THE EMERGING ROLE OF THE STATES IN FOREST PLANNING

by

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ABSTRACT

As the Nation looks to its nonindustrial private lands to produce a greater share of wood fiber and other forest resources, planning for the future use of these lands becomes more important. The need for strong State participation in this effort came to light during preparation of the 1975 and 1980 RPA Assessments and programs. The financial, technical, and other assistance authorized by the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978 is increasing the ability of State forestry organizations to effectively plan for the use of management of State and private lands. Many of the top issues of this decade, such as: the timber supply, energy, the economy, land use and the Federal/State role, will require more professional and comprehensive forest resources planning at the State level. The conservative mood across the country is changing the Federal/State relationship and States must bear the primary responsibility for shaping their future.
The Emerging Role of the States in Forest Planning

The States have always been chief partners of the Forest Service in the formulation of cooperative forestry policies and programs for private non-industrial forest lands. As we look toward State and private lands to produce a greater share of the Nation's wood fiber and other forest resource needs, this relationship becomes even more important. Planning for the future use and management of our forested lands is and must be a cooperative State-Federal effort.

Over the years, the nature of this cooperative relationship has changed in response to new issues and legislation. The Resources Planning Act (RPA) of 1974 and the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978 have had the greatest impact on this relationship in recent times.

Because of the short time available in 1974 and 1975 to prepare the first assessment and program, these documents were primarily in-Service products. The program was heavily National Forest System oriented. While the Act itself did not preclude careful analysis and equal consideration of State forestry activities, the political issues which spawned the Act were concerned with management of the National Forests. The presidential impoundment of appropriated funds, the slashing of Forest Service budget proposals by the President, an increasing backlog of work on the National Forest such as reforestation and timber stand improvement, and a general awareness of the need to preserve a productive national heritage in our National Forests were all issues that created the climate for passage of the RPA.

There were several results of this first RPA effort which had a direct bearing on future State-Federal relationships. The States expressed grave concerns over being left out of the process, and were disappointed with the general lack of consideration for Cooperative Federal-State forestry programs. They also challenged assessment data regarding State and private lands. While the States understood the circumstances which caused the situation, they expressed a strong desire to play an expanded role in the 1980 process.

This expressed desire pointed out a significant problem for the States. Most of them had no long-range program plans or data bases from which to develop the input needed for the 1980 assessment and program. As a result, a few Forest Service and State people began to put together a Federal program to help the States develop new planning capabilities. This need was prompted not only by RPA process, but by other ongoing planning process as well. States were preparing 208 water quality plans, coastal zone management plans, and others which required State Forester input to ensure full consideration of forest resources. It was obvious a new role was being defined for the State Foresters that required new expertise and staffing.

In 1978, the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act was passed which contained a section specifically designed to help the States redeem their new role. The major purpose of section 8(b) was "... to ensure that data regarding forest lands are available for, and effectively presented in, State and Federal natural resources planning." The Act recognized the key role of the State Foresters

in achieving this purpose by listing their activities which directly relate to this matter. They included the assembly, analysis, display and reporting of State and forest resources data; training of State forest resources planners, and participation in natural resources planning at State and Federal levels. The Secretary of Agriculture was authorized to provide financial, technical and other assistance to help carry out these activities.

During the time Congress was preparing this Act, the States and the Forest Service jointly recognized the need for a comprehensive, long-range State plan to provide a basis for what was envisioneded in the new Act. These plans were to be called a State Forest Resources Plan. Between 1977 and 1981, with Federal financed and technical assistance, 47 States began preparation of these plans and most have hired forest resources planners. A program goal has been set to complete plans for all 50 States by the end of FY 1983.

The 1980 RPA process was already well underway when the 1978 Act was passed. As a result, the States had to rely on resource data and program information available from existing sources. While State participation was much improved in the 1980 process, the lack of comprehensive State plans, the lack of resource data, and the lack of time to respond to information requests did not permit the kind of participation desired by both parties.

