

SAF Supports Bipartisan Legislation to Enhance Healthy Forest Restoration Act

August 31, 2009

The Society of American Foresters (SAF) is pleased to support the bipartisan 2009 Healthy Forests Package as proposed by Representatives Greg Walden (R-OR), Kurt Schrader (D-OR), Brian Baird (D-WA) and Stephanie Herseth Sandlin (D-SD).

This legislation, which will update the bipartisan Healthy Forest Restoration Act of 2003 and create incentives for using renewable biomass, will help offset the loss of timber revenues to counties, expand renewable biomass, reduce federal spending, create jobs in rural forested America, and vastly improve forest health.

“SAF is proud to support the 2009 Healthy Forests Package, which actually implements two of the recommendations made by SAF’s Climate Change Task Force: reduce and mitigate catastrophic wildfire, which in turn would greatly reduce CO₂ and other emissions released from wildfires; and use sustainable woody biomass energy in place of fossil fuels to reduce our carbon footprint,” said SAF President Bernard S. Hubbard. “If passed, not only would this package of bills benefit our federal forests, wildlife, and rural communities, it would also help America reduce greenhouse gas emissions.”

Specifically, the legislation contains provisions that would:

- clarify that federal land management agencies have the authority to implement hazardous fuels reduction projects within a community-defined wildfire protection plan areas, in areas of insect infestation or disease, and on federal lands at significant risk of catastrophic wildfire but not within HFRA withdrawn areas.
- apply the renewable biomass production tax credit to on-site uses of electricity produced from biomass.
- establish a program to provide zero-interest loans to institution of higher education, public or private elementary or secondary schools, or hospitals for capital costs to install or converting to the use of renewable biomass for energy generation, heating or cooling systems.
- require all office buildings owned by the US Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to be heated, cooled, or electrified using an installed biomass climate control or energy system. Further, the biomass used by the federal government for these systems must be derived solely from land managed by the Forest Service and BLM.

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The Society of American Foresters (SAF) is the national scientific and educational organization representing the forestry profession in the United States. Founded in 1900 by Gifford Pinchot, it is the largest professional society for foresters in the world. The mission of the Society of American Foresters is to advance the science, education, technology, and practice of forestry; to enhance the competency of its members; to establish professional excellence; and, to use the knowledge, skills, and conservation ethic of the profession to ensure the continued health and use of forest ecosystems and the present and future availability of forest resources to benefit society.