



New Jersey Forestry Association

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Mr. Bob Martin, Commissioner
NJDEP
401 E. State St.
7th Floor, East Wing
P.O. Box 402
Trenton, NJ 08625-0402

Dear Commissioner Martin:

There are several major issues related to the management and conditions in New Jersey forests that are of critical concern to the New Jersey Forestry Association. These issues have a major interrelationship with the forestry programs of your department.

1. The unrelenting spreading southern Pine Beetle is having a disastrous effect on the pine forests of New Jersey. Unless comprehensive suppression and control programs are broadly implemented, the economic and environmental devastation caused by the beetle will only multiply. Too, the dangers of catastrophic wildfire are being enhanced as well.

Could you briefly advise us of the overall suppression and control programs related to this disaster? Please include the role of the Federal funds received as well.

2. The New Jersey Forestry Association, in conjunction with other groups secured the passage of the Forest Stewardship Act in January 2010. This legislation was recognized nationally, by the 25,000 member National Woodland Owners Association as the most important state forest legislation passed that year. Its major purpose was to provide an overall program to revitalize forest management in New Jersey. Expectations were that this law would be implemented by now, but based on recent inquiry, it has been suggested that it may be another couple of years before the regulations and related administrative actions are completed.

What can be done to accelerate the progress of implementing this essential legislative initiative?

3. Much has been said and published recently, in response to new and growing threats to our forests, about the ability of scientifically managed forests to be more productive, healthier, and able to withstand natural threats. Over the past several decades, some of the dominating attitudes impacting on forest policy are that “natural conditions —rather than scientific management—should prevail”. However, the current conditions in many New Jersey forests clearly refute that perspective.

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For state forest lands, S-1085, when adopted has the potential to invigorate and make state forests much more productive and environmentally sound. Also, broadening scientific forest lands management can provide models for private forest land management as well.

Every effort should be made to secure the adoption of S-1085 as soon as possible.

4. As part of the overall effort to improve State and private forest lands, there is an overwhelming need to energize and strengthen the professional staff of the State Forestry Services. Decimated over the past decade, the staff has been stretched beyond its capability to perform the scope of federal and state forestry programs it is legally required to perform. And with new threats and program demands facing our forests, there is an un-paralleled need to fill vacant positions and for additional staff. To some extent S-1085 includes an element that could aid in getting resources for some added staff. In any event this is a crisis issue.

Your consideration of these several issues and your views and comments will be most welcome.

Sincerely

Richard M. Conley

Richard M. Conley
President, New Jersey Forestry Association

P.S. I have enclosed an article that also speaks to some of our issues. See
“**The Southern Coastal Plain Risks Over Time**”; Forest Landowner, September/October, 2011