



### **Position Statement of the Kentucky/Tennessee Chapter of the Society of American Foresters Regarding: Reduction in Forest Management Staff in the Tennessee Department of Forestry**

The Society of American Foresters (SAF) promotes science-based forest management. With a forest resource as vast, varied and valuable as that which is held by Tennessee's private landowners, it is the position of the **Kentucky/Tennessee Chapter of SAF** that any significant lowering of the forest management services provided by the State of Tennessee would be detrimental to the long-term sustainability of this natural resource and the amenities that it supports. In Tennessee, 11 million acres of forest land, or 79% of all forest lands, are owned by an estimated 530,000 non-industrial private landowners (Butler 2008). Typically these landowners are not well-versed in forest management science. Without technical help, they often default to no management or the application of poor practices, especially at harvest. If landowners lack efficient access to, or they are economically deterred from, seeking adequate and effective forest management advice, then forest management and planning will suffer. Forests are a long term enterprise. Poor practices applied in the short term have lasting affects that can be catastrophic and will accrue to inhibit the sustainability of Tennessee's forest. A significant decrease in TDF staffing will lead to a greater likelihood of poor forest management of Tennessee's privately held forest, and a potential loss of access to federal cost share programs for landowners.

Forest industry is very important to the economic vitality of Tennessee. Menard, et.al. 2003, noted that the forestry sector accounts for \$22.8 billion (5.9 percent) of the state's \$388.2 billion economy. That study reported that the workforce in this sector directly employed 58,900 people, including those in logging, pulp/paper/sawmills, and forestry. When added to secondary and supplier industries, employment exceeds 148,000 workers. The primary industries account for 23.6 percent of the forestry workforce, while the secondary industries employ 76.4 percent. A new study conducted by Forest2Market, Inc., a consulting firm located in Charlotte, N.C., showed that private, working forests generate an average GNP of \$277,000 per 1000 acres whereas, in comparison, public forests generate \$41,000 per 1000 acres. These forests provide family waged jobs, a strong tax base and the economic foundation for the forest products industry.

Approximately 90% of Tennessee's forest land is occupied by hardwoods, a relatively complex resource that requires particularly knowledgeable management. Tennessee's forest lands provide wildlife, scenic, recreational, carbon sequestration and timber values. Poor management practices contribute to the degradation of these values and, with any devaluation of the forest, increase tendencies for forest land to be utilized for alternative uses, often developed in such a way that the land will not or cannot be returned to a forested condition.

Forest pathogens, such as disease or the southern pine beetle, along with potential, destructive invaders into the State, like the gypsy moth and emerald ash borer, threaten Tennessee's forests. Technical help is required to keep private landowners aware of such threats and what to do when they strike.

Forest certification is an important part of the competitive status of Tennessee's forests and the various certification programs are becoming increasingly vital as ways to keep markets open. The American Tree Farm System is one certification program and it has been supported by Tennessee Division of Forestry (TDF) with inspections to re-certify individual landowners. In a recent study 56% of the forest landowners say they received forestry advice. Forest landowners indicated they were more trusting of TDF foresters to certify their forests. Twenty-six percent of these landowners had participated in government cost share assistance programs (Mercker 2006). With the assistance of TDF foresters, approximately \$700,000 was acquired for landowners through cost share programs in 2009.

Therefore, the Kentucky/Tennessee Chapter of the Society of American Foresters stands opposed to the potential loss of TDF positions. Such action will result in potentially irreversible harm to the sustainability of the state's forest resources and to the detriment of the states private forest landowners and citizens at large.