



Sustaining the Nation's Forest & Rangeland Resources for Future Generations



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**The Renewable Resources
Extension Act (RREA) of 1978
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rangelands.**

Renewable Resou

Introduction

The Renewable Resources Extension Act (RREA) of 1978 designated federal funding for expanded and comprehensive natural resource Extension programs to sustain renewable resources on forests and rangelands. Quoting from the original Act, Congress found that:

1. “the extension program of the Department of Agriculture and the extension activities of each State provide useful and productive educational programs for private forest and rangeland owners and processors and consumptive and non-consumptive users of forest and rangeland renewable resources, and these educational programs complement research and assistance programs conducted by the Department of Agriculture;
2. to meet national goals, it is essential that all forest and rangeland renewable resources (hereinafter in this Act referred to as “renewable resources”), including fish and wildlife, forage, outdoor recreation opportunities, timber, and water, be fully considered in designing educational programs for landowners, processors, and users;
3. more efficient utilization and marketing of renewable resources extend available supplies of such resources, provide products to consumers at prices less than they would otherwise be and promote reasonable returns on the investments of landowners, processors, and users;
4. trees and forests in urban areas improve the esthetic quality, reduce noise, filter impurities from the air and add oxygen to it, save energy by moderating temperature extremes, control wind and water erosion, and provide habitat for wildlife; and
5. trees and shrubs used as shelterbelts protect farm lands from wind and water erosion, promote moisture accumulation in the soil, and provide habitat for wildlife.”

(Source: <http://www.csrees.usda.gov/about/offices/legis/renresex.html>)

Resources Extension Act

**KEY PROGRAM
HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE:**

317,000
people who collectively
own or manage over 16.7
million acres attending
4,300 renewable resources
educational events

5,800,000
people receiving educa-
tional information from
educators

21,000
forest and rangeland own-
ers adopting at least one
new conservation practice
on their land

\$190,000,000
earned or saved by partici-
pating forest and range-
land owners and loggers

1,400
businesses created or
expanded due in part
to RREA educational
programs

The National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), an agency of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), oversees this funding to 72 land-grant institutions. These dollars are then leveraged with state, territory, institutional, and local funds through numerous partnerships to deliver educational programs to stakeholders, including forest and rangeland owners and managers.

The inaugural national strategic plan for the Renewable Resources Extension Act State-Federal Partnership was completed in 2005 for FY 2005-2009. This process included input from each institution receiving RREA funds. Key program highlights following implementation of this inaugural plan include a national annual average of:

- Approximately 317,000 people who collectively own or manage over 16.7 million acres attending 4,300 renewable resources educational events;
- 5.8 million people receiving educational information from educators;
- 21,000 forest and rangeland owners adopting at least one new conservation practice on their land;
- \$190 million earned or saved by participating forest and rangeland owners and loggers; and
- More than 1,400 businesses created or expanded due in part to RREA educational programs.

This 2012-2016 plan updates the basic recommendations of the 2005-2009 plan and recognizes that there have been significant economic, social, political, technological, and natural resource-based changes that affect renewable natural resources Extension programming. Economic trends, for example, include larger, more competitively funded federal programs, reduction or stagnation of federal formula funds, and reductions in contributions from state and local sources. Social trends include an increased focus on the uncertainty of our climate and, subsequently, the need to prepare landowners and professionals for changes that may occur as a result of climate variability. From a policy perspective, the nation's leaders are increasingly interested in opportunities related to domestic, clean energy sources such as biomass, wind, and solar. This interest will undoubtedly affect our forest and rangeland resources and create a need to educate landowners and professionals on the opportunities or challenges that may arise as a result. Technology trends have also changed dramatically since the 2005 plan and include the increasing abilities of and potential for electronic and distance education via the Internet. Among trends in natural resources are the increase in catastrophic wildfire and the areas affected by exotic species. Combined, these trends and issues create challenges that Extension educators must directly address if our forest and rangeland resources are to continue to provide a sustainable supply of ecosystem services and economic benefits to the people of this nation and the world.

