

Written Public Testimony of Randy Dye, West Virginia State Forester  
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Subcommittee on Public Lands and Environmental Regulation

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On behalf of the National Association of State Foresters, I thank Chairman Bishop and Ranking Member Grijalva for the opportunity to appear before the Subcommittee today. The National Association of State Foresters (NASF) represents the directors of the state forestry agencies of all fifty states, eight territories, and the District of Columbia. State Foresters manage and protect state and private forests across the U.S., which make up two-thirds of the nation's forests, and work closely with our federal partners to respond to invasive species issues.

The impacts of invasive forest insect and disease species on our nation's forests have become an increasing concern for the National Association of State Foresters (NASF). NASF's programs and stewardship actions are on the front lines of eradicating, slowing the spread, and addressing the enormous collateral damage of invasive species.

Forested landscapes cover approximately one-third of the total land area of the United States, including 100 million acres in urban environments. Every American benefits from forests, whether in the form of wood products for construction or paper, neighborhood amenities, wildlife habitat, carbon sequestration, clean water and air, and even our spiritual well-being. Many Americans' jobs are linked to trees. The U.S. forest products industry employs nearly 900,000 people; it is among the top 10 manufacturing sector employers in 47 states. Jobs associated with production of non-wood forest products are estimated to be in the tens of thousands.

Invasive species know no boundaries; they span landscapes, land ownerships, and jurisdictions. The damage they cause costs the American public an estimated \$138 billion each year, which makes them a significant drain on the national economy.

- Private landowners and small communities are some of the hardest hit by invasive species infestations.
- Invasive species can be exceptionally damaging in urban environments where ecological systems are already stressed. Invasive species threaten the quality of life and the property values of millions of metropolitan residents across the country.

- Currently, 42 percent—400 of 958—of the plant and animal species listed by the Federal Government as threatened or endangered have been negatively affected by invasive species.
- Invasive species populations have depleted water supplies, poisoned wildlife and livestock, and directly impacted thousands of acres of native forests and rangelands.
- Public recreational opportunities and experiences have become severely degraded by rapid infestations of invasive species, in many cases hampering access, reducing recreational quality and enjoyment, and decreasing the aesthetic values of public lands

Some of the most damaging Invasive species include Asian Long-horned Beetle, Emerald Ash Borer, Gypsy Moth, Sudden Oak Death, Hemlock Woolly Adelgid, and Cogon grass.

Municipal governments across the country are spending more than \$1.7 billion each year to remove trees on city property killed by these pests. Homeowners are spending \$1 billion to remove and replace trees on their property and they are absorbing an additional \$1.5 billion in reduced property values. The scope of the impacts of these pests is demonstrated by a brief description of the threats they pose:

- The Asian Longhorned Beetle kills trees in 15 botanical families—especially maple and birch which constitute much of the forest reaching from Maine to Minnesota and urban trees worth an estimated \$600 billion.
- Emerald Ash Borer occupies more than 200,000 square miles in 18 states. More than 200 million ash trees in the Plains States and additional trees in the South are at risk to this pest. Homeowners and municipalities collectively will pay more than \$10 billion over the next 10 years to remove dead ash trees that would otherwise fall and could cause property damage or even loss of life.
- Hemlock Woolly Adelgid has killed up to 90% of hemlock trees in the Appalachians from Georgia to Massachusetts. Loss of hemlock groves threatens unique ecosystems and watersheds.
- Goldspotted Oak Borer has killed up to 80,000 California live oak and black oak trees in San Diego County in less than 15 years. The insect threatens oaks throughout California, including close to 300,000 oak trees growing in greater Los Angeles and Yosemite Valley.
- Sudden Oak Death affects 143 different plant species and continues to spread in California's 14 impacted counties as well as Curry County, Oregon. In 2012 alone, nearly 400,000 trees were lost to Sudden Oak Death in California.

The Federal government has several unique characteristics that compel it to play a primary role in the fight against invasive species. It has the direct authority to manage over 200 million acres of national parks, forests and grasslands, many of which harbor infestations of invasive species. It also has the authority to provide technical and financial assistance (primarily for insect,

disease, and invasive plant suppression) for all the Nation's 731 million acres of forest lands, including urban, State, private, and tribal lands

In 1999, Executive Order (EO) 13112 established the National Invasive Species Council (NISC), co-chaired by the Secretaries of the Interior, Agriculture, and Commerce. NISC members include the Secretaries of Transportation, State, Defense, Homeland Security, Treasury, and Health and Human Services; the Administrators of the Environmental Protection Agency and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration; as well as the Director of the U.S. Agency for International Development and the U.S. Trade Representative. NISC was charged with providing coordination, planning and overall leadership for federal invasive species programs and reaching out to state, tribal, local and private partners.

