



Survey of NAFO Members' Research Priorities

A Proposal by the National Association of University Forest Resources Programs

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Why Survey NAFO Members?

NAFO members should have a clear voice in how hundreds of millions of dollars of federal funds are spent for forestry research each year. Forestry research delivers solutions to key challenges that relate directly to forest ownership, from biological invasions of insects, diseases and plants, to market-based issues of international competitiveness, trade, and policy.

In agriculture, producers and processors of corn, wheat, beef, dairy, poultry and many other products are heavily involved in federal research priorities. In forestry research, key players currently include The Nature Conservancy, the National Association of State Foresters, the Sierra Club, the Forest Landowners Association, and the American Forest Foundation.

At one time, forest industry represented the interests of large forest landowners in federal forestry research priorities. Since the transition of millions of acres of forestland to TIMOs, RE-ITs, and other ownership structures, however, research needs and priorities for relatively large acreages in private ownership are not effectively considered in how hundreds of millions of dollars are spent by federal agencies and universities.

Background on Federal Spending for Forestry Research in USDA

Federal funds administered through USDA pay for forestry research in three primary programs:

- U.S. Forest Service research (~\$300 million/year);
- University research through the McIntire-Stennis program (~\$32 million/year); and
- the National Institute of Food and Agriculture's (NIFA) competitive grants program. Within NIFA, the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) allows forestry researchers to compete with other agricultural scientists, with a funding pool of ~\$260 million/year.

Forestry research funds administered through USDA are highly leveraged with funds from state and private sources, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The USDA Forestry Research Advisory Council (FRAC) advises the Secretary of Agriculture on U.S. Forest Service research, the McIntire-Stennis program, and on forestry research coordination among state and federal agencies, universities, forest industries, and NGOs. FRAC includes representatives from universities, forest-based industries, private landowners, and other key stakeholder groups.

Survey Process

The National Association of University Forest Resources Programs (NAUFRP) offers NAFO an opportunity to develop and communicate members' priorities for forestry research at regional and national levels, in the near term and in the longer term. For example, the four questions below may serve as a beginning round in the survey of NAFO members:

1. What are the forestry resource or technology research priorities in the near term (next 5 years) for your region?
2. What are the forestry resource or technology research priorities in the long term (more than 5 years) for your region?
3. What are the forestry resource or technology research priorities in the near term (next 5 years) for the U.S.?
4. What are the forestry resource or technology research priorities in the long term (more than 5 years) for the U.S.?

Responses to the initial round of questions will be summarized, and the summary will be sent to NAFO members to revise or to confirm in terms of both content and priority. We estimate that each round of the survey will take less than 20 minutes to reply.

Confidentiality will be strictly maintained for all individual responses to the survey. Only aggregate findings will be distributed. Access to the raw survey data will only be made available under terms specified by NAFO.

Survey Outcomes

NAUFRP will summarize survey results in a format that will be usable for NAFO, as well as for USDA agencies and universities. Specific outcomes for the survey include:

- the top five short term (< 5 years) and long term (> 5 years) research goals of NAFO members by region and nationally;
- a report summarizing the survey process and various opportunities to advocate for shared priorities with NIFA, the U.S. Forest Service, and other federal agencies and organizations, both directly with congressional delegations and indirectly through legislation such as the Farm Bill; and
- a comparison and alignment of NAFO's research priorities with McIntire-Stennis priorities and the Board of Natural Resources roadmap prepared by the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities.

Understanding and communicating the research priorities of NAFO members within NAUFRP institutions will help researchers focus on key issues, and will also help justify proposed research projects in competitive funding processes.

NAUFRP will also be in a strong position to present NAFO members with important science-based findings, and to report on the progress being made on high priority issues through research at regional and national levels.