Draft WSSAF Position Statements

1. Wildfire at the Wildland-Urban Interface

Position

Regarding the wildland-urban interface, the Washington Society of American Foresters advocates:

Education and training for Washingtonians residing in the wildland-urban interface of how to protect themselves and their property from wildfire, and the need to manage fuels.

Structural firefighters should be responsible for structures and wildland crews should be responsible for forestland. Air resources can be used for both; sometimes dozers can be the interface between structures and forestland.

Increased funding, training, equipment, and resources provided for structural firefighters to protect lives and property in the wildland-urban interface.

The extreme hazard law (RCW 76.04.660) should be used and enforced on all ownerships of 5 acres or more. The public living/moving into the forests, and private landowners should have the same responsibility to reduce hazard at their homes as the industrial timberland owners do along a road. {{The extreme hazard law has never been taken seriously nor enforced uniformly. Any landowner who does not comply with extreme hazard reduction is negligent and should not expect fire crews to try to protect his property--Dick's position}}

Issue

High-valued and lavish homes with associated structures are now located in the wildlands where wildfire is natural, repeated, and often unsuppressed. In some vegetation types, wildfire is not only repeated, but also frequent. When wildfire moves through the wildland-urban interface, homeowners demand protection of their investments. Conventional volunteer or county structural-fire departments cannot protect the number, size, and location of dwellings in the wildland-urban interface. Whereas wildland firefighters may have attacked or monitored wildfire in unpopulated regions in the past, they are now being called on to protect structures—for which they are not trained—instead of natural resources and ecosystems. When fires occur in the proximity of residences in the wildland-urban interface, risks and cost escalate even higher, adding to the complexity of fire management.

Background

Wildfire is a natural occurrence in the wildlands of grasslands, brush fields, savannas, and forests. Suppression of wildfire has been national policy during the past century, but more comprehensive understanding of fuels management and ecosystem science has led to a shift of policy that now allows some wildfires to burn with monitoring, but without suppression.

During the past century, dwellings and infrastructure inclined to be concentrated in communities and towns, while the grasslands, brush fields, savannas, and forests tended to be unpopulated or lightly populated. When wildfires occurred, natural resources burned, but seldom were populations and homes directly threatened. In the past few decades, Washingtonians have been acquiring properties, and constructing homes and associated buildings beyond the traditional communities in the wildlands. This habitation beyond traditional communities is known as the wildland-urban interface.

The national position of the Society of American Foresters (http://www.safnet.org/policyandpress/psst/fire0902.cfm) includes: "Efforts by natural resource and fire management agencies to coordinate with private landowners and tribal, state, and local governments to plan and implement strategies across ownerships, including education and training, such as the FireWise program, at the community level, as many of the people moving into the wildland-urban interface are not well informed on how to protect themselves and their property from wildfire, and especially the need to manage fuels.

2. Washington Trust Land Management

Washington State was gifted at statehood with several million acres of forest and agricultural land by the federal government. Another substantial body of lands was returned to the state via tax defaults. Washington State created a series of trusts for the purpose of generating revenues for affected counties. Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is charged with managing all trust lands and has returned a total of $6.56 billion since 1965 to the Department and trust beneficiaries. Over $5 billion went directly to beneficiaries and $1.5 billion went to fund DNR's land management activities.

A unanimous Washington State Supreme Court decision in 1983 (*Skamania County v State of Washington*) affirmed the "trust mandate," that requires trust lands to produce revenue for specific trust beneficiaries. Several attempts to overturn that mandate have been denied by the courts, mainly on the strength of the Skamania decision. Those challenges are expected to continue for the foreseeable future.

The Washington State Society of American Foresters (WSSAF) supports DNR's efforts to build and maintain a highly professional, well-trained work force at all levels. WSSAF supports DNR's enlightened forest resource management, including development and implementation of the Habitat Conservation Plan, Policies for Sustainable Forestry and landscape planning.

WSSAF further supports DNR's efforts to optimize revenues. This direction ensures active land management and revenue returns will remain attractive to beneficiaries, and will ensure the trust lands will be retained by the state. Washington's trust lands are too important to beneficiaries, the public, the state's rural economy and forest products production to lose.

