



2023 NAFSR Accomplishment Report

NAFSR had yet another productive year in 2023. Among our many accomplishments, we welcomed three new Board members, two new committee chairs, updated our bylaws, testified at two Congressional hearings, and fielded numerous media calls. Media calls for our perspective and comment included such outlets as *NPR*, the *Washington Post*, *The Hill*, *Bloomberg News*, and *E&E News*. A big thanks to the many Board and committee members who engaged in responding to media inquiries.

We had multiple coordination contacts with the Forest Service headquarters office in 2023. Chief Moore attended a portion of our annual NAFSR February Board meeting and has agreed to do so again in 2024. Steve Ellis and Becki Heath were able to meet with Associate Chief Angela Coleman, Deputy Chief Jaelith Hall-Rivera and other Forest Service leadership and staff while in Washington, DC last spring.

Doug Crandall continued doing exceptional work for NAFSR as our Congressional Liaison. Doug's contacts on Capitol Hill and with a variety of NGOs contributed immensely to the advocacy portion of our mission. Doug has also been helpful as a reviewer of NAFSR media statements, congressional testimony, position papers, and letters to various policy makers.

A sincere thank you to all who serve on our Board of Directors and to Jamie Connell for her role as our Vice-Chair. They are volunteers who cumulatively contribute hundreds of hours to the success of our organization. We bid adieu to veteran board members Jim Caswell, Jack Troyer, Hank Kashdan, and Sandra Holsten who stepped down in 2023. We thank them all for their invaluable contributions to the success of our organization. NAFSR filled this huge void by welcoming three new board members: Bill Avey, Tim DeCoster, and Ralph Crawford. Their backgrounds and photos can be found on our website. Bill and Tim have also agreed to serve as committee chairs.

On the budget front, we had the first known outside reviewer audit of our finances in 2023 and are pleased to report that were just a few minor issues. A summary of the audit findings and recommendations can be found in the November 9th meeting minutes on our website. We are grateful to Johnny and Ellen Hodges for the excellent job they continue to do in managing our finances. In 2023,

Johnny pushed out 21 official announcements, notices, and updates of NAFSR work accomplishments to the Board and membership. Bill Disbrow continues to do a stellar job maintaining our website.

NAFSR created a Governance Task Force that consisted of Becki Heath, Jim Caswell, Rich Stem, Don Howlett and Johnny Hodges. The primary purpose of the task force was to draft revisions to the NAFSR Constitution and Bylaws, which they did. The revisions were approved by the Board in August and posted on our website.

We also created a Membership Task Force whose primary duty is to develop recommendations for retaining and increasing membership. Members of this task force are Nora Rasure, Susan Skalski, and Johnny Hodges.

NAFSR created a Climate Committee in 2022 with Rich Guldin agreeing to serve as Chair. Rich is also NAFSR's representative to the Forest Climate Working Group. The committee has been working on a carbon position paper(s) that we hope gets Board approval in February 2024. NAFSR continues to stay engaged in climate change issues on many fronts.

Aspen Institute/TNC Wildfire Resiliency Initiative

In August 2021, The Nature Conservancy, and the Aspen Institute (Aspen/TNC) launched a new partnership to create a roadmap for improving wildfire resilience. NAFSR was a member of this group which published a final report in March 2023. Our fire committee continues to provide implementation advice to the group. The final report can be found on NAFSR's website.

Committee Leadership Changes

Jose Linares served much of the year as our restoration committee chair, stepping down in October to become NAFSR's representative on the newly established federal advisory committee for sustainable, climate-adapted, wildfire-resilient landscapes across the Northwest Forest Plan Area. A shout out to Jose for his continued engagement in many important issues. Bill Avey has kindly agreed to serve as our new restoration committee chair.

Phil Aune stepped down after more than ten years of dedicated service as chair of the awards committee. What a gratifying legacy Phil and his committee provided us! We look forward to Tim DeCoster's leadership as our incoming awards committee chair.

All-Member Zoom Meeting

NAFSR held its first all-member Zoom session in September. Thank you, Nora Rasure, for being such a remarkable facilitator! The primary purpose of the session was to update members on what NAFSR, and the Board are focused on. A video of the session and a copy of the agenda are posted on the home page of our website. The consensus seems to be that we hold more such sessions in the future.

Congressional Testimony

In May, Ranotta McNair testified before the House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Federal Lands. The topic was "Examining the Challenges Facing Forest Management, Wildfire Suppression, and Wildland Firefighters Ahead of the 2023 Wildfire Year."

Steve Ellis testified before the House Natural Resources Subcommittee in March, in support of H.R. 1586, *Forest Protection and Wildland Firefighter Safety Act of 2023*. Both testimonies are posted on the NAFSR website.

American Wildlife Conservation Partners (AWCP)

Kevin Martin represented NAFSR at the AWCP meeting in Big Sky MT in August. His meeting notes are posted on our website.

AWCP is a coalition of over 50 organizations, including NAFSR, that represent the interests of America's millions of hunter conservationists, professional wildlife and natural resource managers, outdoor recreation users, conservation educators, and wildlife scientists. Individual organizations each have their areas of interest, but collectively all are dedicated to ensuring the vitality of our wildlife resources, providing sustainable public use and enjoyment of those resources under science-based management of the state and federal fish and wildlife agencies, in cooperation with habitat and land management by federal, state, county, and local governments.

Kevin has done an excellent job as NAFSR's representative. The many position letters AWCP has sent to Congress, several of which NAFSR has signed on to, are posted on their website.

