



POLICY STATEMENT

“FORESTS: A STRATEGIC NATURAL RESOURCE FOR THE NEW ECONOMY”

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Forests represent a major unrealized natural resource to help the U.S. increase its national security by reducing our dependence on foreign oil, and to help the U.S. fight climate change. It will be much cheaper to invest in our forests today to promote the diverse energy and climate change services they provide for free, than it will be to fight future wars over energy or greenhouse gas emissions. Like no other natural resource of this nation, forests provide a low cost opportunity to achieve the objectives of creating a new economy that is sustainable, healthful, and equitable.

It is clear that the US needs to transition from a 21st century to a new economy for the 21st century. Key elements of the new economy are:

- For national security, be less dependent on fossil fuels, particularly foreign oil;
- Slow down climate change, and be less dependent on domestic and foreign fossil fuels;
- Reduce unnecessary losses to natural or manmade catastrophes; and
- Provide a decent living for citizens of rural, as well as urban and suburban areas.

Forests can contribute to the new economy in a number of different ways, but these contributions must be developed – realizing them will require conscious decisions and a serious commitment. Forests also counteract the climate change. U.S. forestland sequesters about 13% of all U.S. greenhouse gas emissions each year. To capitalize on the potential forests offer to our national security and well-being we need to:

- Establish a national cap-and-trade program for carbon emissions that includes forestry offset projects, and funding for keeping forests as forests, and for forest management that sequesters more carbon onsite and in wood products.
- Establish: first, keeping forests as forests; and secondly, achieving sustainable management, as our national policy. Keeping forests as forests can be accomplished through the acquisition of lands or conservation easements and by channeling growth to urban and suburban areas, rather than sprawl. Sustainability embraces a three-pronged approach to forest management, which considers and protects ecological, social, and economic values. The principles of sustainability have been clearly articulated in international agreements (i.e., the Santiago Declaration) signed by the US.
- Promote the use of wood as a construction material and for other uses as well, whenever wood can be shown to have lower life cycle emissions of CO₂ and other environmental contaminants, when compared with alternative materials.
- Increase the use of woody biomass for heat and fuel – particularly biomass from forests which are overstocked or of low quality. This initiative can – in addition to reducing the



use of fossil fuels by displacing them with CO₂ neutral woody biomass – reduce fire danger, avoid higher CO₂ emissions from wildfires, and improve local economies.

- Land developers should be required to minimize the carbon emissions from land conversion and to mitigate or offset unavoidable impacts.
- Break the current gridlock over the management of our National Forests by:
 - Reinstating the roadless area rule instituted under the Clinton Administration;
 - Putting old growth timber stands off limits to timber harvesting; and
 - Expediting timber harvest in other areas of our National Forests to provide for our wood needs.
- Revitalize the forestry partnership with the states – particularly developing new mechanisms to reach family forest landowners, who own approximately two-thirds of the nation's forests.
- Grow the markets for all the goods and services forests can provide, including ecosystem services such as provision of clean water and sequestration of CO₂. Diverse and robust markets for forest products and services will be important for keeping forests as forest.

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