

NASF RESOLUTION NO. 2019-2: Shared Stewardship Guiding Principles

ORIGIN OF RESOLUTION: NASF Executive Committee

ISSUE OF CONCERN: National guiding principles that promote state-driven Shared Stewardship

BACKGROUND:

For more than a century, partnerships have been at the heart of state forestry agencies' work to conserve and protect America's forests. Since the early 1900s, Congress has recognized and reinforced the public value of a strong government-to-government partnership between state forestry agencies and the USDA Forest Service.

In 2018, the USDA Forest Service published "Toward Shared Stewardship Across Landscapes: An Outcome-Based Investment Strategy" as a renewed commitment to "prioritize stewardship decisions directly with the States, setting priorities together and combining our mutual skills and assets to achieve cross-boundary outcomes desired by all." Individual states are responding with shared stewardship agreements that hold great promise for enhancing active forest management, improving forest health, and reducing wildland fire risk (<https://www.stateforesters.org/shared-stewardship/>).

In 2019, The National Association of State Foresters published "A Century of Shared Stewardship: State Foresters and the Forest Service" to support a new vision for Shared Stewardship and document a wide range of outcomes delivered to the nation by state forestry agencies. National guiding principles that promote state-driven Shared Stewardship based on Forest Action Plans will focus national efforts and resources to meet contemporary challenges. With these guiding principles, State Foresters and the USDA Forest Service can enhance their historic partnership to enhance all partnerships serving America's forests.

RESOLUTION:

The members of the National Association of State Foresters adopt the following guiding principles for Shared Stewardship and urge all government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and companies with forestry and wildland fire interests to support these principles (with "state" including U.S. island territories and the District of Columbia):

- 1. State Forest Action Plans should provide the foundation for shared stewardship.**
State Forest Action Plans, developed with public input for all lands within each state including federal lands, collectively represent a powerful strategic plan for America's forests. State Forest Action Plans, cross-referenced with State Wildlife Action Plans, National Forest plans, and other more detailed site-specific plans, will focus limited resources where needed most.
- 2. Shared stewardship should be state-based and serve all of America's forests, public and private, rural and urban, recognize state differences, and support state flexibility to ensure long-term results.**

Each state represents a unique set of political, social, statutory, budgetary, and natural resource requirements, challenges, and opportunities. Federal government-state government shared stewardship partnerships are grounded in statute and provide a strong foundation for fostering other partnerships adapted to unique local needs. National Forests, State Forests, and private forests exist as a continuum across the landscape and cannot be managed or protected in isolation. State forestry agencies are responsible for delivering a wide variety of federal, state, and private sector programs supporting forest and wildland fire management on all lands.

3. To deliver on the promise of shared stewardship, increased federal investment in USDA Forest Service State & Private Forestry and cooperative fire programs is needed.

More than 25,000 state forestry agency employees provide critical capacity, infrastructure, and trained professionals for America's forest management and wildland fire needs. Contemporary forest health and fire threats cross boundaries at an unprecedented pace and scale. This demands a contemporary USDA Forest Service budget that provides more support for State and Private Forestry, cooperative fire programs, and all hands/all lands solutions.

4. Shared stewardship should build on existing collaborations and partnerships while fostering new ones.

National Forests, state forestry agencies, conservation organizations, and private landowners support and benefit from many partnerships and collaborations at all levels. Shared stewardship offers an opportunity to build on and maintain traditional partnerships while also developing new collaborative efforts with non-traditional partners.

5. Shared stewardship requires shared planning, decision-making, and priority setting by professional forest and wildland fire leaders engaged with communities and partners.

Shared planning efforts that integrate State Forest Action Plans and National Forest Plans with the best available maps, data, and information resources will lead to better natural resource outcomes. Professional forestry and wildland fire leaders can be most effective through shared priority setting and decision-making, informed by science-based planning and community/partner engagement.

NASF ACTION: (X) Approved () Disapproved () Tabled

Date of Action: September 24, 2019