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NEWS

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Colorado State Forest Service Completes Statewide Forest Resource Strategy to Maximize Efficient Use of Resources

FORT COLLINS, Colo. — The Colorado State Forest Service has released a comprehensive statewide forest resource strategy aimed at focusing limited resources where they will achieve the greatest benefit. The strategy was developed in cooperation with forestry stakeholders throughout Colorado and addresses major threats to Colorado’s forest resources.

The *Colorado Statewide Forest Resource Strategy* accompanies and builds on the *Colorado Statewide Forest Resource Assessment*, a geospatial analysis of current forest conditions completed by the CSFS in December 2009.

Development of the assessment and strategy evolved as a result of decreased availability of resources, including funding, and threats to forests that are posing challenges at the state and national levels. Realizing these challenges, in 2007, the U.S. Forest Service sought a way to better shape and influence use of forest land on a scale that would optimize public benefit for current and future generations. With this goal in mind, the USFS State and Private Forestry Program Redesign Initiative was introduced to “improve the ability to identify the greatest threats to forest sustainability and accomplish meaningful change in high-priority areas.”

To guide the process, the USFS identified three national themes and associated management objectives that will be used to direct State & Private Forestry Program funds – conserve working forest landscapes; protect forests from harm; and enhance public benefits from trees and forests.

“Our assessment led to the identification of 10 major threats to Colorado’s important forest landscapes, and the strategy provides us with the tools necessary to address those threats,” said Jeff Jahnke, state forester and director of the Colorado State Forest Service. “The assessment and strategy will help guide the CSFS and other forestry stakeholders as we take a landscape-level approach to leveraging limited resources where they will achieve the greatest benefit.”

Threats to Colorado’s important forest landscapes include forest fragmentation; loss of forest products manufacturing capacity; insect and disease activity; wildfires both within and outside of the wildland-urban interface; forest resiliency and adaptability to changing climatic conditions; declining watershed health; and air-quality issues associated with forest conditions.

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Following completion of the statewide assessment, the CSFS invited 550 interested stakeholders to participate in facilitated regional focus group meetings to assist in developing strategies that address the 10 threats. Meetings were held in Fort Collins, Steamboat Springs, Durango, Salida, Glenwood Springs and Colorado Springs. Participants included representatives from federal agencies, state and local governments, non-governmental conservation organizations, wood-processing businesses, homeowners associations and other stakeholder groups.

Ten overarching strategies emerged from the focus group discussions, such as managing forests based on appropriate science-based information; developing a strategic marketing and communications plan to promote the benefits of active forest management; creating and sustaining a viable forest products industry in Colorado; and focusing on-the-ground efforts to leverage resources. Strategies that specifically address each of the 10 threats also were developed.

“Next, we must develop a clear vision of our future forests and then work together to direct resources that will achieve that vision,” said Joe Duda, Forest Management Division supervisor for the Colorado State Forest Service, who also led development of the assessment and strategy. “This will require a long-term commitment that involves monitoring and adapting strategies as conditions change, because our future forests will be shaped by natural factors and by the decisions we make now.”

The *Colorado Statewide Forest Resource Strategy* is considered a dynamic document and will be reviewed and revised at least once every five years, or more often if necessary. For more information about the statewide forest resource assessment and strategy, visit the CSFS website at www.csfs.colostate.edu.

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