

# POLICY PROCESS

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## **General Policy Information**

The goal of the SAF Forest Policy Department is to provide relevant science-based information to policy makers at the national and local level.

## **SAF's Role in Policy Formulation**

The [SAF national office](#) established a formal natural resource policy program in 1971. Subsequent appointment of a full-time policy director reflected the profession's commitment to actively participate in developing policies regarding the country's renewable natural resources.

SAF does not make natural resource policy. Instead, the Society participates in the political and administrative processes that generate policy by presenting our views to policymakers. These views — [SAF position statements](#) — are developed using a position taking process that is detailed in the [SAF Bylaws](#) (in the Members Only area).

SAF influences policy through the consistent development of high quality, science based positions on issues affecting renewable natural resources and their management. SAF's position is the professional view.

A major task of the [Forest Policy Department](#) is to manage SAF's forest policy and position taking process (Bylaws, Section II), and within this process to guide SAF policy activities in four areas:

- external relations
- SAF unit activities
- task force activities
- policy-related publications

Our policy work provides several products and services to the membership, and under some circumstances also to the publics we serve. They are:

- tracking national issues
- developing and distributing position statements
- providing support to national committees and task forces
- supporting SAF state societies and their components in their policy activities

## **SAF's Role in the Media**

Because SAF is a scientific based organization rather than an advocacy group, we give the media unbiased and impartial information so they can present all the facts to their readership. We have

quick access to a wide range of current, sound scientific and policy information addressing a variety of natural resource issues. We can also connect media representatives with top leaders in the field of forestry and allied disciplines such as watershed management, soil science, fisheries and wildlife, policy, entomology, landscape ecology, and others.

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## **SAF and Forest Policy**

### **Forest Policy Activities**

According to Bylaw II-C, a forestry issue is "a matter relating to forestry, the resolution of which is of public importance." The forest policy department at the national office works closely with members in the formulation of both national and local position statements and in other resource policy activities regarding forestry issues.

### **Forest Policy Principles**

The SAF Constitution (Article II, Section 2) provides for a general statement on forest policy: "The Society shall adopt a statement on forest policy which shall be implemented in accordance with Bylaws established by the Council." In June 2002, the SAF Council voted to change the title of the "statement on forest policy" document from *Forest Policies* to *Forest Policy Principles* to ensure the title was descriptive of the content of the document. The actual content of this document was not changed. *Forest Policy Principles* is a generalized document that guides all of SAF's natural resource policy activities. All positions the Society takes must be consistent with [Forest Policy Principles](#).

### **A Guide to Position Statement Development**

The SAF Committee on Forest Policy has developed [guidelines](#) explaining what forest policy is, and how SAF members can develop effective [position statements](#) on forest policies.

### **Position Statements**

Bylaws II-D and E (1996) are very explicit about position-taking procedures on both the national and local unit levels. An issue may become the subject of a position statement if it is of major importance to the public, covered by [Forest Policy Principles](#), within the knowledge and skills of the forestry profession, or of general interest within the Society. Furthermore, there must be time and resources for SAF to act responsibly on the issue. Proposed national issues are screened by the House of Society Delegates, the Forest Science and Technology Board, and the Committee on Forest Policy for recommendation to Council for study and review. Unit-level policy and executive committees follow similar procedures.

### **National Positions**

[National Positions](#) provide society with the professional view on a specific natural resource issue, and must be approved by at least two-thirds of the SAF Council (normally for a five-year period).

## **Unit Positions**

[Unit Positions](#) are formulated by state societies, divisions, or chapters, and are adopted by at least two-thirds of the unit's executive committee. The national office reviews all draft position statements to ensure their consistency with national position statements and [Forest Policy Principles](#).

## **Emergency Procedures**

The Bylaws provide for an emergency procedure for taking a position on an issue the Society should address, but which has a timeline inconsistent with the process for adoption described above. This process can be used to adopt one-year position statements when appropriate (See [Bylaws](#) II-D, Part 4d; members only page).

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## **A Guide to Position Statement Development**

Forests affect nearly every aspect of our lives.<sup>1</sup> The benefits forests can provide now and in the future are affected by human actions.<sup>2</sup> Forestry is guided by practical experience and applied knowledge, in addition to public policies and laws. Foresters contribute to the formulation of forest policies with professional position statements on forestry issues.<sup>3</sup> Position statement development is guided by the same responsibilities to society and principles of professional conduct found in the forester's Code of Ethics: promoting and practicing stewardship that sustains and protects a variety of forest uses and attributes,<sup>4</sup> helping shape public policy by identifying relevant scientific knowledge and social values,<sup>5</sup> and communicating with honesty and fairness.<sup>6</sup>

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## **The Forestry Profession's View on Forest Policies**

