

Pacific Islands Committee (PIC)
Western Forestry Leadership Coalition/Council of Western State Foresters'
Update on Freely Associated States Forestry Assistance

September 11, 2007

Please contact Caitlyn Peel, CWSF Governmental Affairs Director, for more information on the below issue: 303-445-4363: cpeel@colostate.edu.

Issue: The Freely Associated States (FAS) do not currently receive forestry assistance under the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978 (CFAA). When the Trust Territories of the Pacific Islands (TTPI) trusteeship agreements were terminated in 1990, the island states of the Republic of Palau, the Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of the Marshall Islands began to operate under a Compact of Free Association Agreement. Although not the intention of the change in language, the Compact of Free Association Agreement had an impact on the eligibility for funding from CFAA. The CFAA only specifies the TTPI, not individual islands. The result is that there are several islands that are no longer eligible to receive forestry-related assistance through the CFAA except where the CFAA authorizes international assistance.

The Council of Western State Foresters (CWSF) has been working to promote the inclusion of language in the Forestry Title of the 2007 Farm Bill to resolve this issue. The new language would revise the definition of "United States" and "State" within the CFAA to include all FAS (former TTPI) as eligible for financial and technical assistance.

House

The 2007 Farm Bill approved by the House on July 27, 2007 included the provision that would restore forestry assistance under the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978 to the Freely Associated States (FAS).

Congresswoman Bordallo (D-Guam) and Congressman Faleomavaega (D-American Samoa) sent a letter requesting this definitional change be included in the 2007 Farm Bill. This letter was accompanied by letters of support from NASF and USDA. The CWSF provided information on the benefits of this change to the House Agriculture staff. The House Farm Bill language is available at <http://agriculture.house.gov/inside/2007FarmBill.html>. The "bill text" link provides the FAS language on pages 546-547.

Senate

The draft Forestry Title (not yet released to the public) of the Senate's 2007 Farm Bill also includes the provision to restore forestry assistance to the FAS. The provision is identical to the provision approved by the House of Representatives.

The Senate has not yet begun their discussion of the 2007 Farm Bill and the earliest that the Senate Agriculture Committee is expected to meet on this issue is October 2007. When the Senate Agriculture Committee Chairman's mark of the 2007 Farm Bill is released to the public, the CWSF will review the document to be sure the current draft language has carried over into the document that the Senate Agriculture Committee will mark-up.

Conclusion

The PIC will continue to receive email updates as the Senate approval process of the 2007 Farm Bill progresses. Please forward any information that you receive on this issue to the CWSF for review and incorporation in on-going updates.