



West Virginia Division of Forestry
www.wvforestry.com
Joe Manchin III, Governor
Randy Dye, Director/State Forester

News Release: Sept. 13, 2010

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**WV DIVISION OF FORESTRY COMPLETES LONG-RANGE PLANS
Two Complimentary Efforts Combine to Form the Most Comprehensive
Planning Efforts Ever Undertaken by the Agency**

Charleston, W.Va. – The West Virginia Division of Forestry (WVD OF) has announced the release of two separate, but complementary, planning documents that will guide the activities of the agency for years to come.

“These plans represent the most comprehensive forestry planning efforts that our agency has ever completed,” said Director/State Forester Randy Dye. “They will guide our efforts and help us to focus our resources in areas that will provide the greatest benefits to the citizens of the state in the most cost effective manner.”

The first document, The Strategic Plan for the Sustainability of West Virginia Forests, was prepared at the direction of the Forest Management Review Commission (FMRC), a statutory body that serves in an oversight capacity to the WVD OF. The FMRC is composed of members of the State Senate, House of Delegates and appointed citizen members; it is co-chaired by Senator Walt Helmick of Pocahontas County and Delegate Harold Michael of Hardy County.

According to Dye, “In October 2008 the FMRC directed us to prepare this plan and to address 12 specific points which they outlined in a letter to me. This included topics covering forest ecology, the state’s forest industry, taxation issues, urban forestry, wildlife issues related to forestry and several other topics.”

Dye enlisted the aid of 67 professional foresters and resource managers from around the state to help frame this effort. He also asked the West Virginia Forestry Association to co-author the document and to assist with the final review.

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“A few months after we began this FMRC process,” Dye explained, “we began a similar effort to develop a statewide Forest Resource Assessment and Strategy (FRAS). This was directed by the 2008 Federal Farm Bill and was required for every state forestry agency in the nation in order to continue receiving federal forestry dollars after Oct. 1, 2010.”

There was some similarity between the two planning efforts, but there were enough differences required by the FMRC and by the USDA Forest Service (USFS) that Dye concluded two separate documents would need to be prepared. “I think that we may be able to combine these two documents when the first updates and revisions are due in 2015,” he said. “At least that’s what I’m hoping to do.”

The FRAS is actually two sub-documents: an assessment to identify the primary forestry issues in the state and a strategy which gives guidance on how to address those issues. Many of the components in the FRAS were directed or recommended by the USFS. The FRAS addressed eight primary issues, including sustainability of forest resources; forest fragmentation; utilization, marketing, and workforce development; water quality; wildfire management; and forest health.

Both planning efforts required the WVDOF to collaborate with partners and various groups; so, many of the same public involvement efforts were used for each process. The FRAS required the state to consider possible multi-state projects and landscape level efforts, and to outline the general conditions and trends for forestry in West Virginia. It also required the use of geo-spatial analysis techniques in order to generate maps and other products to visually identify priority areas. The FRAS is a very broad guidance document that will require specific projects to be determined each year in an annual work plan.

The FMRC document, on the other hand, outlines more specific actions to be undertaken, primarily to benefit the forest products industry and the economy of the state.

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“I think that both plans will be valuable in helping us to focus our efforts and to direct our resources where we can gain the most benefit,” said Dye. “We have many challenges ahead of us in forestry, and these planning documents will help guide us.”

The forest planning documents are posted on the Division of Forestry website, www.wvforestry.com.

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