

Testimony by Michael T. Goergen Jr.
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Society of American Foresters
House of Representatives Committee on Agriculture,
Subcommittee on Conservation, Energy, and Forestry
May 18, 2012

Good morning Chairman and members of the Subcommittee. My name is Michael Goergen, and I am the Executive Vice President and CEO of the Society of American Foresters (SAF). I am here today to testify on behalf of our 12,000 members.

As the largest professional society for foresters in the world, SAF believes in sound management and stewardship of the nation's public and private forests. Funding for several of our priority programs and tools are contained within the Agriculture Reform, Food, and Jobs Act of 2012 (Farm Bill), and are particularly important to maintaining and improving our nation's forested landscapes. Though only a small section of the total Farm Bill, the forestry programs and funding provide the ability to sustain health forests and provide for future generations. We also value the conservation title and the many programs that provide forestry solutions for landowners and the environment.

We would like to thank the Subcommittee for the opportunity to testify today, and for your continued support of forestry in the US. There are currently 751 million acres of forests in the US today; roughly the same as 100 years ago shortly after the founding of SAF. While the extent of our forests is a positive result of attention given these lands owned by many, private and public forests are subject to pressures from wildfires, insects, disease, invasive species, changing climates, development market access, and more. At the same time, people are relying on forests more and more for clean water and air, recreational opportunities, hunting, fishing, forest products, and scenic values.

SAF understands the budget pressures that continue to dominate the decisions and funding priorities facing Congress and the Nation. We believe the budget cuts that this Committee identified during the Super Committee process, though not without impact, represent a reasonable approach to address the current fiscal situation, and we urge that if further reductions are made, that the conservation and forestry programs are not cut disproportionately to other Farm Bill programs. To that end, we would like to focus our testimony on several priority areas even though there are many more that we will not discuss today. Our testimony will focus on:

- **Permanent Reauthorization of the Stewardship Contracting Authority**
- **Acceleration of Bark Beetle Mitigation Efforts**
- **SAF 2012 Farm Bill Recommendations**

Stewardship Contracting Authority

Across the country, our forests are reaching a critical threshold that, if passed, could lead to many negative impacts including: continued closures of established infrastructure; job losses to rural communities; pressure of invasive species; expanded areas of insects and disease; overstocked stands; and increased risk of wildfire. This will devastate watersheds and

landscapes, and lead to costly repairs to protect our water supply, public safety, and treatments to restore our forested lands.

One of the tools utilized by the US Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management to increase economic opportunity and jobs in rural communities, restore and maintain healthy forest ecosystems, and provide for other services that benefit National Forests and all that depend on them is the Stewardship Contracting Authority. First enacted as a successful pilot program in the FY1999 Interior Appropriations Bill and then reauthorized in 2003 as part of the Omnibus Appropriations bill, the current authority will expire in 2013. Under Section 323 of Public Law 108-7, the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management have the authority to enter into stewardship agreements on federal lands to achieve landscape-scale management goals at minimal costs. We ask that Congress permanently reauthorize this important forest management contracting tool.

Unique to stewardship contracting is the ability to keep receipts and revenue obtained from timber treatments and other assets to apply to management goals and treatments that would not otherwise pay for themselves. This practice is called trading goods for services, and the tool allows any receipts retained to be available without further appropriation.¹ Land management goals of a project may include, among other things²:

1. Road and trail maintenance or obligation to restore or maintain water quality;
2. soil productivity, habitat for wildlife and fisheries, or other resource values;
3. setting of prescribed fires to improve the composition, structure, condition, and health of stands or to improve wildlife habitat;
4. removing vegetation or other activities to promote healthy forest stands, reduce fire hazards, or achieve other land management objectives;
5. watershed restoration and maintenance;
6. restoration and maintenance of wildlife and fish habitat; and
7. control of noxious and exotic weeds and reestablishing native plant species.

