

Southern Forest Futures Project

Overview and Status—December 12, 2007



What? The Southern Forest Futures Project will analyze and forecast potential changes in the forests of the US South and implications for their sustainability. The SFFP builds on the Southern Forest Resource Assessment which provides a baseline of knowledge for evaluating future changes.

The overall goal of the SFFP is to *inform management choices, policy discussions, and science programs with the clearest possible understanding of the potential long term implications of changes in southern forests.*

Why? Southern forests are reshaped by numerous interacting forces of change including fire, storms, invasive species, urban and suburban development, forest management, and climate. The complexity and the rate of changes demand a rigorous assessment of the implications for the region's forest ecosystems and the many services that the residents of the South and the world derive from them.

Who? The US Forest Service, Southern Research Station and Southern Region, in partnership with the Southern Group of State Foresters, will lead the effort and seek cooperation with other government agencies and the interested public in conducting this analysis.

How? The SFFP will use a two-phase approach to evaluating futures. The first phase will involve constructing a set of future scenarios regarding several driving forces including economic growth, climate, timber markets, energy markets, etc... and will involve a broad cross section of the public. In the second phase of the project, a science team will provide a comprehensive analysis of the implications of the scenarios for future forests and ecosystem services including water, biodiversity, timber, and recreation. Forecasting will rely on new models developed by USFS Research and Development for RPA assessments.

Products? The SFFP will generate a series of reports that explore the possible future trajectory of forests conditions and services over the next half century. In addition, data sets, studies, and projection models will be developed and made accessible for ongoing analysis by agencies and the interested public.

Outcomes? Ultimately, the intent of this effort is to provide knowledge that helps guide sustainable forest management choices in the South. The SFFP will seek to promote:

- Research programs designed to address the most important uncertainties and problems identified through the analysis
- Coordinated forestry program delivery that effectively addresses emerging resource concerns.
- Public and private forest management that anticipates changing forest conditions and needs.
- Better engagement on forest management and policy issues through improved knowledge of possible forest futures.

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When? The SFFP will be completed by the end of 2009. See the detailed timeline below.

Status: The Southern Forest Futures Project is closing out its organizing phase. We are laying out plans through discussions with our partners and have recruited team leaders for undertaking the analysis. We are beginning plans for a series of 15 public meetings to be held around the region in February and March 2008.

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Process and Timeline