The sustainability of the nation's forest and rangeland renewable resources continues to remain largely dependent on the actions of the millions of forest and rangeland owners, farmers, ranchers, and land managers. Some of the key challenges facing the nation's private forests and rangelands today include:

- A rapidly changing landscape and landowner demographic;
- Climate and weather patterns that are not confined to socio-political boundaries;
- Increased encroachment and invasion by highly competitive, undesirable vegetation, wildlife, and other biota;
- A “nature deficit disorder” among major segments of society, particularly young people, who are increasingly disconnected from and uninterested in the natural world and the values, benefits, goods, and services derived from it;
- Impacts on rangelands from broader uses (mining, commodity production, open space, etc.), increased resource production, and conversion to non-rangeland uses;
- Loss, degradation, and fragmentation of wildlife habitat;
- Changing per-capita consumption of wood, fiber, and range products;
- Inequitable and inadequate access to educational opportunities, incentives, and compensation for landowners and communities, particularly those with limited resources;
- Uncertain and, in many cases, declining Extension budgets; and
- Changing educational technologies and preferences, and the ability to measure their impact in a more reliable manner.

*photo courtesy of
David Mercker*



The USDA NIFA Land-Grant University Partnership

The USDA supports and enables the efforts of farmers, ranchers and forestland owners and managers to produce goods and services for society as they conserve natural resources.

The RREA is the only USDA program focused specifically on forest and rangeland Extension programs across the full spectrum of landscapes and represents an important part of USDA's commitment to forest and rangeland owners and managers.

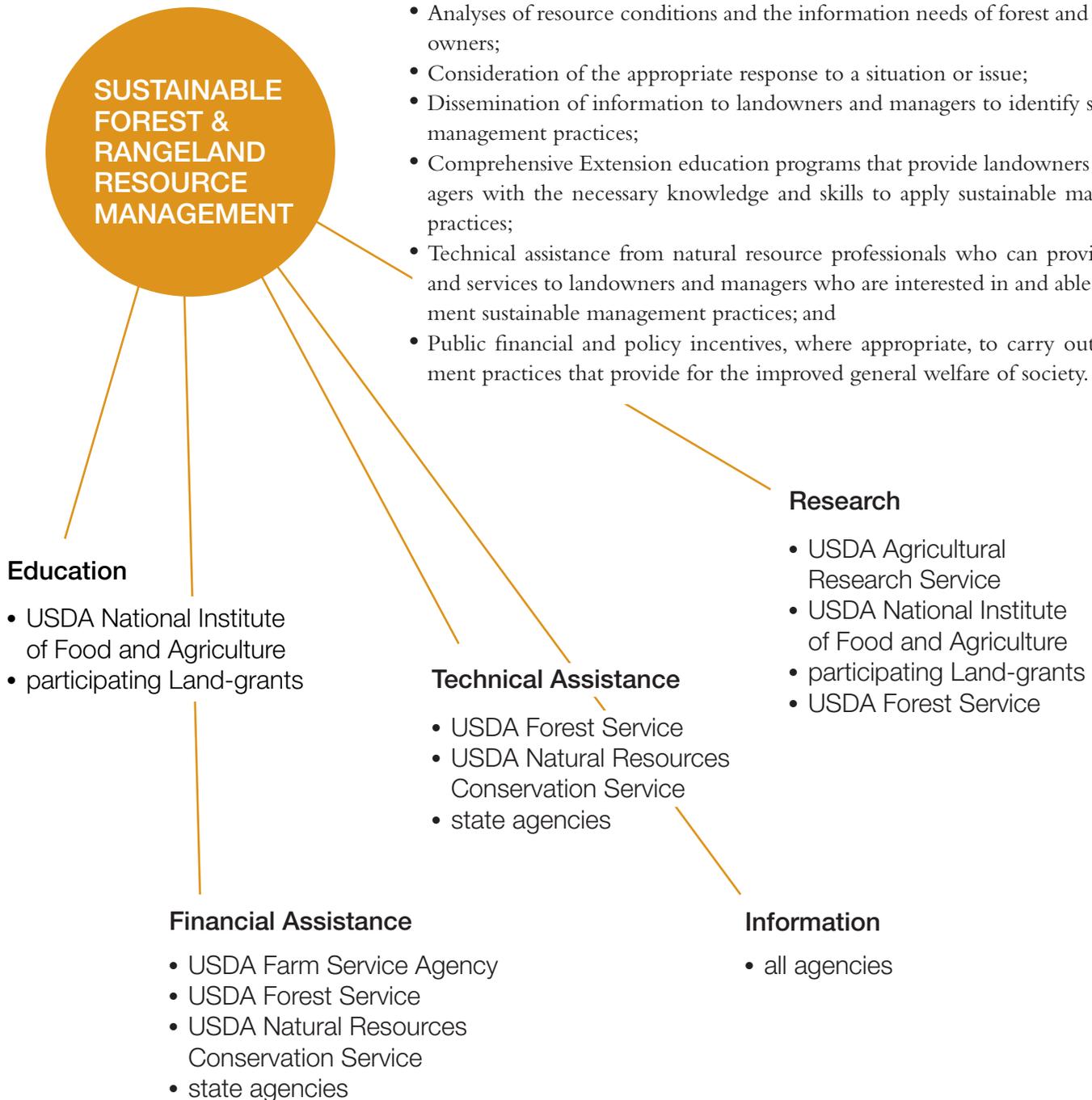
USDA agency functions can be classified broadly as: education, financial assistance, information, research, and technical assistance. These programs, implemented in concert with state, local, and private efforts, are strategically designed to achieve sustainable natural resource management on public and private forest and rangelands. Within USDA, NIFA has the unique mission of supporting Extension programs at the nation's agriculture and natural resource land-grant colleges and universities.