The Society of American Foresters (SAF) is the national organization representing the forestry profession in the United States.<sup>7</sup> Forestry is the profession embracing the science, art, and practice of creating, managing, using, and conserving forests and associated resources for human benefit and in a sustainable manner to meet desired goals, needs, and values.<sup>8</sup> Foresters develop, use, and communicate their knowledge for one purpose: to sustain and enhance forest resources for diverse benefits in perpetuity.<sup>9</sup>

Through the SAF Code of Ethics, members pledge to use their knowledge and skills to help formulate sound forest policies and laws.<sup>10</sup> Among other things, forest policies address forestry issues and identify courses of action. A forestry issue is “a matter relating to forestry, the resolution of which is of public importance.”<sup>11</sup>

Forest policies are formulated and evaluated in public processes. The SAF contributes its professional knowledge to public deliberation on forestry issues through formal position statements.<sup>12</sup> The SAF's position on an issue represents the view of the forestry profession.<sup>13</sup>

## **What is Forest Policy?**

Policies are purposive courses of action (or inaction) that governments, businesses, groups, or individuals take to deal with a particular situation or problem.<sup>14</sup> Policy is not simply a set of prescriptions offered by government; rather, policy evolves over time as participants interact.<sup>15</sup> Policy emerges out of series of negotiated settlements involving interaction among competing interest groups, competing regions, and organizations and agencies competing for the attention and support of the public.<sup>16</sup>

Different policy options arise from the multiple and diverse perspectives of Americans and our pluralistic approach to policy development.<sup>17</sup> To reconcile inconsistencies and differences among policy options, natural resource policy must be pragmatic.<sup>18</sup> As a practical matter, policy focuses on a particular objective or end result.<sup>19</sup>

Forest policy has been defined as:

- a settled *course of action* that has been adopted by a group of people and is actually being followed by them;<sup>20</sup>
- a specification of certain principles regarding the use of a society's forest resources which it is felt will contribute to the achievement of some of the *society's objectives*;<sup>21</sup> and

- a commitment of the *authority of government* to a course of action over time that identifies a purpose or direction for dealing with some problem regarding forests and reflects social choices.<sup>22</sup>

The SAF defines policy as “a definite course or method of action to guide present and future decisions or to specify in detail the ways and means to achieve goals and objectives.”<sup>23</sup>

Americans, however, are not at all clear about many of our objectives, the order in which we should rank them, and the choices we should make if conflicting objectives prove to be mutually exclusive.<sup>24</sup> Forest policy objectives or ends therefore may be ill-defined, obscure, vague, and ambiguous for several reasons, including the following: 1) the technical nature of forestry issues and the variability of forest conditions preclude precise definition of ends; 2) clear objectives can point out winners and losers, leading to divisiveness; and 3) implementation specifics may be purposely left to the discretion of executive agencies; the gain in managerial flexibility from lack of specificity is traded against difficulty in setting priorities or evaluating programs.<sup>25</sup>

What objectives should we seek in the use of our forests? What policies should we follow in order to achieve those objectives?<sup>26</sup> Pragmatic approaches to policy focus attention on problems, rather than projects, practices, or principles.<sup>27</sup> A problem is an unsatisfactory situation, and often becomes an issue, which can be defined as a matter in dispute between two or more parties.<sup>28</sup>

Issue recognition is the beginning of the forest policy formulation process. Forest policies affect the use and management of forest resources and address a variety of issues, including those arising from conflicts over governance of public lands and the potential effects of forest management on the environment.

### **SAF’s Role in Forest Policy**

Over time, the diversity of forests and other conditions in the United States has led to a complex set of American forest policies.<sup>29</sup> Existing forest policies may, from time to time, need revision or termination. As new forestry problems and issues emerge, new policies may be needed. During deliberation on forest policies, the SAF may be called upon to express the profession’s viewpoint.

The SAF does not make natural resource policy, but participates in the political and administrative processes that generate policy by presenting the SAF’s professional view to policymakers through SAF position statements.<sup>30</sup> These position statements expire after a designated period of time,<sup>31</sup> and may need revision or termination. As new issues emerge, new position statements may be needed.

### **SAF Position Statements**

An SAF [position statement](#) is a carefully prepared expression on an issue that represents the SAF’s view.<sup>32</sup> It is the result of thorough study of the issue.<sup>33</sup> Position statements advocate particular actions and/or provide information about the consequences of public forest policies.<sup>34</sup> Positions may take the form of written statements, resolutions, written or oral testimony, letters, and audiovisual or electronic messages.<sup>35</sup>

SAF positions serve a variety of purposes.<sup>36</sup> 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.<sup>37</sup>

The *process* for developing SAF position statements is defined in the [SAF Bylaws](#) (in the Members Only section).<sup>38</sup> The content or *substance* of SAF position statements is driven by issues and guided by principles derived from the [SAF Code of Ethics](#).