To date, the authority has encouraged and allowed local, state, and federal collaborative efforts among interested stakeholders to work towards restoring communities and forests at risk. Stewardship contracting also allows for other factors to be evaluated (i.e. past performance, training, etc.) when selecting contractors for the stewardship project. From 2006 to 2011 approximately 900 Stewardship contracts, which treated 545,625 acres, were awarded, including 208 contracts in 2011.³

SAF strongly supports the reauthorization of this important tool and we ask that the House Agriculture Committee include permanent reauthorization of Stewardship Contracting, without

¹ US Forest Service (USFS). 2009. *Basic Stewardship Contracting Concepts*. Available online at http://www.fs.fed.us/forestmanagement/stewardship/documents/stewardship_brochure.pdf. last accessed May 14, 2012.

² US Forest Service (USFS). 2011. *Stewardship Contracting*. Available online at <http://www.fs.fed.us/forestmanagement/stewardship/aboutus/16usc2104note.shtml>. last accessed May 14, 2012

³ Pinchot Institute for Conservation. 2012. *The Role of Communities in Stewardship Contracting: FY 2011 Programmatic Monitoring Report to the USDA Forest Service*. Available online at <http://www.fs.fed.us/forestmanagement/stewardship/reports/documents/2011/FinalFY11USFSMonEvalReport.pdf>. last accessed March 2012.

changes, in the 2012 Farm Bill. We have been and will continue to work with partnering organizations including The Nature Conservancy, the National Association of State Foresters, The National Association of Forest Service Retirees, and Sustainable Northwest to advocate for this effort. We look forward to working with the Subcommittee and staff on this important issue.

Bark Beetle

Western Bark Beetle, and more specifically, the Mountain Pine Beetle continues to be a major issues affecting the health of our forests and a priority issue for SAF. The current Mountain Pine Beetle (known as MPB) epidemic has been labeled as the largest pine bark beetle outbreak in recorded history.⁴ Since 1997, bark beetle mortality has created more than 41.7 million acres of dead and dying trees across all ownerships.⁵ The US Forest Service estimates that up to 100,000 dead trees killed by beetles alone fall to the ground every day in southern Wyoming and northern Colorado.⁶

The Mountain Pine Beetle is a native species to the forests of western North America.⁷ The Mountain Pine Beetle attacks pines, particularly lodgepole, ponderosa, and limber pine. The MPB targets large, mature trees that have become stressed due to conditions such as overcrowded forest stands, limited water and nutrient availability, old age, and/or poor site conditions.⁸ Much of our forests in the West have created the “perfect storm” for a beetle infestation of this magnitude, and the number of dead trees will continue to grow until the bark beetle runs out of live host trees.

SAF is supportive of the actions being taken by the US Forest Service to increase restoration efforts and actions to mitigate MPB infestations, but the effort is falling short. SAF wishes to see more projects and plans to treat infested forests. To provide an example; approximately 14,000 miles of roads, trails, and right-of-ways and 1,400 recreation sites are at risk of falling trees in the Interior West alone.⁹ This number will only continue to grow; and the devastating losses due to wildfire will dramatically change the forested landscapes we see today. We believe the US Forest Service desires this outcome as well, but are hindered by budget and regulatory issues that prevent the agency from the ability to achieve more.

SAF supports increasing forest management and restoration efforts in affected areas and National Forests to address public safety and property, wildfire risk, and watershed health. We need to act now in order to address these critical issues. We are encouraged by many in Congress who are

⁴ Bentz, et. al. 2009. *Bark Beetle Outbreaks in Western North America: Causes and Consequences*. Bark Beetle Symposium. Snowbird, Utah. last accessed May 14, 2012.

⁵ US Forest Service (USFS). *Western Bark Beetle Strategy for Human Safety, Recovery and Resiliency*. Available online at: http://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb5338089.pdf. last accessed May 14, 2012.

⁶ US Forest Service (USFS). *Western Bark Beetle Strategy for Human Safety, Recovery and Resiliency*. Available online at: http://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb5338089.pdf. last accessed May 14, 2012.

⁷ D.A. Leatherman, I. Aguayo, and T.M. Mehall. Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS). *Trees & Shrubs: Mountain Pine Beetle*. Available online at: <http://csfs.colostate.edu/pdfs/MPB.pdf>. last accessed May 14, 2012.

⁸ D.A. Leatherman, I. Aguayo, and T.M. Mehall. Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS). *Trees & Shrubs: Mountain Pine Beetle*. Available online at: <http://csfs.colostate.edu/pdfs/MPB.pdf>. last accessed May 14, 2012.

