

# The New York Forest Owners Association

## » POSITION STATEMENT «

### Forests as Carbon Offset Projects

Among the many benefits that forests provide, there is growing appreciation for their role as absorbers of greenhouse gasses. The biomass in forests is a vast repository of carbon that helps balance the carbon cycle on which life depends.

An industrialized society and the use of fossil fuels have been identified as major causes of the increased rate of carbon buildup in the atmosphere that contributes to climate change. A pragmatic and economical component of a solution recognizes the contribution of forests to our global carbon cycle. Indeed, one of New York's assets in this situation is its 18 million acres of forest land. By encouraging owners to manage their woodlands for robust growth, forests will continue to provide not only carbon sequestration, but wood products and many other benefits. These include fish and wildlife habitat, biodiversity, clean water and recreation opportunities. Active management to encourage healthy and vigorous forests intensifies these benefits. Without well managed forests, we could lose not only the carbon battle -- but most of the other benefits our forests provide.

Mechanisms are being developed that allow industrialized nations and major greenhouse gas generators to offset their carbon emissions by paying woodland owners to establish and maintain healthy forests, thereby "sequestering," or storing, vast amounts of carbon. Projects such as this are an attractive prospect to many who believe that conservation of forests will be difficult unless the environmental benefits they provide are, like other services for society, properly valued through payment schemes.

NYFOA supports New York's continued participation in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) with other states in the region and urges all levels of government in New York to recognize that:

- *Woodlands help mitigate greenhouse gas emissions.*
- *85% of forest land in NYS is owned by private individuals.*
- *The increasing cost of owning forest land has resulted in sales for development purposes which often removes much of the previous tree cover.*
- *Forests managed to encourage active tree growth and abundant reproduction store more carbon than in forests not having deliberate intervention.*
- *Paying woodland owners to use best management practices in their forests continues economic, environmental and societal benefits of woodlands and adds balancing the carbon budget to the list.*
- *Initiation and support of carbon offset programs are vital to our way of life and perhaps life itself.*