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To: "dwear@fs.fed.us" <dwear@fs.fed.us>, "jgreis@fs.fed.us" <jgreis@fs.fed.us>
cc:
Subject: SAF comments

Gentlemen,

Thanks for such a great report. I thought I'd send these comments to you directly.

Michael Goergen

February 27, 2002

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David Wear, Co-Leader

John Greis, Co-Leader

Southern Forest Resource Assessment

USDA Forest Service

1720 Peachtree Rd. NW

Atlanta, GA 30309

Dear Dave and John:

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to provide comments regarding the content of the Southern Forest Resource Assessment (SFRA). The report is comprehensive, science based, and provides clear insight to the future of our Southern Forests.

The Society of American Foresters (SAF) has long advocated and agrees with many of the report's findings. Clearly, urban sprawl and development continue to be major threats to the integrity of southern forests.

We are also pleased in the report's findings regarding the need for professional forestry expertise. Forest landowners will benefit from professional forestry advice, and that advice ensures the long-term sustainability of the forest resource. Some of the most important factors in keeping southern forests healthy and abundant will be maintaining the options of forest management, developing and enhancing economic opportunities for a host of forest products, and delivering sound professional advice.

Various changes in the amounts and acreages of forest types will continue into the future, as they have occurred in the past, all in a context of variably intensive forest management. Greater landowner education and assistance will be necessary to ensure that the varying landowner goals and societal objectives are met.

We recognize your desire to have specific comments on specific issues in the report. Please note that in addition to the comments we offer here, many of our members have provided substantive comments on the report in their areas of expertise. We recognize that you have no desire to respond to multiple comments on the same subject, as this is not a popularity contest but a scientific review. It is in that spirit that we offer these specific comments not previously offered by members of the Society of American Foresters.

The Executive Summary states "results will be used to help identify subregions within the South that could need additional analysis at a finer scale." Rather than undertaking any subregional analyses, we hope the Forest Service will give complete consideration to the full breadth of forest research needs including full implementation of the Forest Inventory and Analysis program and those issues described as "Scientific Uncertainties." The full range of all research priorities should be reassessed considering long-term trends and better use of existing funding. The SAF advocates public and private funding of research activities that address natural resource concerns and believes knowledge based on sound science is vital for resolving conflicts about forest policy and management.

AQUA-4 Section 6. This section, while recognizing the complications involved in effectively implementing Best Management Practices (BMPs), inadequately addresses the role professional foresters play in present current information about BMPs and ensuring that private landowners successfully implement BMPs.

SOCIO-2 Section 6. This section recognizes the potential roles of foresters in managing southern forests for both economic and non-economic values. It omits a discussion as to how, in a framework of largely private land, such goals may be achieved. Nor does it reflect the ethical obligations of professional foresters to manage not only for sustainable forests, but also for the management goals of the landowner. Though as a profession we recognize that we serve society-at-large and need to advocate for non-market forest outputs we also serve landowners and their interests. This chapter is overly simplistic in its discussion of how this delicate balance works in practice.

SOCIO-3 Section 9.5 This section lacks an adequate discussion of the role that professional foresters play in influencing and implementing forestry regulations, and in developing alternatives to the increasing number of new forestry regulations.

SOCIO-4 Section 5.5. This section, though recognizing that knowledge of management options can influence the nature of private forest management, inadequately addresses the role professional foresters can play in providing that knowledge or in ensuring that landowner objectives are met.

TERRA-4 Section 5.6. This section, while clearly describing the potential wildlife benefits of active forest management, inadequately addresses the role played by professional foresters in formulating silvicultural treatments and in ensuring regulatory compliance to meet such objectives.

TERRA-5 Section 4. While this section recognizes the role that private forest land can play in providing species habitat, the educational efforts necessary to meet that goal, and the potential need for management plans, it inadequately addresses the role that professional foresters play in all those arenas.

The SFRA is a valuable study that confirms the important role of professional resource managers in achieving and continuing the sustainable management of our southern forests. We thank you for all your hard work.

Sincerely,

David Wm. Smith

President

Society of American Foresters