Fire Committee

This past year, the fire committee received several requests that dealt with national issues. As a result of a lawsuit filed by The Forest Service Employees for Environmental Ethics, the fire committee met virtually with Jaelith Hall-Rivera, Deputy Chief for State, Private, and Tribal Forestry to discuss how NAFSR might assist the agency. The committee drafted NAFSR's letter to Congress in support of continued fire retardant use. The committee also assisted in the preparation of talking points for Steve Ellis's Congressional testimony in support of continued use of fire retardant.

In 2023, the EPA proposed a rule that would change the PM 2.5 standard. The proposal would have a major effect on prescribed fire operations. The fire committee prepared a formal response to EPA and members of Congress. The fire committee held a pre-season call with Jaelith and Jerry Perez to discuss the upcoming fire season and outstanding issues for the agency. The committee also drafted NAFSR's talking points in response to the Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission Report released in September, and Steve's meeting with Senator Merkley's staff regarding our recommendations for implementation. Thank you, Mike Dudley, for your leadership as committee chair.

Climate Committee

The committee's climate change position statement and supporting climate change science statement were approved at the February 2023 NAFSR Board Meeting. Afterwards, NAFSR's congressional liaison, Doug Crandall, shared copies with Congressional staff members.

The committee was then asked to prepare a forest carbon position statement and supporting forest carbon climate statement. Dr. David Cleaves took the lead in drafting those statements, with the strong support of other committee members, notably Dr. David Peterson and Dr. Linda Joyce who were among the co-authors of the Forests chapter in the 5th *National Climate Assessment* released in November 2023.

The latest drafts of the NAFSR forest carbon position and science statements were circulated to the Board members in advance of the November 2023 meeting. Final editing to respond to all comments received is ongoing. Final versions of the forest carbon statement and supporting forest carbon position statement will be presented to the Board for approval and adoption at the February 2024 board meeting.

Restoration Committee

Restoration Committee members participated in several virtual engagement/information sessions provided by the Forest Service regarding their Mature and Old Growth (MOG) Forest Threat Analysis efforts. The committee drafted comments for the Board in response to the Forest Service's request for comments on the Advanced Notice for Proposed Rulemaking (ANPR) issued on April 21, 2023, regarding Mature and Old Growth Forests, Climate Resilience and Adaptation. The committee provided supplemental comments on the ANPR, given a time extension by the Forest Service, on July 20, 2023.

Special shout out to Sharon Friedman for preparing the draft comments. Committee chair Jose Linares, participated on NAFSR's Wildfire Crises Strategy Team led by Rich Stem and Ranotta McNair. Bill Avey was designated as the new restoration committee chair beginning November 2023.

Recreation Committee

The recreation committee remained active with nine members engaged during the year. Committee members maintained contact with Forest Service national recreation staff and leadership. The committee tracked various legislative proposals including the various versions of the *Outdoor Recreation Act* and more recently the *EXPLORE Act*.

Recreation committee members represented NAFSR during the Forest Service's 3-day Reimagine Recreation Knowledge Sharing Workshop in July 2023. Over 100 participants representing a diverse set of recreational interests participated in each of the 5 sessions. Information generated during the workshop and other sessions held with employees and Tribes will be utilized to develop an updated recreation strategy and action plan.

Awards Committee

NAFSR has two major awards with the details for considerations and nominations described on the NAFSR website.

John R. McGuire Award: The award was presented to Dr. Robert Ross, Supervisory Research General Engineer of the Forest Products Laboratory located in Madison, Wisconsin. Dr. Ross was nominated by the late, and former Director of the Forest Products Lab (FPL) Chris Risbrudt and submitted by former Chief Dale Bosworth on behalf of Chris.

The presentation was made by awards committee chair Phil Aune at the joint leadership meeting of the Forest Products Lab and Region 9 at the FPL in Madison, Wisconsin. At the leadership meeting, a special Recognition Ceremony was held, honoring Dr. Ross, and former Director of the FPL Chris Risbrudt who had passed away before the John R. McGuire Award could be presented.

Leisz Leadership Award

This is a joint Award with the National Museum of Forest Service History. The next Award will be presented at the 2025 Reunion in Missoula, Montana when the Museum's National Conservation Legacy Center will host their grand opening.

Other Notable Achievements from 2023

- Prepared a joint letter with the Public Lands Foundation (PLF) in response to mature and old-growth forests team initiative.
- Sent a letter to Secretary Vilsack on the fire-retardant lawsuit.
- Submitted comments to EPA for proposed rulemaking on fine particulate matter, PM 2.5.
- Submitted comments to CEQ on their proposed phase 2 NEPA regulations (thank you Sharon Friedman and Chris Iverson and Joe Carbone).
- Submitted joint comments with the PLF on three proposed ESA consultation regulations.
- Submitted a letter to Congress in support of the National Experienced Workforce Solutions program during the 2023 Farm Bill development process.
- NAFSR did a 20-minute interview on NPR (Jefferson Public Radio) in support of the continued use of aerial retardant.
- Continued to have NAFSR Board members involved in curriculum planning for the next Andrus Center Student Congress.
- On December 19th, the Board met virtually with Chief Moore and Deputy Chief for National Forest Systems Chris French to discuss the agency's old-growth forest plan amendment initiative. The session included a briefing by the Chief followed by a Q&A session with Board members.

Thank you all again for your continued commitment to being dues paying members, and for your donations. These are the sole sources of funding for our impactful advocacy and engagement so your membership matters.

With your help, we will continue to influence policy makers, decision makers, and interested publics in recognizing the valuable perspective we bring to the table. I encourage all of you to reach out to your networks and encourage agency retirees to join our organization. Now is a great time to be a NAFSR member!

Steve Ellis, Chair
National Association of Forest Service Retirees
December 27, 2023