



Forestry:

An Objectives-oriented Profession

The Society of American Foresters (SAF) represents much of the forestry profession at the national, state, and local levels. People outside the profession may wonder who belongs to the SAF and what specific perspective(s) they offer, particularly regarding important forest resource issues. The following notes provide some insights about SAF and its members. Of course, core principles like SAF's Mission Statement and its Code of Ethics (see back of this sheet) play a key role in defining the organization and its members, and are reflected here to some degree.

Most professional members of SAF have earned university degrees from SAF accredited forestry programs. In such programs, forestry professionals are trained to be objectives-oriented. This is similar to other professions (e.g., engineering) that use appropriate expertise and experience to address societal needs and related employer-defined, problem-solving tasks.

Thus, forestry professionals view and manage forests for a full range of uses and values – it's the objectives of the owners and related policies for the forest land that drive what SAF members are oriented toward. This is reflected in the technical "Working Groups" within SAF that members can choose to affiliate with, including such diverse interests as Recreation, Wilderness Management, and Wildlife and Fish Ecology.

Another important and related characteristic of SAF and its members is their focus on active management of forest lands. This focus stems from:

- 1) Substantial knowledge (research and education) and experience with what works and what doesn't (all are vital given the site-specific, extended lives of forests)
- 2) A service-to-society Mission, which compels actions that are most effective and efficient for providing for society's desires and needs/demands

It's useful to note that some groups involved with forest resource issues have a different focus and world view than SAF. For example, some follow a philosophy in which natural environments (including forests) with little or no human influence are considered superior. Such distinctions are important to recognize and highlight, particularly with forest issues that are often debated as science/technical matters when instead they are largely values or philosophy based.

The employment affiliation of SAF members can provide some indication of the perspective(s) they offer. But recent data for the approximately 1000 members in Oregon (March 2007) suggest that no particular employment-based perspective is dominant: 27% public employment, 24% private industry/business, 26% retired, 11% consultants, and 12% students or other employment.

Thus, SAF members come from "all walks of forestry" and for a professional society such diversity clearly is an asset, particularly when SAF leaders and members offer their individual and collective views on important forestry issues. And with their unique training, experience, and interaction with many other specialists, SAF members play a central role in helping ensure the fundamental benefits of environmental, economic and social sustainability from our forest lands and resources.

Notes by Paul W. Adams, Chair of the Oregon SAF Policy and Legislation Committee, and a Professor and Extension Specialist in the Forest Engineering Department at Oregon State University. Paul has been an SAF member for over 30 years. August 2007.

Who We Are

Since 1900, the Society of American Foresters has provided access to information and networking opportunities to prepare members for the challenges and the changes that face natural resource professionals.



SAF Core Values are:

1. Forests are a fundamental source of global health and human welfare,
2. Forests must be sustained through simultaneously meeting environmental, economic, and community aspirations and needs,
3. Foresters are dedicated to sound forest management and conservation, and
4. Foresters serve landowners and society by providing sound knowledge and professional management skills

Mission Statement

The Society of American Foresters (SAF) is the national scientific and educational organization representing the forestry profession in the United States. Founded in 1900 by Gifford Pinchot, it is the largest professional society for foresters in the world. **The mission of the Society of American Foresters is to advance the science, education, technology, and practice of forestry; to enhance the competency of its members; to establish professional excellence; and, to use the knowledge, skills, and conservation ethic of the profession to ensure the continued health and use of forest ecosystems and the present and future availability of forest resources to benefit society.** SAF is a nonprofit organization meeting the requirements of 501 (c) (3). SAF members include natural resource professionals in public and private settings, researchers, CEOs, administrators, educators, and students.

SAF Code of Ethics

On joining the Society of American Foresters, members assume a special responsibility to the profession and to society by promising to uphold and abide by the following:

Principles and Pledges

1. Foresters have a responsibility to manage land for both current and future generations. We pledge to practice and advocate management that will maintain the long-term capacity of the land to provide the variety of materials, uses, and values desired by landowners and society.
2. Society must respect forest landowners' rights and correspondingly, landowners have a land stewardship responsibility to society. We pledge to practice and advocate forest management in accordance with landowner objectives and professional standards, and to advise landowners of the consequences of deviating from such standards.
3. Sound science is the foundation of the forestry profession. We pledge to strive for continuous improvement of our methods and our personal knowledge and skills; to perform only those services for which we are qualified; and in the biological, physical, and social sciences to use the most appropriate data, methods, and technology.
4. Public policy related to forests must be based on both scientific principles and societal values. We pledge to use our knowledge and skills to help formulate sound forest policies and laws; to challenge and correct untrue statements about forestry; and to foster dialogue among foresters, other professionals, landowners, and the public regarding forest policies.
5. Honest and open communication, coupled with respect for information given in confidence, is essential to good service. We pledge to always present, to the best of our ability, accurate and complete information; to indicate on whose behalf any public statements are made; to fully disclose and resolve any existing or potential conflicts of interest; and to keep proprietary information confidential unless the appropriate person authorizes its disclosure.
6. Professional and civic behavior must be based on honesty, fairness, good will, and respect for the law. We pledge to conduct ourselves in a civil and dignified manner; to respect the needs, contributions, and viewpoints of others; and to give due credit to others for their methods, ideas, or assistance.

Adapted from: <http://www.safnet.org/who/howeare.cfm>