

ESFPA Working Forest and Wood Product Principles in Climate Change

The Empire State Forest Products Association (ESFPA) supports efforts to reduce carbon emissions that in turn contribute to climate change in a way that maximizes the mitigation provided by working forests and as part of a “Natural Solutions to Climate Change” policy in New York State. We are a trade association comprised of forest landowners, practitioners and wood product manufacturers who are committed to addressing the impacts of global warming and global climate change in a manner that is economically beneficial while demonstrating the important contribution that healthy, sustainably managed forests and responsible biomass energy can make in addressing this global challenge. We are also committed to strengthening the integrated forest economy value chain that creates jobs, family supporting wages and wood products for use every day in our society.

New York’s Forests

New York has 19 million acres of forests that represent the largest terrestrial carbon sink in the State. New York State forests are owned by:

- **Public Owners** – hold 4.8 million acres, or 25% of the State’s forest land. The State owns 4.1 million acres, amounting to 21% of the forest land in New York. Nearly 3 million acres of State-owned forests are classified as Forest Preserve and protected from harvesting or active forest management. The federal government owns about 1% of New York’s forests and municipalities hold around 3%. Public ownership does not include working forest conservation easements over private forest lands.
- **Private Owners** – Private forest landowners hold 14.2 million acres – 75% of the State’s total forest land. Of this, corporations own an estimated 2.7 million acres (14%) and family forest owners hold 10.8 million acres (57%) of the State’s forest lands. The other private forest owners account for about 700,000 acres (4%) and include non-family partnerships (e.g. hunting clubs), non-governmental organizations, and tribal lands.

Carbon stored on New York forest land was 1.6 billion tons or 83 tons/acre¹. This same forest absorbs just under 21 million tons of carbon per year². That equates to 40% of carbon emissions from gasoline vehicles in the State.

Working Forests and Wood Products are the most powerful clean air technology in New York.

By providing a continuing cycle of growing, harvesting and regenerating, active forest management optimizes a forest’s ability to sequester and store carbon and improves resiliency, maintaining the ability to sequester carbon in the future. Productive working forests deliver an abundant supply of wood to meet increasing demand for renewable wood products – products that continue to store carbon throughout their period of use.

Working Forests and Wood Products maximize environmental benefits:

- Working forests and wood products increase carbon capture and carbon storage.
- Working forests are often healthier, more resilient, and able to adapt to the impacts of climate change.
- Productive forests and strong markets for wood products create economic incentive to keep forests as forests, protecting their power to capture carbon.
- Working forests and sustainably harvested biogenic biomass are renewable, carbon beneficial and able to reduce our reliance on more carbon intensive fossil fuel energy resources used in electricity generation, heating and transportation.
- Working forests clean air and water and provide a diverse array of habitats for wildlife.

¹ “New York Forests 2012”, U.S. Forest Service, Forest Inventory Assessment, October 2015.

² “New York State Greenhouse Gas Inventory – 1990-2015”, NYSERDA, Final Report, Revised 2018

Working Forests and Wood Products are a powerful tool in meeting Climate Goals:

1. *Private working forests are a key component of any climate mitigation strategy.* Carbon mitigation strategies that include forest owners and encourage their participation are more likely to deliver the maximum emissions capture and storage potential of forests. Sustainable forest management should be incentivized to encourage privately owned forests to remain undeveloped and to realize their full carbon potential.
2. *Carbon mitigation strategies should recognize carbon sequestration and storage.* Working forests and wood products produced from them must be recognized for providing three critical climate mitigation benefits: carbon sequestered as trees grow, continued carbon storage in the wood products they become, and displacement of demand for more carbon intensive fossil fuels when used as a renewable resource in advanced, efficient energy applications.
3. *Forest owners need clarity and simplicity to participate.* For forest owners to participate, carbon mitigation needs to be clear and simple:
 - Outlining clear rules of engagement from the outset, including how forests will be measured and counted.
 - Establishing streamlined procedures for reviewing and approving participating projects.
 - Removing or addressing cost burdens that can act as a barrier for participation by a responsible landowner.
4. *Wood products are fighting climate change.* The carbon benefits of the wood products from our forests are renewable, recyclable, store and mitigate carbon, and support continued investment in sustainably managed working forests. Over time, stronger markets for wood products from managed lands will bring more value to forest lands and lead to increased forest lands and carbon sequestration, and an economic hedge against permanent conversion of forests to non-forest uses.
5. *Wood product manufacturers need to be recognized.* Companies that manufacture wood products need to be recognized for the carbon sequestered products they produce, the carbon benefits they generate in using residual wood in their manufacturing processes as an energy resource, and in the added value their residuals bring to the total wood supply chain. While forests provide the natural mechanism to sequester carbon and combat climate change, the forest products manufacturing integrated framework provides the support structure to keep those forests healthy, productive and sequestering carbon.
6. *ESFPA members understand and embrace their responsibility to be good stewards of the land and implement businesses practices that minimize environmental impacts.* Our land owners, practitioners and businesses rely on well-established data, constantly improving methods and best management practices to ensure sustainable management of our forests and the wide range of environmental, social and economic benefits they provide.