

Sustainable Forest Management Requires Active Forest Management



A Joint Position Statement of the
Inland Empire Society of American Foresters
and the
Montana Society of American Foresters*

Position

To provide the range of values people seek from **forests**, the IESAF and MTSAF advocate an active approach to **forest management** (see bold terms in the **Definitions** section on page 3). The overall health and condition of forests in eastern Washington, northern Idaho, and Montana could be improved using a **sustainable forest management** strategy using a variety of **cultural operations** focused on attaining ecologically sound, economically viable, and socially desirable management objectives. We advocate **active management** of forest resources instead of passive management to achieve land management goals and objectives while maintaining the **sustainability** of forest ecosystems. In addition to **active management**, as defined on page 3, we support an **adaptive management** approach to forest ecosystem management.

Issue

The range of different strategies to meet forest management goals can be narrowed to two approaches: active or passive management. Some people seem to prefer passive approaches that allow forests to evolve with minimal human intervention. Active approaches involve the application of various **cultural operations** and **forest management** practices for a variety of purposes. For meeting many objectives, **active management** can be more effective, efficient and more timely than passive management. For example, assessment of federal forest resources in this region provides evidence that conditions could be improved, and federal scientists believe active management will provide what people want from federal forests and protect the long-term ecological integrity of federal forests more effectively than a passive management strategy (Quigley et al. 1998). Nevertheless, some people seem to prefer passive management, as reflected in their use of tactics to eliminate active management projects involving timber harvesting on federal lands.

* Adopted by the Executive Committee of the Inland Empire Society of American Foresters (IESAF) on May 5, 2003, and by the Executive Committee of the Montana Society of American Foresters (MTSAF) on April 15, 2003, and approved by the Department of Forest Policy, Society of American Foresters. This position statement will expire in five years unless revised or extended by the Executive Committees.

Background

Much of the debate about **sustainable forest management** arises from the lack of agreement on appropriate forest land and resource *management objectives*. (Each italicized phrase is briefly discussed below.) Once objectives are set, the operations and practices for attaining them are selected. Debate about **forest management** practices often focuses on *timber harvesting*, and especially clearcutting (SAF 2002a), but may also involve the use of chemicals (SAF 2001a) and fire control and use (SAF 2002b). (See the SAF position statements supporting these practices.) To attain resource management objectives, passive management is simply not an option. From the professional forester's perspective, *active management is preferable to passive management*, and the issue becomes selecting appropriate **cultural operations** and **forest management** practices to attain objectives.

Management Objectives Vary by Ownership Category. The key to effective **forest management** is setting objectives. On private forests, owners determine the management objectives within the constraints set by state laws and policies regarding reforestation, slash disposal, and water quality protection. On state forests, the same laws and policies must be met and objectives also must be consistent with the goal of sustainably providing revenue for public schools. On federal forests, especially the national forests managed by the U.S. Forest Service, the goal defined in public policy is sustained yield of multiple goods and services determined by comprehensive planning involving the public and in light of environmental impact analysis; specific objectives and activities must be consistent with such plans and also involve the public and analyze environmental impacts (Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act of 1960, National Forest Management Act of 1976, and National Environmental Policy Act of 1970).

Timber Harvesting on Federal Lands. The Society of American Foresters supports commercial and non-commercial timber harvesting on federal lands allocated for such use through land and resource management planning (SAF 2001b). The SAF position states that current harvest levels on federal lands are insufficient to maintain forest health, to meet the goals for hazardous fuel reduction to reduce wildfire risk in the nation's forests and provide economic and community benefits. Furthermore, current laws offer more than enough protection to sustain the full range of forest values on public lands, and timber harvesting is a legitimate use of national forests and BLM public lands, as the multiple-use mandates make clear (SAF 2001b).

Active Management is Preferable to Passive Management. Forest Service scientists concluded in their integrated assessment of resources in the interior Columbia River basin region that when compared with traditional approaches, "active management appears to have the greatest chance of producing the mix of goods and services that people want from ecosystems, as well as maintaining or enhancing long-term ecological integrity" (Quigley et al. 1996). A reserve-based passive management strategy was one alternative approach evaluated by these scientists. Passive management simply would not be as effective as active management in restoring desired conditions on federal lands in the region.

Definitions

Active management is attaining desired forest objectives and future conditions using **cultural operations** and **forest management** practices. These may include timber harvesting, tree planting, thinning, fertilization, grazing, weed control, and other activities for improving wildlife habitat and watersheds, such as erosion control, and also fire suppression, restoration-based fuel treatment, and prescribed fire. Active management also involves road and trail maintenance, including and construction, reconstruction, or deconstruction, as well as activities and practices for improving recreation areas and trails, including road closures to manage access. (Lacking a standard definition, the IESAF and MTSAF created this one.)

