Council of Western State Foresters
Priority Programs
FY 2008

Our nation's forests and the benefits they provide are at risk. These benefits such as: clean and abundant water, wood products, habitat for plants and animals, rural community stability, energy self-sufficiency, and access for recreation and spiritual renewal are essential to the quality of life for all Americans. Our forests and these benefits are diminishing due to: large-scale wildfires, insect and disease outbreaks and outdated tax policies and assistance programs. The following programs, when adequately funded can help prevent the loss and devastation of our nation's forests.

State Fire Assistance – #1 Funding Priority

State Fire Assistance (SFA) provides crucial financial and technical assistance to states and local fire departments for wildland fire management. SFA helps to ensure preparedness of local resources, which serve as the first line of defense for forests and communities. These fire fighting resources function as both "first responders" for local incidents and as "ready reserves" for large federally-managed catastrophic fires. Improved response efficiency provided through State Fire Assistance funding is critical to reducing fire size and subsequent suppression costs, which have skyrocketed of late, reaching over $1 billion in four of the last seven years.

The Waterfall Fire threatened homes near Carson City, Nevada in 2004

Further, SFA is the only federal program tailored to provide funding for fuel reduction work on non-federal lands, regardless of their proximity to federal lands. It is also one of the few programs that help communities develop Community Wildfire Protection Plans, which are an important component of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act. SFA also helps prepare states for dealing with non-fire emergencies, such as hurricane recovery and other all-hazard events.

The National Association of State Foresters estimates that funding for FY 2008 must be increased to $145 million to ensure successful wildland fire preparedness and management across the landscape. This funding level would be offset by federal suppression cost savings derived from the efficiency of state and local first responders in initial attack. SFA improves the local capacity to fight fire as federal funds through SFA are matched by states and other sources that often exceed the required match amount. Working in concert with SFA, Volunteer Fire Assistance and Rural Fire Assistance funds aid in initial attack for a higher fire containment success which reduces overall federal fire costs.

Forest Stewardship Program

The Forest Stewardship Program is the primary program for promoting sustainable forest management practices on family-owned forestlands. Since its inception in 1991, over 272,677 Stewardship Plans have been written covering over 31.2 million acres. Private forestlands provide the public with an array of benefits including increased water quality, wildlife habitat, carbon sequestration, and wood products. The CWSF supports appropriating $45 million for continued Forest Stewardship planning to reflect priorities as established under the Spatial Analysis Project. This proposed appropriation amount also considers the recent USFS work on Open Space Conservation, one of former Chief Bosworth's four threats.

Urban and Community Forestry Program

The Urban and Community Forestry program provides technical and financial assistance to promote the stewardship of urban and community trees and forest resources. The program leverages existing local efforts that help urban areas and rural communities manage, maintain, and improve their tree cover and green spaces. These efforts reduce energy consumption, create healthier human environments, and provide buffers to reduce flooding.

The CWSF supports increasing FY 2008 funding to $36 million in order to better address the funding needs of the growing applications for the Urban and Community Forestry programs that include the stewardship of urban natural resources where 80 percent of the nation lives.

Research finds that people spend more money at shopping centers with treed landscapes. Cities reap many benefits from urban forests.

Cooperative Forest Health Program

The Cooperative Forest Health program provides funding assistance for forest health issues on non-federal forestland. Cooperative Forest Health activities include prevention, detection, and suppression of damaging insects, diseases, and plants. Every year, the American public loses billions of dollars to damage by invasive species to cover the cost of insect and disease detection and control. This program assists in the development and application of new technologies that mitigate these forest health concerns and reduce public expenses.

The CWSF supports the National Association of State Foresters recommendation of $66 million. Additionally, the Western Forestry Leadership Coalition (WFLC) recently examined western needs related to the catastrophic bark beetle infestation and produced the *Western Bark Beetle Assessment: A Framework for Cooperative Forest Stewardship (www.wflcweb.org/infomaterials/reports.php)*. Based on this report, the CWSF believes that $32 million/year is necessary to adequately address the 2.4 million priority acres identified within the Plan.

The Council of Western State Foresters represents the State and Island Forestry Agencies in the seventeen western states and six Pacific Island territories and commonwealths of the United States whose responsibilities include wildfire and forest health protection services to non-industrial private forest landowners. For more in formation please visit www.westernstateforesters.org