



Forest Policy Guidebook

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FOREST POLICY OVERVIEW

Forests affect nearly every aspect of our lives. Forest resources provide the raw materials for our homes, our workplaces, the books and newspapers we read, and the packaging that contains our food and other products of our labor. Forest ecosystems supply our water, maintain our climate, help purify the air, protect soils, and provide for wilderness experiences. Forests provide habitat for wildlife, and serve as preserves of biological diversity and as sources of food, fuel, and medicine for people throughout the world. They shape the recreational landscape, help stabilize our farms, and enhance our cities.

The actions of humans affect the benefits forests can provide. If forest resources are to be sustained and enhanced, these actions must be directed at achieving desired outcomes in diverse ecosystems, environmental conditions, and social regimes; they must anticipate the effects of population growth and social change on future human needs. The present and future benefits from forests of the world depend upon careful use of the knowledge that guides the forest policy actions we take.

How SAF Participates

Although SAF does not make forest policy, we do participate in the political and administrative processes that generate policy by presenting SAF's professional views to lawmakers. During deliberation on forest policies, SAF members may be called upon to represent the viewpoints of the forestry profession through expert testimony or other means. Another way SAF and its members participate in the formulation of forest policy is through Position Statements. These position statements expire after a designated period of time and may need to be updated or terminated to reflect the current values and needs of ecosystems, society, and the forestry profession.

SAF Position Statements

An SAF position statement is a carefully prepared expression on an issue that represents the SAF's view. It is the result of thorough study of the issue. Position statements advocate particular actions and/or provide information about the consequences of forest policies. Positions may take the form of written statements, resolutions, written or oral testimony, letters, and audiovisual or electronic messages.

SAF positions serve a variety of purposes. They reflect the aspirations and responsibilities of the profession. By focusing on public policies that affect forests, SAF positions transform ideas into action. Positions are a communication tool for informing landowners and the public about technically and socially complex forestry issues. SAF members might want to periodically check the Internet for national and unit-level SAF position statements on forestry problems and issues confronting them.

The process for developing SAF position statements is defined in the SAF Bylaws. The content or substance of SAF position statements is driven by issues and guided by principles derived from the SAF Code of Ethics.

SAF Position Statement Process

SAF position statements may be developed at the *National*, *Regional*, and *Unit* levels. Procedures also exist for *Emergency* positions. The Forest Policy Department at the SAF national office works closely with members in the formulation of position statements and in other resource policy activities regarding forestry issues.

National Positions – Drafted by the executive vice-president, task forces, the Committee on Forest Policy, or by individual members of the Society. Adoption requires a 2/3 vote from the SAF Council. The Committee on Forest Policy advises the Council in the review of position statements.

Regional Positions – Prepared by two or more adjacent units of the Society and subsequently adapted by each of the participating units. They are subject to review and approval by the Forest Policy Department at the SAF national office, to ensure consistency with national position statements and SAF’s Forest Policy Principles. Multiunit position statements are encouraged where issues may be more regional than local in scope. An example is forestry’s role in the recovery of particular species protected by the Endangered Species Act.

Unit Positions – Formulated by state societies, divisions, or chapters and adopted by at least 2/3 of the unit’s executive committee. The Forest Policy Department at the SAF national office reviews all unit draft position statements to ensure their appropriate format and consistency with national position statements and SAF’s Forest Policy Principles.

Emergency Positions – Adopted by the affirmative vote of the SAF Council Executive Committee or a minimum of 2 national officers providing they believe the position reflects general agreement of the members of the Society nationally. At the next available opportunity emergency positions are ratified by the full SAF Council, provided they approve of the statement.

SAF Position Statement Content

The required component parts of a position statement are a concise summary of the *Position*, a brief description of the *Issue*, relevant factual *Background*, and an *Expiration Date*. For effective communication, the *Position* and *Issue* paragraphs should not be too lengthy. Additional information could include a section with detailed recommendations, a list of references cited, additional reading, and a glossary.