The definitions below are from *The Dictionary of Forestry* (Helms 1998).

Adaptive management – a dynamic approach to **forest management** in which the effects of treatments and decisions are continually monitored and used, along with research results, to modify management on a continuing basis to ensure that objectives are being met.

Cultural operations – the manipulation of vegetation to meet objectives of controlling stand composition or structure, such as site improvement, forest tree improvement, increased regeneration, increased growth, or measures to control insects and disease.

Ecosystem – a spatially explicit, relatively homogeneous unit of the earth that includes all interacting organisms and components of the abiotic environment within its boundaries.

Ecosystem management – management guided by explicit goals, executed by policies, protocols, and practices, and made adaptable (see **adaptive management**) by monitoring and research based on the best understanding of ecological interactions and processes necessary to sustain **ecosystem** composition, structure, and function over the long term. (A National Research Council [2000] committee of forest scientists used the term synonymously with **sustainable forest management**.)

Forest – an **ecosystem** characterized by a more or less dense and extensive tree cover, often consisting of stands varying in characteristics such as species composition, structure, age class, and associated processes, and commonly including meadows, streams, fish, and wildlife.

Forestry – the profession embracing the science, art, and practice of creating, managing, using, and conserving forests and associated resources for human benefit and in a sustainable manner to meet goals, needs, and values.

Forest management – the practical application of biological, physical, quantitative, managerial, economic, social, and policy principles to the regeneration, management, utilization, and conservation of **forests** to meet specified goals and objectives while maintaining the productivity of the forest. *Note:* forest management includes management for aesthetics, fish, recreation, urban values, water, wilderness, wildlife, wood products, and other forest resource values.

Sustainability – the capacity of forests ranging from stands to ecoregions to maintain their health, productivity, diversity, and overall integrity, in the long run, in the context of human activity and use.

Sustainable forest management (sustainable forestry) (SFM) – *this evolving concept has several definitions:* 1. the practice of meeting the forest resource needs and values of the present without compromising the similar capability of future generations – *note* sustainable forest management involves practicing a land stewardship ethic that integrates the reforestation, managing, growing, nurturing, and harvesting of trees for useful products with the conservation of soil, air and water quality, wildlife and fish habitat. 2. the stewardship and use of forests and forest lands in a way, and a rate, that maintains their biodiversity, productivity, regeneration capacity, vitality, and potential to fulfill, now and in the future, relevant ecological, economic, and social functions at local, national, and global levels, and that does not cause damage to other ecosystems – *note* criteria for sustainable forestry include (a) conservation of biological diversity, (b) maintenance of productive capacity of forest ecosystems, (c) maintenance of forest ecosystem health and vitality, (d) conservation and maintenance of soil and water resources, (e) maintenance of forest contributions to global carbon cycles, (f) maintenance and enhancement of long-term multiple socioeconomic benefits to meet the needs of societies, and (g) a legal, institutional, and economic framework for forest conservation and sustainable management.

References Cited

- Helms, J.A., editor. 1998. *The Dictionary of Forestry*. Society of American Foresters, Bethesda, MD.
- National Research Council. 2000. *Environmental Issues in Pacific Northwest Forest Management*. National Academy Press, Washington, DC.
- Quigley, T.M., R.W. Haynes, and R.T. Graham, tech. eds. 1996. *Integrated Scientific Assessment for Ecosystem Management in the Interior Columbia Basin*, PNW-GTR-382, USDA Forest Service, Pacific Northwest Research Station, Portland, OR.
- Quigley, T.M., R.W. Haynes, W.J. Hann, D.C. Lee, R.S. Holthausen, and R.A. Gravenmeier. 1998. Using an ecoregion assessment for integrated policy analysis. *Journal of Forestry* 96(10):33-38.
- SAF (Society of American Foresters). 2001a. Herbicide use in forest management. Position statement [online]: <<http://www.safnet.org/policyandpress/psst/herbicide.cfm>>.
- SAF (Society of American Foresters). 2001b. Timber harvesting on federal lands: an essential tool for sustainable forest management. Position statement [online]: <<http://www.safnet.org/policyandpress/psst/timber.cfm>>.
- SAF (Society of American Foresters). 2002a. Clearcutting. Position statement [online]: <<http://www.safnet.org/policyandpress/psst/clearcut1202.cfm>>.
- SAF (Society of American Foresters). 2002b. Wildfire management. Position statement [online]: <<http://www.safnet.org/policyandpress/psst/fire0902.cfm>>.

