



August 11, 2010
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Dan Whiting
(202) 747-0746

Strong and Diverse Markets Help Conserve Private Forests

WASHINGTON, D.C. – David P. Tenny, President and CEO of the National Alliance of Forest Owners, offered the following comments on the USDA Forest Service's report, released today, entitled *Private Forests, Public Benefits: Increased Housing Density and Other Pressures on Private Forest Contributions*:

The Forest Service report underscores that one of the most effective means of conserving private forests is vibrant markets for the goods, services and other public benefits they provide. History has demonstrated this. Over the past century the U.S. population has increased by 3 ½ times, creating an unprecedented demand for forest products and services, particularly in the housing market. During this same period total forest acreage in the U.S. has remained constant, and the volume of trees has increased 50% over the past 50 years as forest owners sustainably manage their lands to meet market demand.

As private forest owners face difficult economic times that put great economic pressures on land use, public policies that promote robust existing markets for forest products, emerging markets like renewable energy and carbon, favorable tax policies, and public investment in conservation are vital to maintaining working forests on the landscape.

NAFO's members recognize this and work to protect and enhance the economic and environmental values of privately-owned forests for the long term. That is why NAFO helps lead the Working Forests Coalition, a diverse group of organizations united around keeping working forests working by ensuring forests are an economically viable land use. The Coalition's platform states:

As existing markets weaken or disappear, goods, services and uses associated with working forests are becoming less competitive with other economic uses of private forest land over time. While some conversion from forests to other uses is acceptable to accommodate a growing population or to optimize land use, it is critical to develop policies and programs that help working forests remain competitive with other land uses and thereby help sustain the many benefits they provide as part of our nation's natural resources infrastructure. This is especially critical as we advance our efforts to meet our nation's growing need for renewable energy, climate change solutions, a healthier environment, and family-waged jobs in rural communities.

[MORE]

While traditional markets are critical, they must be augmented by new and emerging markets. The Forest Service report mentions that USDA's Office of Environmental Markets is working to create and expand markets for environmental services from forests, such as carbon sequestration, clean air and water, and wildlife habitat. These markets are still undeveloped, and much work must be done to make them helpful to forest owners.

An important market that will help meet our nation's renewable energy needs is the use of forest biomass for electricity, heat, and fuel. Biomass is a plentiful energy source that can add value to forest lands that doesn't exist today. We applaud Secretary Vilsack's support for biomass energy and its role in helping to sustain working forests and jobs in rural communities. However, we are concerned that this important marketplace is threatened by policies at the EPA, like the PSD Tailoring Rule, that equate renewable biomass energy to fossil fuels. Unless changed, such policies will depress markets for biomass energy in favor of fossil fuels and weaken the economic viability of working forests and the communities they support. We look forward to working with USDA and EPA together to ensure that biomass energy plays the positive role it should play in U.S. energy policy and as an important means of conserving working forests.

More information on the working forests coalition is available at www.nafoalliance.org/workingforests.

###

NAFO is an organization of private forest owners committed to advancing federal policies that promote the economic and environmental values of privately-owned forests at the national level. NAFO membership encompasses more than 75 million acres of private forestland in 47 states. To see the economic impact of America's working forests, visit www.nafoalliance.org/economic-impact-report.