### **Guiding Principles for SAF Position Statements**

Forest policies reflect the *principles* governing the actions of people with respect to forest resources.<sup>39</sup> A *principle* is a general statement, adherence to which determines the way we think about things.<sup>40</sup> The SAF Code of Ethics lists six statements of “Principles and Pledges” that provide guidance for all professional endeavors, including SAF forest policy activities. These principles may be characterized by a single word, as follows:

- **[Sustainability](#)**. “Foresters have a responsibility to manage land for both current and future generations ... [and] maintain the long-term capacity of the land to provide the variety of materials, uses, and values desired by landowners and society.”
- **[Stewardship](#)**. “Society must respect forest landowners’ rights and correspondingly, landowners have a land stewardship responsibility to society. ...”
- **[Science](#)**. “Sound science is the foundation of the forestry profession. We pledge to strive for continuous improvement of our methods and our personal knowledge and skills. ...”
- **[Values](#)**. “Public policy related to forests must be based on both scientific principles and societal values. We pledge to use our knowledge and skills to help formulate sound forest policies and laws; to challenge and correct untrue statements about forestry, and to foster dialogue among foresters, other professionals, landowners, and the public regarding forest policies.”
- **[Honesty](#)**. “Honest and open communication ... [using] accurate and complete information ... is essential to good service. ...”
- **[Fairness](#)**. “Professional and civic behavior must be based on honesty, fairness, good will, and respect for the law. We pledge to conduct ourselves in a civil and dignified manner; to respect the needs, contributions, and viewpoints of others; and to give due credit to others for their methods, ideas, and assistance.”<sup>41</sup>

Whether revising an existing SAF position statement or creating a new one, these principles can be used to ensure that the position statement is consistent with the ethical stance of the forestry profession.

### **Who Develops SAF Position Statements?**

SAF position statements may be developed at the national, regional, and unit level. 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.<sup>42</sup>

National positions provide society with the professional view on a specific natural resource issue.<sup>43</sup> They are drafted by the executive vice-president, task forces, the Committee on Forest Policy, or by individual members of the Society.<sup>44</sup> Adoption requires at least a two-thirds vote of the SAF Council.<sup>45</sup> The Committee on Forest Policy provides advice to the Council,<sup>46</sup> including review of position statements before making a recommendation to the Council.<sup>47</sup> When urgency precludes following the normal drafting and adoption process, emergency position statements can be adopted by the affirmative vote of the Council Executive Committee or a minimum of two national officers, providing they believe the position reflects general agreement of the members of the Society nationally.<sup>48</sup>

Unit positions are formulated by state societies, divisions, or chapters, and are adopted by at least two-thirds of the unit's executive committee.<sup>49</sup> 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 as well as [SAF Forest Policy Principles](#).<sup>50</sup>

Regional position statements are prepared by two or more adjacent units of the Society and subsequently adopted by each of the participating units.<sup>51</sup> They are subject to approval by the [Forest Policy Department](#) at the SAF national office. Multi-unit position statement preparation and adoption is encouraged where issues may be more regional than local in scope.<sup>52</sup> An example is forestry's role in the recovery of particular species protected by the Endangered Species Act.

### **When are SAF Position Statements Needed?**

There is no requirement that SAF take a position on any particular issue.<sup>53</sup> An issue may become the subject of a position statement if it is of major importance to the public, within the knowledge and skills of the forestry profession, or of general interest within the Society.<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, there must be time and resources for SAF to act responsibly on the issue.<sup>55</sup>

When an issue arises, SAF leaders may decide that the views of the forestry profession should be heard. Additional criteria for deciding whether a position statement is needed to address an issue include the following:

- **Urgency.** Is a policy decision pending that will substantially affect the use and management of forest resources?
- **Concern.** Have SAF members or their representatives (e.g., the House of Society Delegates) consistently identified the issue as needing a position statement?
- **Consensus.** Given the diversity of SAF members (e.g., regional, employer, disciplinary, cultural, political, etc.) is it likely that the membership as a whole would support a specific position?
- **Science.** Is knowledge about the issue sufficient to adequately inform position statement development and support its scientific credibility?

- **Commitment.** Have SAF members demonstrated a commitment to use the position to communicate information or advocate specific forest policies?
- **Need.** Is the issue already addressed by an existing position statement?

Because a position statement may involve public advocacy of controversial policies, as well as substantial work load consequences for SAF members, position statement development needs due deliberation by the appropriate SAF leaders. Position statement development should generally not be undertaken unless the SAF is committed to thorough study of the issue, and willing to support the adoption and effective implementation of forest policy recommendations.

### **Content of SAF Position Statements**

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.<sup>56</sup> Additional information could include a section with detailed recommendations, a list of references cited, additional reading, and a glossary.

**Position.** The first part of an SAF position statement summarizes actions the SAF believes are needed to improve the problem situation or resolve the issue. This usually consists of only a few sentences clearly stating what the SAF is supporting, promoting, or advocating (see [Separating Facts and Values](#)). If the position is lengthy, it may be appropriate to include a recommendations section after the *Background* is presented.