Looking ahead in the 1980's, both the Forest Service and the States are confident about their ability to jointly prepare and carry out plans for meeting future resource needs. State forest resources plans will significantly increase each State Forester's capability to participate in all Forest Service planning, as well as other State planning. Preparation of State plans should also help to ensure the most effective use of combined Federal and State funds to meet social, economic, and environmental goals and objectives. With new State forest resources plans completed, most States will be prepared to participate in preparation of the 1985 RPA program with realistic and accurate information reflecting the long-term interests of the States.

The importance of State forest resources planning and participation in other planning effecting forest resources is becoming more critical as the Nation focuses its attention on the nonindustrial private forests to meet its resource needs. Many of the top issues of this decade will be affected by the use or nonuse of these lands.

**Timber Supply** - The 1979 RPA assessment indicates a need to more than double wood and wood fiber production by the year 2030. The 284 million acres of nonindustrial private forest lands account for 58 percent of the Nation's total commercial forest lands. Coordinated State and Federal planning and program implementation are needed to ensure these lands contribute their share to meet projected demand.

**Energy** - This country is and will continue to be dependent on foreign oil during the next decade and beyond. As we attempt to reduce this dependency, there will be additional efforts to develop and increase
use of all potential energy sources. Severe competition for resources will occur between traditional uses and new energy development. Wood energy is a good example. States will play a key role in determining how the wood supply will be allocated.

**Economy -** Inflation, unemployment, productivity and other issues regarding the economy are long-standing problems which must be addressed in all planning processes affecting natural resources. The nonindustrial private forest lands have the potential to provide new jobs and additional raw material to the economy. The relative prices for wood products and housing will increase significantly if demand increases at a greater rate than supply. The States, through their planning efforts, are in a key position to affect the formulation of policies and programs to encourage full productivity of State and private forest lands.

**Land Use -** The productive capability of our Nation's forest lands will depend, in part, on how these lands are allocated for various uses. Forested lands are being expected to produce a greater number and variety of outputs than ever before. It is imperative that forest lands not be allocated to non-forest uses without full consideration of all forest resource values. Even within the array of forest resources—wood, water, forage, wildlife and fish, recreation and esthetics, the effects of featuring one use over another must be carefully considered. The States must play a key role in all land use decisions. This will require sound long-range forest resources plans and base data.

**Federal-State Roles -** The Federal-State relationships is primarily shaped by prevailing political attitudes and the current state of the economy, both Federal and State. Long-term stability is provided by relationships defined in legislation. As new issues emerge and old ones change, new relationships and roles must be defined. State forest resources planning and the RPA process are the vehicles for assessing these issues, and for providing a long-term perspective. Planning provides goals—political, social, and economic realities chart our path for reaching these goals. It also opens up the entire decision process for public participation.

The new Administration and Congress reflect a changing mood across the country. This will undoubtedly mean more reliance on State and local government to provide services since forestry programs on private lands are now carried out by State agencies. We can and do fit in well with changing attitudes.

Where a substantial amount of the benefit from a cooperative program accrues to the States, there is a tendency to shift most of the financial burden to the States. This attitude is expected to continue. Defining the Federal interest in many of our programs has and will continue to be a tough job; one which will require State assistance.
Softwood timber supply continues to be the dominant cooperative forestry issue. Programs which will help meet timber targets will receive the greatest support, providing they can clearly be linked to established targets through hard outputs. Other programs to protect wildlands from fire and the effects of watershed destruction are equally vital over vast regions of the country. There will continue to be close scrutiny of the State/Federal funding mix to carry out these programs.

As we move into the 1980's, State forest resources planning will become increasingly important. The lead role for public forest resource planning as it relates to State and private lands lies with the States. National pressures will grow to provide more jobs, income, and raw materials from all forested lands. Federal, State, and local government will be asked to increase economic efficiency in all program areas. As populations grow, the States will be faced with increased pressures to meet growing and more diverse demands for forest resources. Forest Service requirements for State information in the RPA process will necessitate more intensive analysis at the State level. National goals for forest land resources will have to be achieved through cooperative Federal-State programs.

In summary, the need for State forest resources planning seems clear. We cannot continue to develop natural resources and other plans independently and hope to make the best use of our national heritage. We cannot look to national programs to cure all our Nation's ills. Within the scope of national goals and objectives, the States must look within and to the future and carve out their role for tomorrow.