Governor Steve Bullock

February 6, 2017

Governor's Office

P. O. Box 200801

Helena, Montana 59620-0801

Dear Governor Bullock,

Re: Society of American Foresters Forest Policy Committee Follow-up Comments

On behalf of Montana Society of American Foresters (SAF) Forest Policy Committee, we appreciate the opportunity to visit and share our professional perspectives on the benefits of the Forest in Focus Initiative, status of the timber industry, ecological state of Montana's forested landscape, Chairman's WGA Initiative on Forest and Range Management, and other ongoing forest policy issues. The following comments summarize our professional perspectives.

Montana Society of American Foresters has nearly 300 members and SAF Nationally, with nearly 15,000 members is the world's largest organization of natural resource professionals. Our perspectives and positions are based upon SAF's overall mission to advance the science, education, technology, and practice of forestry for the benefit of society. Locally and Nationally, we are very supportive of efforts to increase the level of active management on our forested lands through state of the art, sustainable forest practices which produce a variety of goods and services.

- Forest in Focus Initiative (FIF)-SAF supports and advocates for active forest management and FIF has demonstrated significant accomplishments in increasing the pace and scale of stewardship and restoration project acres treated on State, Private and Tribal lands. The partnership created between the state of Montana and R1 U. S. Forest Service is beginning to display its long term potential to improving forest health and resilience on our National Forest System lands. The forester position for FWP has also produced significant beneficial results on Montana's Wildlife Management Areas. These efforts promoted by your administration have increased the level of active forest management. Therefore, Montana SAF Forest Policy Committee supports continuation of the DNRC Forest Service liaison and local government positions and the FWP forester position to continue these efforts.
- Outlook for the Timber Industry-Montana's fully integrated timber industry infrastructure has weathered numerous economic storms over the years and suffered casualties from insufficient available raw materials at an affordable market price. Last year Weyerhaeuser closed the Columbia Falls Sawmill and Plywood plant. Every closure results in detrimental impacts to workers and their families, the local communities, loggers and forest landowners. Lumber prices remain depressed which is forecasted to stay relatively unchanged until there's some resolution to the Canadian-US Softwood Lumber Agreement as well as a realized increase in demand from the Asian Rim for imported logs and lumber.
- Ecological State of Montana's Forested Lands-The overall forest health and resilience from catastrophic wildfire, and insect and disease epidemics is continuously improving on private forest lands through active management. Montana State Trust lands have been very well managed and the professionals at DNRC have been diligent in offering timber sales and implementing active management projects to achieve desired future conditions while contributing to the sustained yield harvest. Federal forest lands clearly are most at risk with declining forest health, overstocking and susceptibility to wildfire, insect and disease epidemics which exposes

adjacent ownerships to their detrimental effects on their forests, fisheries and wildlife habitat, recreation and impacts to soil and water resources. SAF Forest Policy Committee commends the Governor's designation of nearly 5 million acres of high priority landscapes under the 2014 Farm Bill which recognizes the magnitude of forest health decline on our Federal lands in Montana.

- Montana SAF Forest Policy Committee applauds the WGA Chairman's selection of the "Forest and Range Management Initiative" which provides Western Governors with an increased opportunity to influence forest reform through Congress and to further inform forestry provisions in the upcoming 2018 Farm Bill. Recommendations such as making current streamlined NEPA provisions permanent, expanding Categorical Exclusions for collaborative projects from 3000 acres to 5000 acres and further incentivizing Collaboration through alternative dispute resolution process, binding arbitration or injunctive relief would be helpful. Nationally, SAF intends to be very engaged in reviewing the summary after workshops are completed this year and visit often with Congressional Staff which can further advance creative recommendations that surface in the final report. The WGA Chairman's initiative offers an opportunity to proactively influence the future of Montana's forested landscape which parallels the very mission of SAF.

Montana SAF Forest Policy Committee will contact your incoming Natural Resource Policy Advisor, Patrick Holmes to schedule an opportunity to brief him on our professional perspectives and offer to assist in Forest Policy issues from a credible, science based background. We have submitted testimony to the appropriate Legislative sub-committee leadership for DNRC's Forest Service liaison and local government advisor positions as well as the FWP Forester position. We have also provided copies of testimony to your Senior Advisor, Adam Schafer along with our position opposing Federal land transfer, letter to our Congressman on forest reform, National SAF's "Recommendations to Maximize the Benefits Forests Provide to People, Local Communities and the Economy" provided to the incoming Trump Administration.

In closing, thank you, Governor Bullock for taking the time from your busy schedule to meet with Montana's SAF Forest Policy Committee on these very important forest policy issues which are paramount to the future of Montana's forested ecosystems' overall health and ecological resilience to disturbance factors such as wildfire and insect and disease epidemics. Should you have any questions or comments, please contact us at your convenience and look forward to visiting with Patrick Holmes.