**Issue.** A short paragraph describing the controversy or problem addressed by the position is the key to an effective statement (see [Identifying the Issue](#)). If existing forest policies are involved, identify them (see [Commenting on Existing Forest Policy](#)).

For effective communication, the *Position* and *Issue* paragraphs should not be too lengthy. Periodically the SAF national office condenses position statements into one-page statements and compiles them in a document distributed to policymakers and media representatives.<sup>57</sup> Members who prepare the position statement are better able to do the condensing than anyone else.

**Background.** Presentation of background information is generally the lengthiest portion of the position statement. Identification of relevant scientific knowledge and social values are two principles guiding SAF policy activities.<sup>58</sup> Brief reviews of the scientific knowledge supporting the position and the pertinent social values at stake, with references to the literature, add credibility to the position statement.

**Expiration Date.** Positions generally expire after five years, thus allowing reconsideration based on new scientific knowledge or shifts in social values. Emergency positions generally expire after one year.

### **Identifying the Issue**

The first task in creating a position statement is to clearly identify the *Issue* or problem addressed by the position statement. Everything else stems from that. The *Position* portion of the

statement communicates the actions the SAF believes should be taken to improve the problem situation associated with the issue. The **Background** portion reviews the consequences associated with the problem and proposed actions.

Concise issue statements are most effective. Try capturing the essence of the situation with a one-sentence statement of the issue, followed by a sentence or two explaining why the issue is a problem. If existing forest policies are at the core of the issue, as will often be the case, the relevant policies should be identified in the **Issue** portion of the statement. For example, if the position is intended to address the issue of maintaining biological diversity in national forests, the appropriate federal statutes and regulations should be identified and connections to the issue stated briefly.

Following the drafting of an issue statement, it could save time and effort to locate other SAF position statements that may cover the same issue or parts of the same problem. Look first to the national SAF Internet site and determine if there is a national position statement that could be adapted.<sup>59</sup> A search of other SAF unit Internet sites, most of which are accessible through the national site, may reveal a relevant unit position statement.

### **Separating Facts and Values: Information Positions and Advocacy Positions**

What is the purpose of the position statement? Is it to inform members and the public about the issue, or to persuade decision makers to adopt or implement specific policy options? SAF position statements usually combine both purposes to some extent, although one of them typically predominates. If the position statement advocates a particular course of action, identify a specific policy and explain the recommendations for improving the problem.

Policy problems are more than just objective conditions described by the “facts” in a given situation; various stakeholders interpret facts differently because they hold competing assumptions about human nature, the government, and opportunities for change through collective action.<sup>60</sup> A role for foresters as issue educators has emerged.<sup>61</sup> The policy educator’s role is different than advocating a particular policy choice, or providing analysis designed to support a particular policy option.<sup>62</sup>

All position statements should address what is known and unknown about the actual or potential consequences of the problem being addressed. A leading reason why resources are mismanaged is that the scientific community often fails to differentiate science from policy, that is, to separate facts from values.<sup>63</sup> In order to clearly distinguish between facts and values, policy advocacy is confined to the **Position** portion of the statement, or in a recommendations section following the **Background** portion. If the primary intent is to communicate information, value-driven comments on existing policies and recommended actions would be minimized.

### **Commenting on Existing Forest Policies**

If the position addresses existing forest policies, state the objective or purpose of the policy, and the means identified in the policy for attaining the ends. This may be done in the **Issue** portion of

the statement, in the **Background**, or both. Suggestions for addressing policy objectives and means of attaining them are as follows:

First, is the purpose or objective of the policy clearly stated?

- Although lack of clarity may sometimes be encountered, there may be good reasons for it (see [What is Forest Policy?](#)). In that case, applicable reasons for ambiguity, such as maintaining managerial flexibility to adapt to local conditions, may be worth mentioning in the statement.
- Point out the drawbacks of vague and ambiguous policy objectives. For example, the objectives of maintaining “healthy forests” or “ecosystem integrity” do not identify what it is managers are supposed to be sustaining in a manner that the owners or the public can hold them accountable for. Again, there may be good reasons for vague objectives, but foresters can expect to be asked what they mean by such ambiguous terms. The *SAF Dictionary of Forestry* provides definitions members can use, but if a member is uncomfortable with vague terms and imprecise definitions, perhaps it is best to avoid such terminology altogether.
- Identify expected outcomes of policy actions. Will they meet the specified objectives?
- If necessary, recommend a clearly stated objective that would improve the policy by giving forest resource managers and the public something tangible by which to measure outcomes and progress toward goals.

Second, does the policy provide a mechanism for choosing among options when different choice criteria suggest different courses of action? For example, if economic criteria point to one choice and ecological criteria another,<sup>64</sup> and the policy does not specify a means for resolving this dilemma, it would be useful for the position statement to illustrate how policy modifications could help reconcile such differences.