Position – Summarizes actions the SAF believes are needed to improve the problem situation or resolve the issue. Usually consists of only a few sentences clearly stating what the SAF is supporting, promoting, or advocating. If the position is more complex, it may be appropriate to include a recommendations section after the *Background* is presented.

Issue – Describes the controversy or problem addressed by the position in a short paragraph. The issue statement is the key to an effective statement. If existing forest policies are involved, they should be identified.

Background – Presents relevant factual background information and is generally the lengthiest portion of the position statement. This section should briefly review the scientific knowledge supporting the position and the pertinent social values at stake, with references to literature, adding credibility to the position statement.

Expiration Date – Positions generally expire after 5 years. This allows for reconsideration based on new scientific knowledge or shifts in social values. Emergency positions generally expire after one year.

Briefings on Forest Issues

It is crucial to remain informed about issues affecting the field of forestry. Briefings, including the SAF’s positions on various forest issues are available on the SAF website at <http://www.eforester.org/fp/positionstatements.cfm>

Topics covered include: biological diversity in forestry ecosystems, clearcutting, conservation easements, the Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) Program, herbicide use in forest management, federal tax treatment of timber investments, professionalism, international trade in forest products, protecting endangered species habitat on private land, public regulation of private forest practices, roads, timber harvesting on federal lands, urban forestry, wildfire management, and world forestry.

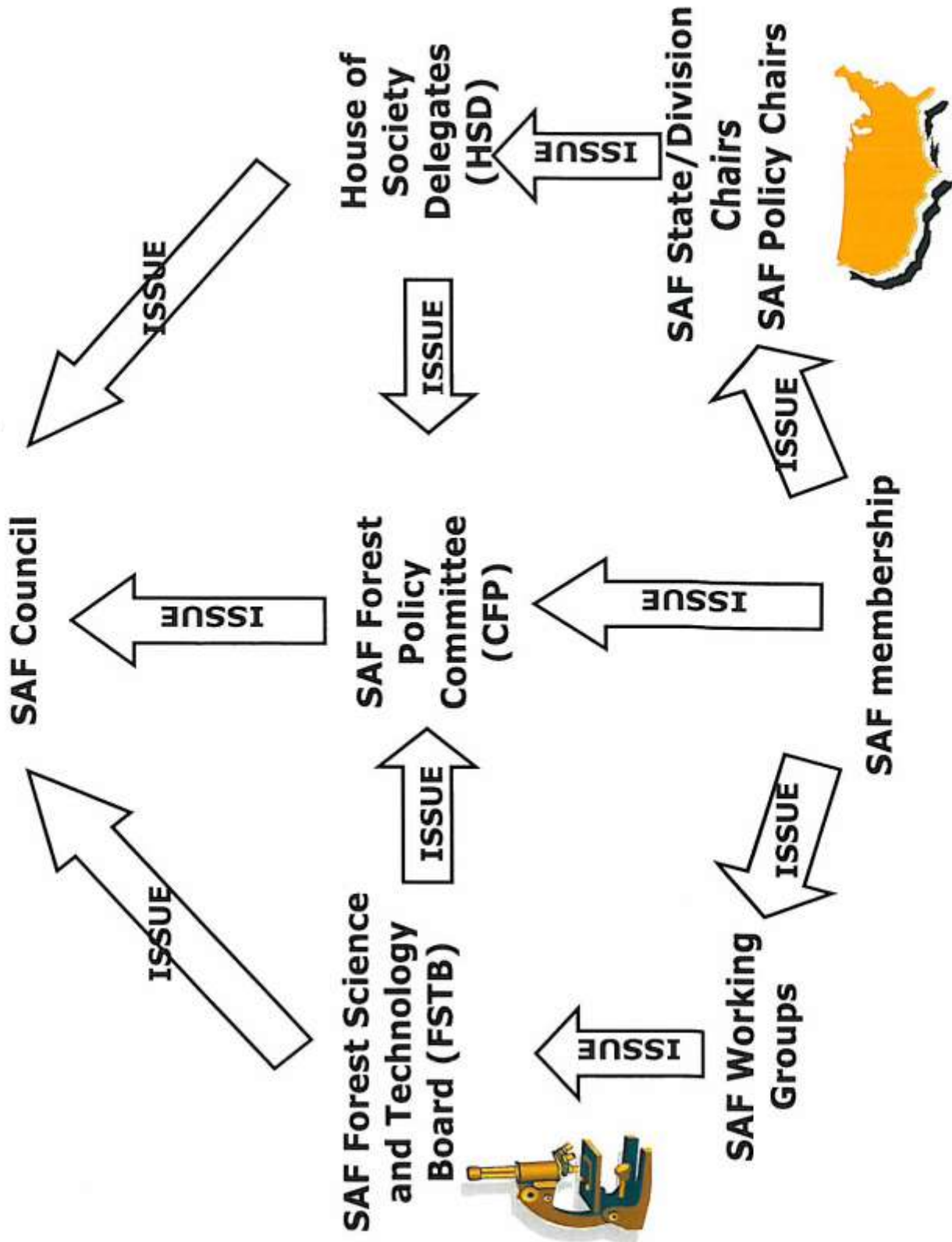
SAF'S COMMITTEE ON FOREST POLICY (CFP)

