

## Forest Fragmentation and Urban Sprawl Working Group

## Forestry Threatens Sprawl

## The Challenge

Why do Americans flee urban areas for more rural settings? We seek the American Dream, a better quality of life, natural surroundings with greater space and privacy, and the lower cost of living in suburban and exurban areas.

Achieving the dream accelerates sprawl, which often degrades community character, environmental integrity, and economies that depend on sustainably managed forests. America loses 1.2 million forested acres each year to development and other land conversion.

## The Solution

Sprawl begets forest fragmentation and forest parcelization to form a harmful trinity, with environmental, economic, and social consequences. It devours open space so ravenously that no single solution will stem it.

To fight sprawl, forestry professionals get continual upgrades to their tool kits for keeping forests intact and working. These advances come in large part through the regional facilitation and technology transfer efforts of the Durham Field Office Forest Fragmentation and Urban Sprawl Working Group.

The persuasive economic, social, and value-centered approaches to good forestry put forth by the working group give States skills for working with landowners and making strategic resource decisions. Sample successes include:

- The working group reconvened the participants from a 2000 regional workshop on stemming forest loss to communicate policy options and development activities that minimize landscape change.
- In cooperation with University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension, State specialists were introduced to Geographic Information System (GIS) analysis methods that address impacts from sprawl, fragmentation, and parcelization.

## Resulting Benefits

The working group provides education, facilitates regional initiatives, and puts sprawl-fighting technology into the hands of State partners, who in turn influence the use of State lands and implement conservation programs for

*The vast possibilities of our great future  
will become realities only if we make  
ourselves responsible for that future.  
— Gifford Pinchot*



Darkened by the 2003 blackout, the Northeast appears untouched by sprawl and forest fragmentation.

thousands of private landowners. These efforts reach people on the ground and strengthen communities that:

- Grow in harmony with their environment and natural resources,
- Develop along models that maintain steady costs for community services, and
- Continue to boast high quality of life owed to woodlands and rural character.

## Sharing Success

The group employs a holistic approach to share options:

- Professionally—By building on work at the Society of American Foresters New England Chapter 2002 meeting themed *Forestry in the Fragmentation Puzzle*, the group will present solutions to fragmentation, parcelization, and sprawl at the 2004 meeting in Quebec.
- Regionally—By partnerships with grassroots groups such as the Small Woodland Owners of Maine and presentation of “Effects of Urban Sprawl on Forest Management” at Smart Growth Institute training sponsored by the Maine State Planning Office.
- In education—By dedication to efforts like Envirothon and its 2004 competition theme on natural resources of urban ecosystems.
- With technology—By using GIS analysis to produce results that support forest management, policy making, and help States strategically place resources to conserve critical forest land.

These channels and examples combine with the partnership of government, forestry professionals, educators, and private landowners to form the defense against forest loss.



USDA Forest Service  
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