### **Conclusion: Building Trust with SAF Position Statements**

The communication principles of fairness and honesty, the use of relevant scientific knowledge and identification of appropriate social values, and a focus on stewardship of forest conditions that meet human needs sustainably, now and in the future, are required by the SAF Code of Ethics. These principles can be the basis for position statements on issues affecting the use and management of forest resources. Professional positions can help shape forest policies, but only to the extent people trust the forestry profession.

Today’s forest policies were developed in the 1960s and 1970s, and grew out of public distrust for the way public lands were being managed.<sup>65</sup> Some people continue to distrust natural resource managers; and if foresters are to retain any semblance of their historic management prerogatives, distrust must be allayed.<sup>66</sup> Position statements built upon the principles in the SAF Code of Ethics perhaps can help restore trust in the profession.

Forestry involves many high-profile issues of concern to society at large.<sup>67</sup> Reduced public trust in the profession is evident in the rise of regulation, litigation, public initiatives, licensing, and certification of practices and products. Demonstrating that all professional forestry actions, including policy communications, have a basis in science is one way the profession can retain

credibility and public trust.<sup>68</sup> However, inappropriate advocacy and value judgments by scientists can diminish attempts to integrate science with policy.<sup>69</sup> Nevertheless the policy process needs substantive knowledge about natural resources.<sup>70</sup> The basis for developing successful conservation policies is a combination of ecological knowledge and society's value judgments.<sup>71</sup>

Sustainable development raises many issues requiring judgments and decisions from multiple perspectives, and provides foresters with opportunities to be issue educators as well as advocates. Principled SAF position statements can be an effective communication tool for demonstrating the profession's commitment to sustainable forest resource use and management. Ultimately foresters will be judged by the actions we take, including our public statements on forestry issues and forest policies.

### **Checklist: Does the Position Statement Conform to SAF's Guidelines?**

This document was designed to guide the development of SAF position statements on forest policy issues. First of all, the position statement must conform to the required format, which includes the following items:

- **Position** statement paragraph, clearly identifying recommended actions.
- **Issue** statement paragraph, describing the controversy or problem addressed by the position, including comments on existing forest policies.
- **Background**, stating the relevant scientific facts and societal values associated with the consequences of the problem.
- **Expiration date**.

To assure consistency with SAF norms of professional conduct, it may be helpful for foresters developing position statements, as well as those making decisions to adopt them, to consider the relationship of SAF "Principles and Pledges" in the Code of Ethics with the position statement draft. The following sections explain that relationship and provide checklists for ensuring consistency with the SAF Code of Ethics.

**Sustainability.** Sustainability is "the capacity of forests, ranging from stands to ecoregions, to maintain their health, productivity, diversity, and overall integrity, in the long run, in the context of human activity and use."<sup>72</sup> Appropriate forest uses are identified in the SAF Code of Ethics: "Foresters seek to *sustain* and protect a variety of forest uses and attributes, such as aesthetic values, air and water quality, biodiversity, recreation, timber production, and wildlife habitat."<sup>73</sup>

People expect resources to be managed sustainably,<sup>74</sup> and public consent is necessary for resource management.<sup>75</sup> Public acceptance of forestry practice is the greatest challenge foresters face.<sup>76</sup> Sustainable forestry involves three dimensions: ecological soundness, economic viability, and social desirability.<sup>77</sup> Judgments of sustainability require, at a minimum, consideration of ecological/environmental, economic, and social/community factors.<sup>78</sup> Managing for multiple objectives requires selecting an appropriate set of criteria and indicators, and paying attention to *all* of them.<sup>79</sup>

Sustainability asks for consideration of what is known (and unknown) about:

- Ecological/environmental consequences of actions, including potential benefits and detrimental effects that can be communicated in the position statement.
- Economic impacts, including assessment of costs and benefits, and identification of who gains and who pays. Perceived shortcomings can be identified and communicated in the position statement.
- Social acceptability. The SAF is responsible to the forestry profession and to society as a whole, not to various interest groups (including segments of SAF) or to public opinion polls that run counter to what professional judgment recommends as being in society's interest.

If the position statement is addressing a forest policy, does the policy encourage sustainability; that is, does the policy move toward sustainable patterns of resource use? Sustainability evokes the need to reply to several questions:<sup>80</sup>

- What is to be sustained, and at what scale, and in what form? As a practical matter, the goals of management will determine what is to be sustained on the land.<sup>81</sup>
- Over what time period and with what level of certainty?
- Through what social process and with what tradeoffs against other social goals? That is, how are issues resolved that arise from different perspectives? A forest policy without a choice mechanism and a process for using it is not likely to be sustainable.