⁹ US Forest Service (USFS). *Western Bark Beetle Strategy for Human Safety, Recovery and Resiliency*. Available online at: http://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb5338089.pdf. last accessed May 14, 2012.

calling for increased forest management actions in affected stands. We hope you will continue to advocate for intensified treatments, and we will forward to continuing to work with both the Senate and the House of Representatives on this issue.

SAF 2012 Farm Bill Recommendations

The 2008 Farm Bill included significant improvements for forestry by supporting forest conservation and agroforestry practices and activities across the country. For the 2012 Farm Bill, we hope to build on the success of the 2008 Farm Bill, while respecting the budget situation. With the current challenges and threats facing private forests, SAF encourages the House of Representatives Agriculture Committee to focus on the Forests in the Farm Bill Coalition's recommendations in four key areas:

- Improving Conservation Programs for Forests
- Strengthening Forestry Outreach, Education, Research, and Inventory Programs
- Combating Forest-Related Invasive Species
- Improving Forest Market Opportunities

Improving Conservation Programs for Forests

Farm Bill conservation programs are critical to assisting private land owners improve the management of their forests. Programs including the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), and the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP) provide the tools to for land owners to keep their forests as working forests while also sustaining the economic viability of the land. SAF urges the Subcommittee to maintain forest owner opportunities and access to important cost-share programs like EQIP, CSP, and WHIP. We also support the removal of the cap on forest enrollment in the Conservation Stewardship Program to allow forest owners to have full access to the program.

Strengthening Forestry Outreach, Education, Research, and Inventory Programs

Forestry and agroforestry outreach and education activities are essential for engaging forest owners in conservation and management activities on their land. These programs and activities provide the tools, knowledge, and expertise to maximize the benefits of responsible management of private forests.

The US Forest Service's Forest Inventory and Analysis Program (FIA) is an important tool utilized by the agency to address emerging forest data needs such as biomass, forest carbon, forest species composition, forest health data, and baseline inventory estimates used in State Forest Resource Assessment and Strategies. FIA provides landowners with unbiased information that assists in monitoring trends that include wildfire risk, insect and disease threats, and wildlife habitat. This data also helps the entire forestry community make appropriate decisions on how to sustainably care and manage our forests. SAF supports providing strategic direction for implementation of the FIA program including:

- Completing the transition to a fully annualized program

- Reporting information on renewable biomass supplies and carbon stocks at the local, state, regional, and national level
- Engaging users of FIA data in re-evaluating the list of core data variables with emphasis on demonstrated need
- Fostering cooperation among the FIA program, research station leaders, state foresters, and other users
- Improving the timeliness and accessibility of the annualized information on the database
- Expanding existing programs to promote sustainable forest stewardship through increased understanding by all stakeholders.

Combating Forest-Related Invasive Species

A critical threat to the health of America's private and public forests is the spread of invasive species. According to the US Forest Service, roughly 58 million acres of forests are at risk of increased mortality due to insects and disease. SAF supports maintaining the Plant Pest and Disease Management and Disaster Prevention Program as the funds help build and preserve critical plant health safeguarding initiatives that protect forests and mitigate invasive species damage.

Improving Forest Market Opportunities

A viable forest products industry is only successful if there are strong markets for both traditional and emerging forest products being sold. Without a viable forest products industry, forest owners have difficulty keeping their land forested, and instead fall to economic pressures that cause them to fragment their landscape. Forest owners need strong markets that will allow them to reinvest into their lands to keep them working and healthy.

This is of great concern as it means that not only does the forestry community continue to see dramatic losses to our jobs, infrastructure, and capabilities, but it also means that our public and private forests suffer from many negative impacts. From 2005 to 2010 primary (forestry and logging, paper, wood manufacturing, etc.) and secondary (residential construction, furniture, etc.) employment have seen a combined reduction of 920,507 total jobs. In fact, total US annual timber harvests are at their lowest levels since the 1960s. This lack of production led to the closure of more than 1,000 mills from 2005 to 2009, which decreased overall sawmilling capacity by 15 percent, and lowered production levels below 50 percent of capacity at the remaining mills.¹⁰

To help maintain and restore some of these traditional markets, and to improve market opportunities for private forest owners, SAF recommends that Congress modify the USDA Biobased Markets Program in the Farm Bill's Energy Title to better incorporate appropriate forest products as renewable, biobased products.

