



Update on State Assessments and Strategies

To: NAASF

From: NAASF Forest Resource Planning Committee (FRPC)

Background—The Farm Bill and S&PF Redesign require states to complete a State Assessment and Resource Strategy (plan) to receive funds under the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act. The State Assessment provides an analysis of forest conditions and trends across all ownerships and delineates priority forest areas from the urban to rural continuum. The Resource Strategy provides long-term strategies for investing Federal and other resources to address priority issues and areas in the assessment.

In November 2007, NAASF tasked FRPC to work with other NAASF committees and key NA staff to draft the minimum components, framework, and recommend a core set of data for State Assessments (potentially followed by an effort to outline the components/framework for the Resource Strategies). In June 2008, the NAASF Executive Committee also asked the FRPC to draft responses on the (1) national guidance for State Assessments and Strategies and (2) S&PF Redesign performance indicators.

Process and Status—With support from NA, a FRPC State Assessment and Plan Core Team (see sidebar) was formed in March of this year. This team drafted the minimum components, information about geospatial data layers, and an outline for the State Assessment and presented this information to each NAASF Committee and the Forest Legacy Program Managers in May and June. NAASF Committee members had an opportunity to provide input on the draft documents. This input was compiled and used to inform related discussion at the FRPC meeting in June. As a result of discussion and decisions made at the FRPC meeting and input received from NAASF Committee members, the State Assessment and Plan Core Team has developed the following regional-level documents:

- **NAASF Guide for State Assessments and Strategies**—includes national guidance, regional clarification, and an appendix on the geospatial data layers.
- **NAASF Framework for State Assessments**—provides a suggested framework for how the State Assessment report can be organized.

The FRPC also drafted responses on the (1) national guidance for State Assessments and Strategies and (2) S&PF Redesign performance indicators.

NAASF FRPC

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Key Points

- FRPC efforts to date have focused primarily on the minimum components, data, and framework for the State Assessment; work is needed to outline the components for the Resource Strategy.
- States should consider developing State Assessments and Strategies as important resource documents for the state forestry agency (beyond serving to meet Federal funding requirements). At a minimum, the State Assessment and Strategy should address forest-related issues of importance to the state and be linked to the three S&PF national themes (not driven by the geospatial data or the Redesign performance indicators).
- FRPC appreciates flexibility for the State Assessment and Strategy, but recognizes the desire to roll-up data for regional and national priority setting. In lieu of a more-standardized approach, NA can summarize key issues and points from the individual State Assessments and Strategies.
- Due to varying methods and data likely to be used in the geospatial analyses, individual state priority area maps should not be stitched together to create a regional priority area map (however, states are encouraged to work with neighboring states to identify multi-state priority areas). If desired, NA may utilize the S&PF National Assessment or other separate regional product for this purpose.

- FRPC recognizes that states will have information critical to forest resource conditions and trends which can not be adequately shown geospatially. A combination of qualitative, quantitative, and geospatial data should be used to identify key issues and priorities.
- More work is needed to address gaps in geospatial data available. The FRPC has formed a Geospatial Work Group to identify gaps and prioritize projects to support the long term geospatial needs.
- The identification of priority areas is important for focusing certain coordinated efforts, but is not intended to replace efforts by state forestry agencies to serve other areas of the state.
- We are awaiting S&PF policy or Farm Bill rule-making for clarity on the approval and updating process, including what existing statewide assessment/planning work will be considered sufficient and whether funding for State Assessments and Strategies will be appropriated (Farm Bill authorizes \$10 million annually through 2012).
- Baseline forest health data (surveys) are being compromised as funds are diverted for the S&PF Redesign competitively allocated projects.

FRPC Recommendations

1. NAASF request that the US Forest Service compile national and regional data relevant for State Assessments and provide in one easy to obtain location by early fall, 2008.
2. NAASF request that NA help facilitate the state's identification of "multi-state areas that are a regional priority" (as required by the Farm Bill).
3. NAASF request that the US Forest Service assist with high-level coordination with NFS and other Federal units (e.g., NRCS, AHPIS, F&WS) for required coordination with Federal land managers.
4. NAASF work with NASF to provide high-level coordination with other state agencies.
5. In recognition that states vary in their GIS capacity, NAASF should develop a process/procedure with NA, for NA assistance to some states in the selection and analyses of geospatial data.
6. NAASF has \$300,000 to support State Assessments and Resource Strategies (from a Forest Service grant given to NASF). 15% was reserved to support related travel as needed (e.g., for participation in FRPC meetings). FRPC recommends investing the remaining 85% to develop geospatial data layers that will benefit all states for future State Assessments. FRPC formed a work group to identify priorities and projects and requests a simple mechanism for NAASF approval for use of these funds.¹

Next Steps

1. NAASF replies on the national guidance for State Assessments and Strategies and proposed S&PF Redesign performance indicators are due July 21.
2. NAASF review and approve the NAASF Guide and Framework for State Assessments by August 4, 2008. FRPC share revised documents with NAASF committees and Forest Legacy Program Managers.
3. Urban Geospatial Analysis Work Group complete effort to identify data layers appropriate and available for identification of urban priority areas by October 1, 2008.
4. FRPC State Assessment and Plan Core Team draft a regional document with more details on the components for the Resource Strategies by February, 2009 and work with other NAASF Committees and Forest Legacy Program Managers to finalize by July 31, 2009.
5. FRPC Work Group on Geospatial Data to identify priorities by November 14, 2008 and initiate projects as soon as possible for investment of the NAASF \$300,000 funds over the next few years.
6. FRPC State Assessment and Plan Core Team continue to be an active reviewing body for the development of the Redesign Performance Indicators.

¹ MN recommended that some percent of the \$300,000 be used to support identification of multi-state priority areas.