



February 14, 2023

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The Honorable Homer Wilkes
Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20250

Via email

Dear Undersecretary Wilkes:

One of the core beliefs of the National Association of Forest Service Retirees is the importance of addressing emerging national issues professionally and deliberately with facts and science. For the past four years, NAFSR has focused attention on climate change and its effects on both public and private forests and communities.

Over the past year, we have seen interest in climate change growing—both nationally and within USDA. Recent executive orders have highlighted the issue. Further, Secretary Vilsack’s Memorandum 1077 of June 23, 2022, directed you and Chief Moore to take a series of immediate and near-term actions to build carbon stewardship and climate resilience in our national forests. NAFSR applauded this new direction.

In July, I asked Dr. Richard Guldin, our NAFSR Board member representing the R&D mission area, to prepare a position statement for NAFSR on climate change effects on our nation’s forests. He assembled a team of eight retirees who have led and conducted research on climate change for decades. Together, the team members have over 250 years of combined experience in climate change research.

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The products of their work over the past six months are the two documents attached. The first is a position statement that succinctly summarizes what NAFSR believes are the most important aspects of climate change effects of forests. The second is a longer statement of the science issues regarding climate change and forests.

Both papers take a broader view than just the national forests. Changing climatic conditions and weather patterns are affecting all the nation's forests. We believe that the cascading effects of extreme events require greater focus and attention because of their many effects on communities and people. While we strongly support near-term actions, such as investments outlined in the current wildfire crisis strategy, we also urge you to keep the long-term future in mind. While our knowledge today about future conditions remains uncertain, the policies, programs, and actions taken now will have ramifications decades from now for the nation's forests, communities, and citizens.

NAFSR commends the position statement and supporting science statement to you and encourages you to use its key points to help shape the policies and programs that are needed to help create more acres of resilient forests that survive and thrive to benefit future generations.

Sincerely,

Steve Ellis

Steve Ellis, Chair
National Association of Forest Service Retirees (NAFSR)

Attachments (2)

Cc:
Deputy Under Secretary for NRE
Chief