**Stewardship.** The profession of forestry serves society by fostering stewardship of the world's forests.<sup>82</sup> Stewardship is "the administration of land and associated resources in a manner that enables their passing on to future generations in a healthy condition."<sup>83</sup> The concern for future generations links stewardship with sustainability. Stewardship, however, emphasizes ecological/environmental considerations related to human perceptions of a "healthy condition." Forest health is "the perceived condition of a forest derived from concerns about such factors as its age, structure, composition, function, vigor, presence of unusual levels of insects or disease, and resilience to disturbance."<sup>84</sup>

To evoke management strategies that would maintain or restore desirable forest conditions in the context of human use, the position statement should address the following:

- Goals or objectives to be attained through forest resource management,
- Current condition of forest resources, and
- Given those conditions, identify appropriate means for administering forest resources to attain socially acceptable outcomes stated as objectives.

**Science.** The SAF Code of Ethics states that "sound science is the foundation of the forestry profession."<sup>85</sup> The scientific process is the pursuit of knowledge about how the world works; it has an established process for inquiry, logic, and validation.<sup>86</sup> Sustainable forest management requires planning and planning requires prediction; the science underlying prediction is thus the cornerstone on which professional forestry is built.<sup>87</sup>

Position statements are based on thorough study of an issue.<sup>88</sup> That must include a review of the scientific knowledge associated with the consequences of the problem situation being addressed. Therefore,

- A position statement should carefully consider the science underlying the forestry issue or problem being addressed.
- A valuable professional contribution is identifying scientific shortcomings, either in the body of scientific knowledge or in the forest policies associated with the issue.
- An advocacy position statement should provide recommendations for action based on scientific knowledge as well as social values.

The best assurance of good public policy is not only scientific knowledge, but also open debate, caution, and a regulatory system capable of self-correction.<sup>89</sup> It seems appropriate to “rely on scientists to recognize problems, but not to remedy them.”<sup>90</sup> Traditional scientists engaged in policy analysis often misperceive how public policy is developed, and attempt to replace political decisions with rational, objective decisions based on their disciplinary knowledge and models.<sup>91</sup> In the future science must be more directed to the needs of resource managers, and to the society around them.<sup>92</sup> Science applied to environmental and conservation issues requires both empirical science and value clarification.<sup>93</sup>

**Values.** To be relevant, the forestry profession must be both science-based and value-driven.<sup>94</sup> The combination of science and values is emphasized in the SAF Code of Ethics principle regarding forest policy: “Public policy related to forests must be based on both scientific principles and societal values.”<sup>95</sup> Foresters have a responsibility to help the American people create forest policies that serve human values.<sup>96</sup> Two overarching American values are *individualism*, expressed through individual, market, and political freedom concepts; and *community*, including the related concepts of democracy, justice, and fairness or equity. Although there is some tension between individualism and community in our society, both sets of values seem to be necessary.<sup>97</sup>

American values that have endured for more than a century include a belief in abundance and progress, devotion to growth and prosperity, faith in science and technology, commitment to a laissez-faire economy and limited government planning, and private property rights.<sup>98</sup> In contrast are values often identified with the American environmental movement that began in the 1960s. Environmental values have evolved to include three core items: 1) protecting biodiversity, ecological systems, and wilderness; 2) minimizing negative impacts on human health; and 3) establishing patterns of sustainable resource use.<sup>99</sup> As per the **sustainability** principle above, foresters have a responsibility to society in helping establish sustainable patterns of forest use.

Forest policies are a subset of environmental policies. Environmental policy is always informed by scientific judgment.<sup>100</sup> Deciding what to do about environmental problems is a value judgment, not a scientific judgment, and a scientist is no more qualified to make such judgments than any other citizen.<sup>101</sup> Decisions on environmental issues must begin with an examination of the relevant scientific evidence; however, environmental decisions also require careful analysis of the economic, social, and political consequences, and solutions to environmental problems will also reflect religious, aesthetic, and ethical values.<sup>102</sup>

For position statements addressing forest policy issues,

- Have relevant social values been overlooked or inadequately reflected in the policy?
- If so, which values?

- How could they be included?

It may be appropriate to include social values in a position statement, especially one that advocates or recommends a particular forest policy option. However, the *honesty* principle would have values clearly identified as such and kept separate from facts and/or scientific knowledge related to the issue or problem.

**Honesty.** Foresters are obliged to communicate accurate information honestly and openly, stating on whose behalf public statements are made.<sup>103</sup> SAF position statements are made on behalf of the diverse membership of the SAF, and therefore consider differences in regional conditions and landowner objectives. To communicate with honesty, pertinent facts and applicable knowledge are included and clearly separated from value-based judgments:

- Are facts and values clearly identifiable as such, or are they blended together in an inappropriate manner?
- To separate facts and values, it may be helpful to attempt to identify each sentence in the position statement as primarily a fact or a value.<sup>104</sup>
- Are values presented in the appropriate sections of the position statement?

**Fairness.** Foresters are required to behave in a civil and dignified manner, respecting the viewpoints of others.<sup>105</sup> Because SAF position statements are the profession's view on forestry issues and problems, it is not necessary to identify other viewpoints. However, issues by definition involve conflicting views, and in some cases it may be useful to identify them. To communicate with fairness, the viewpoints of diverse groups are treated respectfully:

- Are the viewpoints of different affected interests reflected in the position statement?
- Does the position statement use inflammatory adverbs, adjectives, or terminology that seem to disfavor or discredit any particular viewpoint?