3. Commodity Production from Washington's Forests

The Washington State Society fully supports reasonable forest ecosystem efforts. We are concerned, however, that the nation is losing its ability to produce forest products to meet consumer demand without relying on importing lumber and other forest products. We support the following five steps to recognize and deal with the potential hazards of becoming heavily dependent on foreign countries to supply our nation's forest products.

- The Washington State Society of American Foresters will work to educate the public at large about the expanding demands for and development of forest products and the benefits society receives from those products;
- The Washington State Society will promote a technical and political agenda that encourages forest management to provide a perpetual output of forest products and ecosystem services;
- The Washington State Society of American Foresters encourages development of forest products that replace or ease depletion of non-renewable resources; and
- The Society supports reasonable and sustainable forest products' commodity production from Washington State's federal lands.

In the years between 1945 and 1970, forest management grew from humble beginnings to a technologically advanced profession and business. Computers, genetic enhancement, sophisticated reforestation and stand management prescriptions, satellite imagery and mapping all combined to create complex management systems mainly targeted at growing better trees faster to satisfy the nation's - and the world's - ever growing forest products demand.
From the 1970s to the end of the century, a new protection paradigm was embraced. Ecosystem management, watershed planning, federal land planning and resultant lands set for biological legacies emerged. Endangered species management, fisheries protection and water quality concerns all combined to require new ways of thinking, new management models and research agendas, and new regulatory standards to better protect the environment.

In the past decade, land managers are now faced with the challenge to provide “ecosystem services” from all forests. These services include clean air, clean and abundant water, game and wildlife species, and outdoor recreation opportunities.

In our efforts to understand and implement these new services, commodity production forest management from federal lands is not perceived publicly to be an important aspect of forest management. This new paradigm has had immense impacts on the forest products infrastructure. In the past 25 years, the milling capacity of the Pacific Northwest has fallen ___% (citation). Thus private land managers are finding it harder and harder to manage for timber. In fact, the forest products industry has changed dramatically with the creation of TIMO’s and REIT’s, commonly controlling land from out of state headquarters and shortening planning horizons. Additionally, the fragmentation of private forestlands into “life-style” tree farms provides additional challenges now and into the future.

It is not in the publics or the professional forester's interest to ignore current supply/demand dynamics, but it is hoped that the sustainable management of the timber in our forests for important private usage return to a more balanced perspective. It is well known that wood construction materials are renewable; sequester carbon; and have a smaller carbon footprint than steel, concrete, and brick. Thus wood products will help us mitigate the influence of greenhouse gasses into the atmosphere.
.

4. Credentialing of Foresters

Position

A forester is a uniquely qualified professional, with at least a bachelor's degree in forestry. Landowners who seek a qualified forester to oversee forested land management often need a venue to access information about a registry of qualified professional foresters. Washington SAF seeks to ensure the system is equitable, administratively simple and minimizes administrative costs and therefore advocates registration systems as opposed to licensing. To achieve these goals, the Washington SAF recommends using the existing forester certification programs administered by SAF and the ACF. State agencies who provide information to forest land managers are encouraged to refer landowners to the lists of qualified foresters that are maintained by these organizations. Washington SAF . Utilizing existing systems minimizes the cost of registration. SAF certification is administered by a national level board, which helps ensure scientific and fair standards. The testing system is simple, and requires only that a test taker sign up at any of a number of Washington test centers at a time convenient to the test taker.

Issue

Several states have created legislation requiring forester licensing and creating state level boards and administrative systems to administer the licensing. These systems were created before SAF adopted an administrative system to administer forester certification. Since then, one state has replaced their state level administration with the SAF certification system, and other states are considering the same path. The issue of forester licensing has been raised in the state of Washington, which prompts SAF to provide a position statement on this subject.

Background

In the case of forestry, using competent individuals (professionals) can cause a substantial improvement in the outcome of management activities such as reforestation (Royer 1985), harvest quality (Cubbage *et al* 1987), post-harvest stand structure (Cubbage *et al* 1985), and economic value (Cubbage *et al* 1985, Jackson 1985). In the Cubbage study, landowners assisted by professional foresters received as much as 87 percent more for their timber than those not assisted. In a Minnesota study, landowners who used a service forester received 40 percent more for their stumpage than landowners who did not (Henly *et al* 1988).

SAF's National office has constructed a Certified Forester program to ensure that the public can locate a qualified professional to ensure the forest management plan benefits the owner.