

The New York Forest Owners Association

» POSITION STATEMENT «

Service Forestry

Situation Statement

Forests are one of New York State's most valuable natural resources and most forest land (72%) is owned by individuals and their families. However, the future of the forest resource is important to every citizen because of the benefits it provides. Forests protect all major water supplies in the state, help sequester carbon dioxide, and provide clean air, wildlife habitat, biological diversity, scenic landscapes and recreational opportunities. New York's forests are also part of the economic base for employment, tourism, and a diverse forest products industry. Private forest lands supply about half of the annual harvest of logs and pulpwood, supporting thousands of jobs at hundreds of firms in every part of the state. The recent interest in using wood chips for ethanol production may increase the importance of forests to help meet energy needs.*

Unfortunately, the future productivity of family owned forest land in New York is threatened by a number of adverse trends. These include:

- Fragmentation and loss of forest land to development
- Inability of forest uses to compete with real estate values
- Property taxes which are higher than the value of annual timber growth
- Invasive insect and disease outbreaks which destroy forest and shade trees
- The fact that most private landowners do not have a forest management plan or have a professional forester involved in the selection of timber for harvest
- The loss of local forest products manufacturing facilities which provided markets for logs and pulpwood to help cover the cost of forest management for forest health, wildlife, and other purposes.
- Local timber harvesting ordinances which impose high regulatory burdens on routine forest management activities.
- Timber theft and the difficulty in successfully prosecuting miscreants.

The New York Forest Owners Association believes that the state government has an interest in the future of privately owned forest land. This responsibility was formally recognized in 1946 with passage of the Forest Practice Act. This legislation was the impetus behind the employment of state service foresters to provide information and technical assistance to the 255,000 private landowners in New York State. Public service foresters encourage woodland owners to consider management approaches to help achieve ownership objectives while providing broad benefits to society. Service foresters of the Department of Environmental Conservation provide a bridge between private consulting foresters, industrial foresters, and logging contractors. They also provide initial public education and outreach, check on compliance for various cost-sharing and other forestry incentive programs, administer the Forest Tax Law (480a), and refer owners to private consulting foresters for detailed management work. The number of public foresters to serve private forest owners in New York State has significantly declined over the last several decades with less than 20 foresters at present to serve all private non-industrial forest owners in New York State.

Position

The New York Forest Owners Association urges the Governor, members of the Legislature, and the Commissioner to maintain and enhance the Department of Environmental Conservation's program of private forestry to ensure the sustainability of New York's finest natural resource. State government should build on over fifty years of effort and encourage a stewardship ethic on privately owned forest land through;

- Incentive based motivation rather than regulatory approaches, and
- Education that demonstrates the compatibility of meeting the landowner's interests and the public benefits provided by private forest land, and
- Technical assistance that compliments and encourages the use of forest management services that are available

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through private consulting foresters and the forest products industry, and

- Access to the latest science and technical information related to forest land management, and
- Monitoring and evaluation of the service forestry program on a regular basis in order to show how the program is meeting stated goals and objectives and to improve its effectiveness, and
- Sufficient staffing levels of well qualified foresters to achieve these goals and objectives.

*Highlights from *The Economic Importance of New York's Forests*, Northeast State Foresters Association - 2004

- New York covers 30.2 million acres. 18.5 million acres are forested - 61% of the state
- Forest-based manufacturing provided \$7.4 billion in value of shipments
- Forest based recreation and tourism expenditures contributed \$1.6 billion
- Sales of Christmas trees, wreaths, maple syrup, and ginseng contribute \$24 million
- Each 1,000 acres of forestland supports 2.6 manufacturing jobs and .78 forest related recreation and tourism jobs