In closing, SAF would like to speak to an issue that many of the Subcommittee members are likely aware of. Currently, there is an effort underway by some to regulate forest roads as point

¹⁰ Smith, B.W., and Guldin, R.W. 2012. *Forest Sector Reeling during Economic Downturn*. The Forestry Source January, 2012. Available online at http://www.nxtbook.com/nxtbooks/saf/forestrysource_201201/index.php; last accessed March 2012.

source pollutants under the Clean Water Act. The 9th circuit ruled that storm water runoff from forest roads and forestry activities should be subject to National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permitting requirements. In years previous forest roads were considered non-point source pollutants that were exempt from the NPDES requirements, and effectively addressed through state-developed BMP's and forest practice acts. This is of significant concern as a permitting process would increase costs per forest acre harvested, create a complex and arduous process, and cause unnecessary burdens on forest landowners and for agencies to administer. SAF urges Congress to pass the Silviculture Regulatory Consistency Act, H.R.2541 and S.1369, to ensure forest roads and forestry activities remain exempt from NPDES requirements.

On behalf of the Society of American Foresters, I thank you for this opportunity.

Committee on Agriculture
U.S. House of Representatives
Information Required From Nongovernmental Witnesses

House rules require nongovernmental witnesses to provide their resume or biographical sketch prior to testifying. If you do not have a resume or biographical sketch available, please complete this form.

1. Name: Michael Goergen

2. Organization you represent: Society of American Foresters

3. Please list any occupational, employment, or work-related experience you have which add to your qualification to provide testimony before the Committee: _____
Fifteen Years of progressive experience representing the Society of American
Foresters _____

4. Please list any special training, education, or professional experience you have which add to your qualifications to provide testimony before the Committee: _____
BS. Environmental Studies, MS Forestry _____

5. If you are appearing on behalf of an organization, please list the capacity in which you are representing that organization, including any offices or elected positions you hold: _____
Executive Vice President and CEO _____

PLEASE ATTACH THIS FORM OR YOUR BIOGRAPHY TO EACH COPY OF
TESTIMONY.

**Committee on Agriculture
U.S. House of Representatives
Required Witness Disclosure Form**

House Rules* require nongovernmental witnesses to disclose the amount and source of Federal grants received since October 1, 2008.

Name: Michael T. Goergen Jr.

Organization you represent (if any): Society of American Foresters

1. Please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants and subcontracts) you have received since October 1, 2008, as well as the source and the amount of each grant or contract. House Rules do **NOT** require disclosure of federal payments to individuals, such as Social Security or Medicare benefits, farm program payments, or assistance to agricultural producers:

Source: _____ Amount: _____

Source: _____ Amount: _____

2. If you are appearing on behalf of an organization, please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants and subcontracts) the organization has received since October 1, 2008, as well as the source and the amount of each grant or contract:

Source: USDA Forest Service Amount: \$18,000.00

Source: USDA Forest Service Amount: \$45,922.75

Source: USDA Forest Service Amount: \$25,000.00

Source: USDA Forest Service Amount: \$25,000.00

Source: USDA Forest Service Research Amount: \$48,943.95

Source: USDA Forest Service Research Amount: \$18,000.00

Source: Peace Corps Amount: \$3,497.55

Source: Bureau of Land Management Amount: \$12,000.00

Please check here if this form is NOT applicable to you: _____

Signature: 

* Rule XI, clause 2(g)(4) of the U.S. House of Representatives provides: *Each committee shall, to the greatest extent practicable, require witnesses who appear before it to submit in advance written statements*

of proposed testimony and to limit their initial presentations to the committee to brief summaries thereof. In the case of a witness appearing in a nongovernmental capacity, a written statement of proposed testimony shall include a curriculum vitae and a disclosure of the amount and source (by agency and program) of each Federal grant (or subgrant thereof) or contract (or subcontract thereof) received during the current fiscal year or either of the two previous fiscal years by the witness or by any entity represented by the witness.

PLEASE ATTACH DISCLOSURE FORM TO EACH COPY OF TESTIMONY.