*SAF and Forest Policy: A Guide to Position Statement Development* was written by Jay O'Laughlin, University of Idaho professor and member of the SAF Committee on Forest Policy (CFP) during 2001-2002. Additions by Nick Dennis, CFP chair in 2001, improved it substantially. The document was also improved by Lisa Stocker, CFP chair in 2002; Sharon Friedman, SAF Forest Science & Technology Board chair in 2002; CFP members during the February 2002 meeting; and review of an earlier draft by Jo Ellen Force and David L. Adams, University of Idaho professors and SAF leaders.

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### ***Forest Policy Principles***

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 actions we take.

Forestry is the science and art of attaining desired forest conditions and benefits. As professionals, foresters develop, use, and communicate their knowledge for one purpose: to sustain and enhance forest resources for diverse benefits in perpetuity. To fulfill this purpose, foresters need to understand the many demands that forests must satisfy and the potential for forest ecosystems to satisfy these demands now and in the future.

The Society of American Foresters is the national organization representing the forestry profession in the United States. The Society's forest policy principles, approved by referendum, guide the positions the Society takes in contributing its professional knowledge to public deliberation on forestry issues.

### **Expanding Knowledge**

The Society of American Foresters promotes public policies that advance knowledge about the capabilities of forest resources and responses of forest ecosystems to specific actions and policies. The Society has a responsibility to ensure that knowledge about forests grows vigorously to serve society's needs, thereby improving decisions affecting forests and resolving uncertainty about the future consequences of forest activities.

***Resource Inventory***—The Society promotes policies and programs that improve knowledge about the extent, quality, distribution, potential, and values of forest resources. The world's forests are complex and diverse. The variability of soils, climates, topographies, and gene pools, of access to urban areas and markets, and of human population and use, create marked differences in biological and social potentials, even over short distances and times. New technologies, institutions, and economic conditions may create even greater differences and possibilities. Such variations determine the impacts of policies and activities on the benefits that forest resources can sustain. The Society promotes the advance of forest assessments and the improved interpretation and use of the information they provide.

***Research***—The Society advocates policies that strengthen forestry research. Research improves and develops new knowledge about the effects of different activities, social and biological conditions, and policies on forest quality and productivity. Such knowledge is vital for sustaining and enhancing the benefits that forests provide and for resolving conflicts about forest policy and management on scientific grounds.

SAF also advocates the growth of knowledge about forest ecosystems and their management. Through journals, conferences, special committees, and task forces, the Society sponsors the evaluation and dissemination of research results, applies the results to contemporary policy issues, and assesses the priorities of forestry research agendas. In addition, it advocates cost-effective funding for research activities and for the development of scientists in areas of social priority.

**Planning**—SAF supports long-term planning of forest activities. These activities can have enduring effects. They must be chosen and implemented with the best available understanding of their future impacts on forest ecosystems, resources, and people. Planning provides the means for using scientific knowledge and methods systematically to choose, implement, evaluate, and improve forestland allocations and practices.

The Society advocates resource planning and evaluation to help foresters, landowners, and the public understand the reasons for and the effects of specific decisions. It supports organizations that plan effectively and remain responsive to new knowledge and societal needs. It encourages its members to participate in public discussions of forest plans, their basis, and their implications.

### **Transforming Knowledge into Abilities**

The Society of American Foresters has a responsibility to improve the education of forestry professionals and to strengthen communications between them and the people they serve.

**Education**—SAF promotes policies that will improve the quality and effectiveness of professional and technical education throughout the world. Such education is the best way to develop the skills of resource professionals and to improve their responsiveness to the future complexities of the world's forest ecosystems. The Society helps to recruit promising men and women of all backgrounds into forestry education programs. Through its accreditation and recognition process, it regularly evaluates these programs and recommends improvements. It also provides continuing education opportunities for individuals to learn about new scientific and technical advances, to understand the social context in which they are applied, and to improve their managerial skills.

**Public Deliberation**—SAF advocates policies that strengthen informed interaction and discussion between resource professionals and the public. Forest plans and policies combine public perspectives, landowner interests, and professional advice. Their value depends upon the nature of the dialogue from which they arise. The Society also promotes the quality of, and mutual access to, information that productive discussion requires. It advocates improved opportunities for cooperation between resource professionals and the public.

### **Applying Abilities**

The Society of American Foresters supports policies that increase the effectiveness of resource professionals in applying their knowledge to the beneficial protection and management of forest resources.

**Protection**—The Society advocates policies that strengthen the protection of forests against the threats of unprescribed fire, pests and diseases, atmospheric pollution, and abusive treatment. The Society encourages wide dissemination of information about the extent and variety of forest resources destroyed by fire and other agents, the costs, both monetary and social, of forest loss, and the means to avoid them. It is committed to protecting forest resources consistent with public and landowner interests. It supports the development of model protection policies and programs. The Society also encourages coordination among protection agencies, between landowners and protection agencies,

and at all levels of local, state, and federal government charged with establishing protective controls.