Coordination is not only critical between agencies of the Federal government, but also with state and local entities. Recent efforts to create national management frameworks have helped coordinate US Forest Service (USFS), Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), National Association of State Foresters (NASF), National Plant Board (NPB), and their missions, expertise and available resources to effectively respond to three priority invasive species threats: Sudden Oak Death, Emerald Ash Borer, and Thousand Canker Disease.

Actions at the local level are also critical. I'd like to highlight some efforts in my home state of West Virginia. The Potomac Highlands Cooperative Weed and Pest Management Area (CWPMA) is a partnership between federal, state, and local agencies, community associations, non-profit organizations, and private land owners aimed at coordinating efforts and programs for addressing the threat of invasive species. The mission of Potomac Highlands CWPMA is the prevention and management of invasive species in the headwaters region of the South Branch of the Potomac River in West Virginia and Virginia. They are dedicated to decreasing the impacts of invasive species on native plant and animal communities, public and private forests, private and agricultural lands, and local economies through public awareness, education, professional improvement and environmental awareness. Projects include volunteer work days, landowner education, and youth events at schools.

Other efforts like those in Georgia are essential in the fight against invasive species such as Cogon grass. The Georgia "Cogon grass Task Force" has provided training to resource professionals throughout the state, and its educational campaign continues to help landowners identify and remove the plant. The Georgia Forestry Commission spearheaded an effort to bring a total of 23 state, federal and private partners to establish the entire state of Georgia as a Cooperative Weed Management Area for Cogon grass in May 2008. The combined effort of this group should have far reaching impacts to help educate the public about Cogon grass as well as help locate all infested sites

Legislation and program implementation is needed to increase the nation's current protection system for invasive species, which is currently piecemeal and lacks adequate rigor and

comprehensiveness, virtually ensuring that invasive species will continue to arrive and spread. Federal government involvement with states is critical as specific federal legislation (e.g. inter-state commerce, plant protection) limit certain state actions. A successful forest invasive species prevention and control program must address the complexity and wide-ranging agency and community needs at the regional, state, and local level. The National Association of State Foresters believes that:

- Federal agencies (e.g., USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service) should coordinate with appropriate state agencies as well as their traditional state agricultural agency partners in addressing forest invasive pests. If desired, state agencies should be provided the option to have a lead role in deciding what programs, regulations and initiatives are needed and best suited to protect forest resources within their respective states. In most cases state agencies have better knowledge and contacts with local stakeholders and community-based organizations that have developed tactics and programs to combat invasive species at the local level (e.g., county representatives, utilities).
- Where federal forests dominate ownership at a local or regional level, Federal Agencies should partner strategically with state forestry agencies to minimize the spread of invasives between adjoining private or state forest land and identify opportunities for cost-effective treatment.
- A federal program should include initiatives that are non-regulatory and incentive driven, support and build capacity at the state, regional, and community level, and encourage voluntary cooperation of affected private entities and communities.
- Investments to support local, state, and regional partnerships, which are prepared to take immediate action against known priority invasive species, will provide valuable lessons for others and promote innovations and efficiencies in protection and public outreach strategies. By sharing their progress, these partnerships will, in turn, help identify the policy and legal obstacles to success as well as build a constituency for more effective invasive species prevention and control programs in other areas.

NASF recommends the following strategies to be considered in any comprehensive invasive species legislation:

- Establishment of a state-level rapid response capacity that can quickly eradicate priority forest invasive species.
- Non-regulatory and incentive-driven national programs, with specific focus on encouraging voluntary cooperation.
- Adoption and enforcement of workable national regulatory programs to address key pathways such as firewood movement where non-regulatory approaches are not in place, effective or, simply, to serve as a “backstop” for those voluntary approaches.

- Support efforts to enhance forest invasive species response, management and restoration in areas and communities that have been impacted by harmful non-native forest insects and diseases.
- Development of procedures that resolve jurisdictional and other disputes in an effort to improve coordination of Federal agencies, and between Federal and State agencies. A network of partners is needed with agreed upon authorities, responsibilities, and roles.
- Increase research capacity in efforts to quickly assess impacts of potential invasive species; identify, test, and deploy bio-control agents, develop management tools for mitigation and suppression, and genetic and breeding programs designed to enhance resistance of high priority tree species; and
- An increased percentage of funds delegated to the states and their cooperating entities. In most cases, state agencies have better knowledge and contacts with local stakeholders and community-based organizations.

I appreciate the opportunity to appear before the Subcommittee today to offer perspectives shared by state foresters regarding the impacts of invasive species on the nation's forests. I would like to thank the Subcommittee for its continued leadership and support of active, sustainable management of all forest lands.