SAF's Forest Policy Committee is a nine-person team that reports to and assists the SAF Council in developing the forest policy direction of the Society of American Foresters.

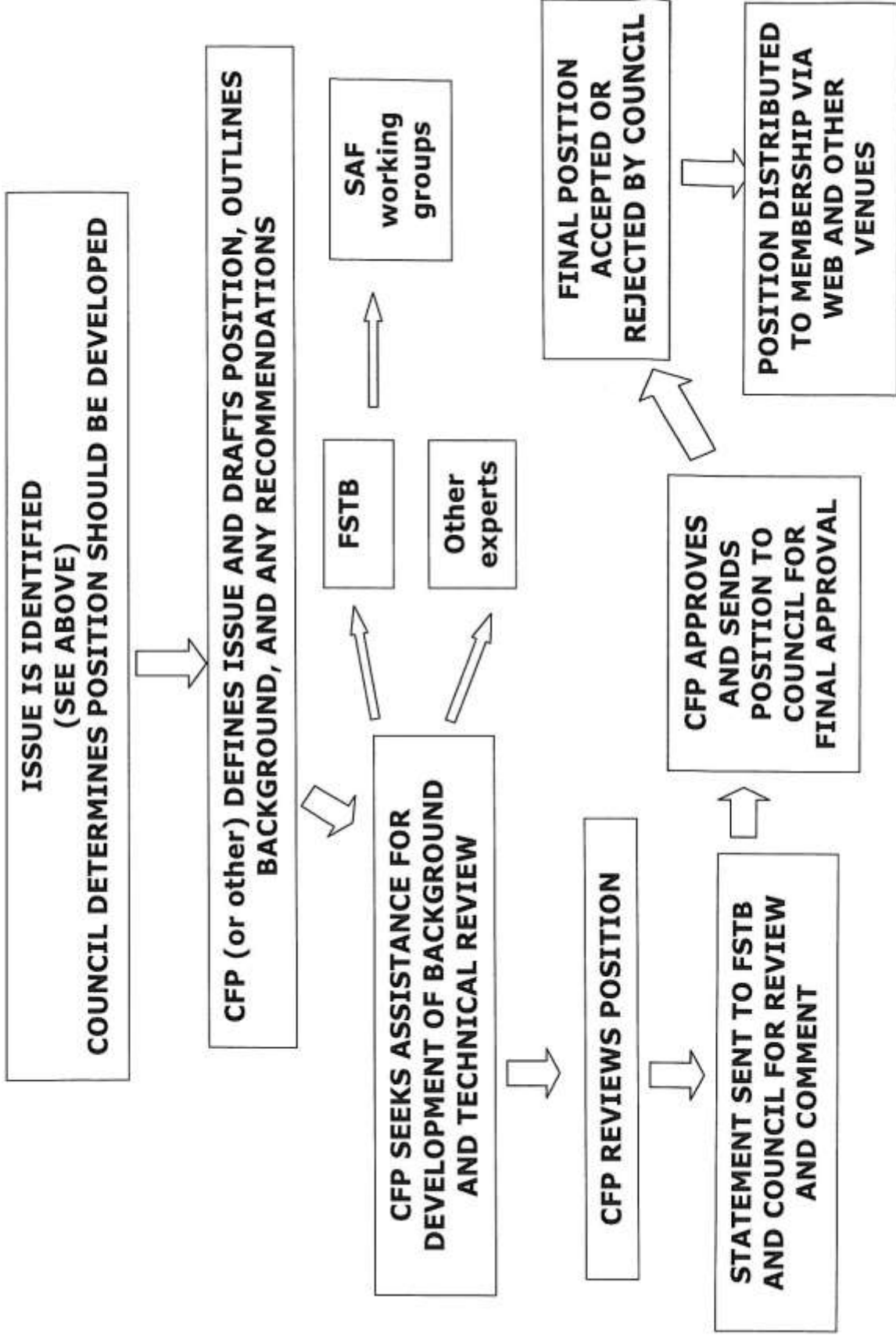
Duties & Responsibilities

- Developing, reviewing, and presenting position statements to the Council for their adoption as official positions of the SAF;
- Coordinating and facilitating the review of position statements by the Forest Science and Technology Board, the Working Groups of the SAF and other interested members;
- Educating and mentoring national and local leadership about policy issues;
- Bringing grassroots and local issues to the attention of the full Committee;
- Facilitating connections between local leadership and experts on issues they are facing;
- Periodically reviewing the *Forest Policy Principles* of the SAF;
- Providing feedback to staff on emergency issues as appropriate.
- Review draft task force and national committee reports in terms of their implications for position-taking, coordinating such activity with the Forest Science and Technology Board.

Who decides the issues to take positions on?



HOW ARE POSITION STATEMENTS DEVELOPED?



HELPFUL TIPS FOR POLICY DEVELOPMENT

- All SAF Position Statements, whether national, regional, or unit positions, must be consistent with SAF's *Forest Policy Principles*. (Available on the web at <http://www.eforester.org/fp/policyprocess.cfm#forestpolicyprinciples>)
- **Unit/regional position statements:**
 - May use same process as national position development process
 - Must be consistent with national position statements
 - A region or unit may develop a position on an issue for which there is no national position as long as it is consistent with SAF's *Forest Policy Principles* and SAF position statements.