**Management**—The Society promotes professional ethics and public policies that ensure skillful management for all forest ecosystems, types of ownership, and desired uses. Forest ecosystems can be managed to produce timber, water, forage, energy, and minerals; they can be protected to maintain landscapes for watershed, recreation, and esthetic values, and to maintain wilderness, fish and wildlife populations, and species diversity. They are managed to achieve any and all mixes of these values. Applying forestry practices in such complex ecosystems requires professional judgment that combines the biophysical possibilities of a specific site, the objectives of the landowner—private or public—and the interests of the public at large. The Society endorses ethical standards of performance to which its members are held accountable. It advocates policies that (1) respect these standards, (2) recognize the need for professional judgment, and (3) support its effective exercise.

### **Shaping Policy**

The Society of American Foresters has a responsibility to shape policies that affect sustainable forest resources and the future benefits they will provide. It promotes policies that:

- encourage conservation of, or investment in, forest resources to satisfy future expectations
- resolve conflicts about forest uses and forestland allocations to make future investments more secure
- promote the equitable distribution of forest benefits to strengthen public support for forest resource conservation
- increase cooperation between and among foresters and forestry institutions throughout the world who are developing mutually beneficial approaches to these challenges

**Investment in Forest Resources**—The Society promotes policies that encourage investment in forests for the future. The benefits that forests provide depend upon the resources that the landowner and the public commit to sustain and enhance future forest capabilities. A number of factors—uncertainty about the future, weak returns to landowners who are environmentally responsible, limited funds, population pressures and forest fragmentation, competitive governmental jurisdictions—discourage the types and levels of private investment the public may want. Budgetary and other financial policies can have similar effects on public lands. Unfulfilled expectations become sources of conflicts that further weaken investment.

SAF advocates tax policies that respect the long-term nature of forestry investments. It also promotes programs for forestlands that reflect the material, environmental, and social benefits these resources create for present and future generations. It supports property rights and regulations that encourage investment and deter resource degradation as well as policies that limit the negative effects of population growth on the integrity of the forestland base, forest habitats, and forested landscapes. It also encourages

cooperation—among governmental and private owners of forestland, between landowners and those their activities affect, and among diverse governments and agencies—to increase investment in forest resources in mutually advantageous ways.

***Conflict Resolution***—The Society supports policies that help to resolve conflicts among diverse interests in the world's forest resources. Both the public and the landowner have come to expect greater opportunities for use and development than these forest resources can sustain. Conflicts become costly for all involved because they discourage investments in resource-enhancing activities that would better satisfy everyone's expectations.

Forums to resolve differences among competing interests for the management, use, and allocation of forest resources are promoted. It encourages the involvement of forestry professionals and the application of their knowledge in conflict resolution as well as policies that remove the technical, financial, and institutional constraints that prevent forests from realizing their full potential.

***Equity***—The equitable distribution of forest opportunities and benefits is important. Forests must be protected from uses they cannot sustain and nurtured by activities that enhance their capabilities. Throughout the world, people who in different circumstances might conserve forest resources lack the opportunities that would allow them to do so. Poverty erodes people's will and ability to conserve the forest. Groups who are not represented in public decisions about forest resources have little reason to support policies they cannot influence.

The Society promotes policies that secure people's support in sustaining and enhancing forest resources. It also supports policies that increase job opportunities in forest regions, particularly in the area of forest improvements, and that strengthen the viability and the diversity of forest enterprises so as to prevent forest fragmentation and conversion. SAF advocates public decision-making processes that adequately represent the full range of the racial, gender, class, and ethnic diversity of those with potential interests in forests and forest resources.

### **International Cooperation**

The Society is committed to constructive international efforts to address problems of forest degradation and its local and global impacts. Many local forestry issues have become international concerns because of the growing interdependence of environmental conditions and trade among nations, the global pressures and opportunities related to population and economic growth, and expanding knowledge about mutual forestry problems that all nations face. The Society encourages cooperation—in education, research, planning, development, and policymaking—between the foresters and forestry institutions of the United States and nations abroad. It promotes increased financing of such collaborations in the common search for means to achieve sustainable rural, regional, national, and international development and to strengthen strategies for the conservation of forest ecosystems throughout the world.

### **The Professional Responsibility**

These forest policy principles must be flexible and responsive to changing public interests. The Society encourages forestry professionals to discuss these policy principles with interested groups and with one another and to suggest changes that may better reflect public needs and

professional knowledge. To improve the responsiveness and effectiveness of the profession itself, the Society is committed to achieving a social diversity among forestry professionals that represents the diversity of American society as a whole.

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### Endnotes

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<http://www.its.uidaho.edu/cnr/>

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