

NEFA Strategic Plan Draft

2008-2013

Adopted 9/24/08

Introduction

The North East *State* Foresters Association (NEFA) is the state foresters of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont and New York cooperating with the USDA Forest Service State and Private Forestry. NEFA was formed in the 1980s and has focused its work in this four-state region on areas where the missions of the individual state forestry agencies and State and Private Forestry meet and where joint action yields greater benefits to the forests of the region and the people who care about these forests than action by any individual state.

A strategic plan was originally adopted by NEFA in the mid-1990s and this was updated and revised several times leading to this plan. In 2007, in an effort to re-position NEFA and better focus its efforts on the most important issues for the region consistent with USDA Forest Service direction, among others, a USDA Forest Service grant was secured and work on new strategic positioning began. These efforts and this new strategic plan are designed to better allow NEFA to secure public and private funds for its work.

Further, as the founder and lead entity in the development of the Northern Forest Lands Council 10th Anniversary Forum, NEFA was the leader in the NFLC 10th's successful outcome. The NFLC 10th effort formed the basis for the Sustainable Economy Initiative. In this strategic re-positioning, NEFA is focusing on the two recommendations from the Forum's final report that others have not focused on (i.e):

- Continue public and private investment in the conservation and forest stewardship efforts catalyzed by the work of the original Northern Forest Lands Council.
- Support private forest landowners in practicing sustainable forest management and good stewardship while encouraging public access to private land for recreational purposes.¹

The success of the 10th anniversary forum is indicative of what NEFA is capable of and this strategic plan builds on those efforts.

NEFA recognizes that this plan will be implemented on at least two levels: information gathering that supports the core goals and then advocating for the goals in order to change

¹ Northern Forest Lands Council 10th Anniversary Forum Final Report April 25, 2005

public policy or secure funding. NEFA is a small organization that has and can continue to produce good information while not generally being the lead action organization that carries out the actual activity that leads to reaching the goal. NEFA's role in advocacy will be accomplished through building partnerships, securing resources, and assisting in advocacy at the right time and place for NEFA. This dual strategic approach allows NEFA to participate in accomplishing the substantial goals identified in this plan.

Mission

The Mission of NEFA is to keep the region's forests as forests. This will be accomplished through, and NEFA will focus its attention on, two areas toward that end:

- *Permanent land conservation²; and*
- *Sustainable forestry.*

Goals

1. Support land conservation efforts for the purpose of conserving sufficient forestland to: provide fiber for wood-using manufacturing mills and wood energy plants, biodiversity conservation, ecosystem services and public values. NEFA accomplishes this goal by working with organizations to develop regional targets for land conservation.

Strategies

- a. Determine how much forestland we need for wood sourcing and biodiversity conservation.
- b. Develop a regional forest land conservation plan that identifies the priority lands in the Northern Forest states for permanent land conservation. This plan should build on existing plans developed by the four states, private land conservation groups and others.
- c. Advocate for federal and state funding of land conservation efforts in support of permanently conserving the lands identified in the regional plan referenced above.
- d. Develop a predictive model that determines when forest land in the NEFA region is most vulnerable to land conversion.
- e. Investigate the extent to which productive forest land is being changed or lost to other uses, and potential impacts in the NEFA states. Assess the effectiveness of tools to address this change and loss.

² Permanent land conservation includes actions by government and private sector NGO's with land conservation missions.

2. Support sound stewardship of the forests of the NEFA region.

Strategies

- a. Research additional income streams for forest landowners that encourage long-term management and stewardship of private forests in the region.
- b. Encourage stewardship of private forestland in the region through incentives, education and other means.
- c. Support other land conservation/stewardship initiatives such as federal tax policy that encourages intergenerational transfers of forest ownership to keep forestland parcels intact and other efforts that are mutually beneficial among the NEFA states.
- d. Support efforts of identifying 'priority' stewardship areas through the USDA Forest Service SAP process and focus assistance to promote sustainable forestry in areas of need.
- e. Advocate for maintaining and diversifying markets to encourage sustainable forestry.
- f. Encourage forest certification for forestland in the region.
- g. Advocate for maintaining and improving forest health.

3. Provide timely, credibly regional information of consistently high quality, and support applied research that will enhance the health, productivity, and sustainability of forests across the NEFA region in order to reach public officials, forest industry, environmental groups, private forest landowners, and other interested members of the public.

Strategies

- a. Develop data on forest resources of regional significance in the NEFA area.
- b. Promote the development and standardization of new forest data sets throughout the region such as biodiversity, forest health, landowner attitudes and practices and wood flow.

Note: The purpose of completing a and b is to provide for data that is comparable and compatible among states.

4. Provide a forum for the NEFA states for presentation and discussion of current resource issues and trends to reduce duplication, share experiences, attract and focus resources, and benefit from the strength of multi-state initiatives and partnerships where appropriate.

- a. Advocate for federal Programs and other funding which support the wise stewardship of private and state lands in addressing critical forest issues in the region.
- b. Use NEFA to provide for a regional context for state and local decision making.
- c. Coordinate implementation of the relevant recommendations from the Sustainable Economy Initiative.
- d. Coordinate the efforts of the governors on issues of importance to NEFA.
- e. Communicate with key partners and constituents on issues of importance to NEFA and forests of the region.

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