

The Society of American Foresters (SAF) is pleased to announce the publication of “Managing Forests Because Carbon Matters: Integrating Energy, Products, and Land Management Policy,” a groundbreaking report published in the *Journal of Forestry* that summarizes and analyzes the most recent science regarding forests and carbon accounting, biomass use, and forest carbon offsets. The report was compiled by the SAF’s Task Force on Forest Climate Change Offsets and Use of Forest Biomass for Energy, which also coordinated more than 25 external reviews of the report.

SAF Executive Vice President Michael Goergen stated, “This report provides important policy recommendations that will encourage forest management to maximize the carbon and energy benefits forests and forest products provide, while simultaneously sustaining ecosystem health and traditional forest uses. It demonstrates why the United States must invest in its forest resources and how their management can have important positive impacts on carbon in the atmosphere while producing renewable energy and other benefits, including energy independence.”

According to the task force, U.S. environmental and energy policies need to be linked and based on four science-informed premises:

- Sustainably managed forests can provide carbon storage and substitution benefits while delivering a range of environmental and social benefits, such as timber and biomass resources, clean water, wildlife habitat, and recreation.
- Energy produced from forest biomass returns carbon to the atmosphere that plants absorbed in the relatively recent past; it essentially results in no net release of carbon as long as overall forest inventories are stable or increasing (as is the case with US Forests).
- Forest products used in place of energy-intensive materials, such as metals, concrete, and plastic: (a) reduce carbon emissions (because forest products require less fossil fuel-based energy to produce); (b) store carbon (for a length of time based on products’ use and disposal); and (c) provide biomass residuals (i.e., waste wood) that can be substituted for fossil fuels to produce energy.
- Fossil fuel-produced energy releases carbon into the atmosphere that has resided in the Earth for millions of years; forest biomass-based energy uses far less of the carbon stored in the Earth, thereby reducing the flow of fossil fuel-based carbon emissions to the atmosphere.

“Kudos to SAF for bringing together such a diverse team of scientists to evaluate this critical environmental and energy issue,” said US Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell. He also noted the “significant and important contributions provided by the two Forest Service members of the task force, Edmund Gee and Jeremy Fried.”

In discussing the report’s scientific review, Dr. Robert Malmshemer, the Task Force’s chair, emphasized the policy implications of the report. “This work will help policy makers reconsider the critical impact forests have on our daily lives and the potential they have to solve problems that confront our nation. We believe our science-based findings should lead toward positive reforms that encourage investment in this vital renewable resource.”

The Task Force's report was issued as a Special Issue of the October/November 2011 *Journal of Forestry* and is available at: <http://www.safnet.org/documents/JOFSupplement.pdf>.

The following scientists developed this innovative/forward looking report:

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