



COUNCIL OF FOREST RESOURCE ORGANIZATIONS

*Landowners, Forest Products Industry, and Professional Foresters
Working Together to Improve New York's Forest Resources*

The Healthy Forests Agenda 2009 (adopted Jan. 20, 2009)

A four-point program to maintain the size, health and productivity of New York's forests.

New York's 18.5 million acres of forest land are in crisis, their future imperiled by economic and ecological threats. Traditional markets are changing; subdivision and development threaten wildlife, watersheds, clean air, recreational values and economic productivity; invasive pests endanger valuable species. These difficulties threaten our forests' ability to respond to modern needs for new energy sources and relief from the effects of climate change. They also are damaging the economic sustainability and health of many rural communities. Therefore, the Council of Forest Resource Organizations urges the following prompt executive and legislative actions:

I. Destructive invasive species threaten to destroy NYS's forests. Expand State efforts to combat invasive species by allocating more resources for research on, and assistance to, private forest lands. Healthy private forest lands contribute more than \$40 million annually to the State's economy and provide important public benefits such as clean water, soil stability, and wildlife habitats.

- The NYS Invasive Species Advisory Committee, the NYS Invasive Species Council, and the 10 PRISMs should recognize the importance of invasive forest insects, plants and diseases in prioritizing inventory and eradication efforts statewide; and continue to assure active involvement of forestry interests.
- Fully fund DEC's new Office of Invasive Species and its efforts to craft an integrated map that pinpoints invasives in and near New York, create an information clearinghouse for invasives and work with the federal government, and plan and implement a more effective emergency response system.
- Accelerate Asian Long-Horned Beetle survey and eradication efforts in quarantine areas of New York City and Long Island; containment of this pest is vital to the survival of the many industries, ranging from maple syrup to furniture, that depend on New York's vast and valuable maple woodlands.
- Reinforce efforts to contain the spread of known invasives, such as the Emerald Ash Borer, which threatens another of the state's most valuable and famous hardwood species.
- Request that federal agency partners increase monitoring and inspections for invasives at New York's ports and borders.

II. Ease the economic strain of increasing, burdensome taxes on forest owners. Such taxes encourage early harvests and subdivision, thus preventing sustainable management of forest resources and often disrupting wildlife and important non-timber plant species.

- Create a new refundable income tax credit to offset property taxes on forest ownership.
- Eliminate the so-called "Tree Tax" which is applied by local assessors under the guidance of the State Office of Real Property Tax Services.
- Expand the reimbursement to towns for revenues "lost" through RPTL 480A.
- Preserve the practice that was established in 1886 of maintaining comparability of tax payments on Forest Preserve Lands with those on private land.

AFFILIATED ORGANIZATIONS

Adirondack Landowners Association • Catskill Forest Association • Catskill Landowners Association • Empire State Forest Products Association
• NY Forest Owners Association • NY Society of American Foresters • NYS Farm Bureau • NYS Maple Producers Association •
NYS Timber Producers • NYS Tree Farm • Tug Hill Resources Investment for Tomorrow (THRIFT)

III. Traditional and new markets for forest products can provide greater employment and revenues than are currently realized. Increase the economic contributions of New York's forest resource through focused state actions. Encourage good management of forest lands and grow their role in the state's economy by actively encouraging the exploitation of new markets, particularly wood energy and biofuels, and encouraging investment in the necessary infrastructure.

- The Department of Agriculture and Markets, NYS DEC, and Empire State Development should work cooperatively to support forest products manufacturers through promotion, market development and technical assistance.
- Expand the scope of study in NYSERDA's recent RFP for a Renewable Fuels Roadmap and Sustainable biomass Feedstock Study that seeks to address critical issues related to energy alternatives in New York. Currently, the RFP seeks to study only biomass-based liquid fuels ("biofuels") as a potential alternative energy technology utilizing forest derived biomass. There are other proven biomass-based energy alternatives (e.g.--heat, co-generation, power production) with much greater potential to be implemented in the coming decade.
- NYSERDA and the PSC should work to expand the Renewable Portfolio Standard to include "biomass" as an eligible Tier II Customer Sited fuel.
- Limit proposed restrictions on existing or new outdoor wood boilers that provide affordable heat and hot water for rural families.
- The Attorney General and DEC must vigorously enforce laws governing timber theft. Educational programs need to be continued and expanded.
- Provide public incentives - such as expedite review of permissible activities for participants - that recognize landowner and industry investments in forest certification programs such as the Tree Farm System, the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI).
- DOT should not impose routing restrictions on log trucks.

IV. Sequestration of atmospheric carbon has been identified as a part of the solution to global climate change. Well-managed forests are effective in removing greenhouse gases from the atmosphere and sequestering them for many years. Reward good forest management and encourage forest owners to combat the effects of climate change.

- The Governor and DEC's Office of Climate Change need to accept and advocate for the inclusion of forestry and forest management as an offset strategy in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative and to advocate for the establishment of a national cap-and-trade system to limit and/or offset the production of greenhouse gases.
- Income from the sale of carbon credits from managed forest lands should be exempt from state and local taxes. As there is no current revenue from carbon trading, there will be no net effect on state revenues and the State will encourage viable solutions to climate change.

A F F I L I A T E D O R G A N I Z A T I O N S

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