 - Must be reviewed by national office staff:
 - To ensure consistency with national positions
 - To ensure SAF records are kept up to date
 - To ensure web is updated
 - Often unit positions become the basis for national positions, so information sharing is very useful
 - Approval: 2/3 of unit executive committee. Can be sent to membership if desired, in which case approval is by 2/3 of voting members.
- **Emergency positions (national, regional, or unit):**
 - For issues requiring quick response
 - Usually expires after 1 year
 - Requires approval of Council (or unit) Executive Committee or two national (or unit) officers (i.e President, Vice-President, or Executive Vice-President) and ratification of Council (Executive Committee) at the next available opportunity.
- **Task Force:**
 - A group designated to study a particular forestry issue as described in the Task Force Charter
 - Appointed by the President (or Unit Chair) in consultation with the Executive Committee or the full Council.
- **Where can I go for help with an issue?**
 - SAF National Office Staff
 - SAF Forest Policy Committee (CFP)

ADVOCACY VS. LOBBYING: A GUIDE TO POLICY COMMUNICATION

By SAF's Committee on Forest Policy

Is it appropriate for SAF members to become politically active in local, state, or national forestry politics? Is it even legal? How far can an SAF chapter go in supporting a political position on a forestry topic? Can the SAF endorse a political candidate? These are the types of questions that at one time or another face SAF members nationwide. As such, it is important for members, chapters, divisions, and state societies to understand when advocacy becomes lobbying, and what pitfalls might exist.

