addresses many sustainability aspects for development in metro area.

Sherri Wormstead, Northeast Forests, Water and People Project, which has focused on a geospatial analysis on forests, water and people in the northeast, which is now spinning off into a national level geospatial analysis. Ms. Wormstead emphasized the importance of RSF’s engagement in the “forest to faucet assessment.”

Ruth McWilliams, Catamount Lodge Project, Sustainable Woodlands, and State Foresters, provided several updates on these initiatives. As part of a webinar series with the sustainable forest partnerships project at Cornell University, they transformed the state foresters handbook into various educational tools for land owners. Ms. McWilliams also highlighted the need to heighten tourists’ awareness about their role in protecting watersheds. For more information see: www.catamountlodge.com; www.sustainablewoodlands.org ; www.stateforesters.org

Don Outen, Baltimore County Dept. of Environmental Protection & Resource Management, provided an update on Baltimore County’s work in continuing to build forest sustainability and management using science, including a lot in inventory and assessment and developing management plans. The department has worked with the Forest Service and the University of

Vermont to produce a forest canopy cover combined with county LIDAR data, along with doing more work on street tree and invasive species control and deer management.

Don Monatic, Intertribal Timber Council (ITTC), highlighted the theme of sustainability for the Council. Mr. Monatic noted that tribal culture is guided by the notion that nature defines people. There are three projects to discover how nature is defining people. The first project is a joint fire science project, with funding from DOI. ITTC would like to partner with other agencies and universities to develop regional centers on joint fire science. The second project is tribal marketing of special forest products, and the third project involves developing a coalition of national resource intertribal associations.

Jim Finley, Sustainable Forest Partnership, noted that the partnership team reviewed 44 indicators and developed metrics to measure the importance of forestry and trees to the general public. The group is also working to enhance management through stewardship principles and produced five outcomes based upon that effort.

Eric Norland, RSF Communications and Outreach Work Group (COWG), updated the group that the COWG is transitioning some communications and outreach into Web 2.0 tools such as social media outlets like Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. Sarah Ashton has volunteered to help with developing a Facebook and Twitter presence.

Conclusion & Next Steps:

Joel Holtrop, USDA Forest Service, thanked everyone for their updates on various projects and work from around the country. He expressed appreciation for participant input on the creation of a ninth recommendation, noting the importance of not losing sight of the human dimension of this. Mr. Holtrop underscored the need for greater collaboration, working across agencies and in conjunction with other entities in order to accomplish the agreed upon priority action items. As a next step, the RSF Co-Chairs plan to provide Secretary Vilsack with a suggested action plan for the USDA Forest Service to implement the vision outlined in the Secretary's speech.

In closing, Mr. Holtrop challenged participants to take advantage of the work and progress made during the meeting, and build upon that to engage and utilize their respective spheres of influences to further the cause of sustaining America's forests.