Sincerely,

Gordy Sanders, Chair

Montana Society of American Foresters Forest Policy Committee

406-677-2201 x 27, cell: 406-239-3145

e-mail: gsanders@pyramidlumber.com

February 1, 2017

To: HB 2 Joint Appropriations Subcommittee on Natural Resources and Transportation

Re: Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks Decision Package

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee,

My name is Gordy Sanders, Chair of the Montana Society of American Foresters Forest Policy Committee which focuses on Forest Policy issues. Montana Society of American Foresters (SAF) has nearly 300 members and SAF Nationally, with nearly 15,000 members is the world's largest organization of natural resource professionals. On behalf of the Montana SAF Forest Policy Committee, we submit the following comments in support of Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) request for 1 FTE to be permanently filled by a Forester included in their decision package now before the committee.

Montana SAF Forest Policy Committee's support for this position is based on SAF's overall mission to advance the science, education, technology, and practice of forestry for the benefit of society. Nationally, we are very supportive of efforts to increase the level of active management on forested lands which achieve multiple objectives and were involved in the development of the 2014 Farm Bill and numerous other Congressional efforts on forest reform.

The 2015 Legislature established a Forester Position for FWP as onetime only, to be funded through timber sale revenue from forestry projects on FWP lands which would improve wildlife habitat. The forester position has been instrumental in developing a forestry program which meets the objectives of the wildlife biologists managing each Wildlife Management

Area while providing significant sawlog and non-sawlog volume through the implementation of various stewardship and restoration treatments. Prior to establishing a forester position, Montana's Wildlife Management Areas received very little treatment and were rapidly losing the quality of wildlife habitat available and creating forest conditions conducive to catastrophic wildfire and insect and disease epidemics. The forester position accomplishments, since his hiring in August of 2015, is significant and the projects are widely distributed across Montana benefitting numerous Wildlife Management Areas while producing raw materials delivered to various mills and work for numerous logging contractors and log haulers.

The FWP Forestry Program report to the 65th Montana Legislature is a thorough summarization of accomplishments, activities and programmatic planning for implementation of future projects with estimated objectives and outputs. SAF finds this report very professional which will assist the forester in completing the Management Plans for each of the Wildlife Management Areas and move toward a more predictable sustained yield output based upon their Forest Inventory and Analysis and desired future conditions. Forester has also been able to leverage resources through grants or partnerships with other organizations to share in the cost of treatments to benefit more wildlife habitat.

Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks has clearly demonstrated the benefit of a full time Forester Position and maintaining this position is key to delivering an increase in active forest management which improves wildlife habitat across Montana. Montana Society of American Foresters Forest Policy Committee supports and advocates for active forest management and therefore, strongly supports the approval of continuing 1 FTE for a Forester position for FWP to increase the pace and scale of ecological restoration treatments on Wildlife Management Areas and significantly improve their forest health and resilience.

Sincerely,

Gordy Sanders, Chair

Montana Society of American Foresters Forest Policy Committee

406-677-2201 x 27, cell: 406-239-3145

e-mail: gsanders@pyramidlumber.com

A Vision for Montana's Forested Landscapes

Healthy, sustainable forests that provide diverse wildlife species, tree ages and sizes, natural processes and human uses. These forests, managed in a sustainable fashion, which reflects ecological, economic and social needs will provide dependable forest resources and multiple benefits for all Montanans and future generations.

- Active forest management is essential for maintaining the ecological, economic, and social integrity of Montana forests and rural communities.
- Sustainable forest management is critical for restoring structural, and species diversity of forested stands, increasing resiliency of forests to severe insect, and disease and wildfire outbreaks, enhancing wildlife habitat, and restoring watershed health.
- Active forest management is an important tool for treating overstocked forests and accumulated fuels, improving road location, removing barriers to fish passage, and restoring our forests to a healthy condition.
- The forest industry in Montana provides an important service to forest landowners by maintaining a market for wood products that provides income to landowners while underwriting the costs of fuel reduction and other desired forest improvements.
- The current forest management infrastructure is a workforce that has developed knowledge and applied abilities to harvest wood products in an ecologically sound manner across Montana's unique forest types and difficult landscape through decades of experience and represents a collectively skilled and experienced workforce that cannot be found elsewhere.
- Planning and implementation of landscape-scale forest management projects promotes resilient forests that are more resistant to wildfire, insects and disease, and drought stress, and provides goods and services important to Montana residents.
- Planning and implementation of landscape-scale forest management projects is a proactive means of moderating the scale and extent of undesirable forest disturbances, which in part is promoted by uncharacteristic climatic events, and provides a positive tax base for community well-being, versus reactive and tax consuming fire suppression and rehabilitation activities.
- Encouraging and partnering with existing businesses to develop alternative energy solutions, which utilize Montana's excess forest fuels.