Advocacy

SAF members may frequently find themselves advocating on behalf of professional forestry, even if they do not recognize it as such. Whenever SAF members adopt a position statement, testify before a legislature on a general forestry issue or topic, comment on proposed regulations, are interviewed by the media, or write an opinion– editorial, they are acting as advocates. There is nothing inherently wrong or unethical with such activity. SAF is founded on a set of principles that encourage its members to “advocate” for forest management and, in the many cases where SAF members become involved with forestry issues in a political setting, advocacy is an accepted form of expressing support or objection to a particular policy. Thus, members should feel free to engage the media, government, and the public in important forestry issues. It is only when advocacy becomes lobbying that greater caution is warranted.

Lobbying

The primary control over lobbying activity is exerted by the Internal Revenue Service. Nonprofit groups such as the SAF have strict limitations on the types of lobbying activities in which they may engage. Failure to comply with the IRS law and rules may lead to the revocation of a group's nonprofit status. For that reason, groups treat their lobbying activities quite seriously.

There are two fundamental types of lobbying: direct and grassroots. The first involves an organization contacting legislators or calling upon the group's members to contact legislators to support or oppose a particular program or piece of legislation. The second involves approaching the public to influence the outcome of legislation. What both share is that they attempt to influence a decision-maker or politician to vote in a particular way and both involve mention of specific legislation rather than general topics.

For the purposes of the IRS, as long as nonprofit groups refrain from spending money on direct or grassroots lobbying efforts, the activity is not considered "lobbying." In other words, if an SAF member volunteers her time to meet with a legislator to garner support for a new forestry bill and spends SAF funds to do so, that activity is considered lobbying. If she does not spend her SAF chapter's funds, then it is not lobbying.

In addition to the limitations pertaining to the way nonprofit groups may use their funds, another area of concern is the endorsement of a political candidate. Nonprofit groups are forbidden to either endorse or oppose the election of political candidates. For example, SAF chapters, divisions and state societies should take special care when inviting political candidates to speak at meetings during an election year. At such times, it is prudent to extend an invitation to the candidate's competitor as well. The SAF should take care to avoid even the appearance of favoring a particular candidate. This does not mean, of course, that the SAF cannot support or oppose the policies that a particular candidate might embrace.

The information presented here is not intended as legal advice to SAF members and groups. Rather, it is to provide suggestions and cautions when SAF members become involved in the one of the many political facets of forestry.

To that end, SAF's Committee on Forest Policy recommends the following for SAF members engaged in political activity.

Identify your affiliation. The media, politicians, and the public should know on whose behalf comments or remarks are made. Opinions voiced as an individual are obviously less likely to be perceived as lobbying than those on behalf of the Society. Members should always be cognizant that speaking as an SAF member and speaking on behalf of the SAF are not the same thing.

Comments and position statements should coincide. When comments are made to the media or in a political forum, it is appropriate that those comments coincide with the applicable position statements at the national and state level. In that same vein, it is appropriate to have your state executive board approve such things as letters to a legislature prior to submission, if in fact the letter speaks on behalf of the SAF.

Scrutinize the use of funds. If at any point an SAF chapter, division, state society, or member expends SAF funds to participate in a political process, the use of those funds should be a red flag to carefully consider the nature of the activity.

Know the law. SAF members should familiarize themselves with any state-specific laws and regulations that may also regulate lobbying activities should the SAF become involved in state-level politics.

Find answers to your questions. Members should feel free to consult various resources if they have questions about advocacy or lobbying. Your state and regional policy chairs, the Committee on Forest Policy, and national office staff can be helpful in sorting out whether an activity runs any risk of being labeled as lobbying.