Extension education programs are a critical component to achieving long-term conservation and resource protection. Extension education programs are systematic, objective, and research-based initiatives that help participants understand the context of an issue, consider the prudence of action, and weigh the possible impacts of various management alternatives. Extension programs are equally important as and often work in concert with technical and financial assistance programs that are often utilized to increase active management on private lands. This occurs because Extension educators work with clients to provide information and technology that influences attitude, knowledge, skill sets, aspirations to adopt new practices, and implementation of sustainable natural resources management practices.

The RREA program was created “to provide for an expanded and comprehensive Extension program for forest and rangeland renewable resources.” As the only USDA program focused specifically on forest and rangeland Extension programs across the full spectrum of landscapes, it represents an important part of USDA's commitment to forest and rangeland owners and managers.

Sustainable forest and rangeland resource management can be enhanced by coordinated efforts, including:

- Analyses of resource conditions and the information needs of forest and rangeland owners;
- Consideration of the appropriate response to a situation or issue;
- Dissemination of information to landowners and managers to identify sustainable management practices;
- Comprehensive Extension education programs that provide landowners and managers with the necessary knowledge and skills to apply sustainable management practices;
- Technical assistance from natural resource professionals who can provide advice and services to landowners and managers who are interested in and able to implement sustainable management practices; and
- Public financial and policy incentives, where appropriate, to carry out management practices that provide for the improved general welfare of society.





es **Extension** Act

Extension programs emphasize a sustained relationship with stakeholders



photo courtesy of Stephen Fitzgerald

What Makes Extension Unique

The Cooperative Extension System (CES) is an established educational network uniquely charged with extending university-based research and practitioner experience to the public. A successful federal, state, and local partnership, the CES has, over its lifetime, developed into a comprehensive and effective educational network that connects the educational resources of the land-grant system with various users and stakeholders. The system is comprised largely of professionals who motivate, inspire, support, inform, link, and educate individuals and communities, helping them to make informed decisions. These decisions also help sustain the productive and functional qualities of rural and urban forest and rangeland ecosystems.

Extension education is programmatically based and thus unique from the training and education methods used in other settings. It involves integrated, research-based, objective curricula and activities that help stakeholders increase their knowledge of an issue or opportunity, reflect on their beliefs and attitudes, increase their skills, and facilitate positive behavior change. Programmatic Extension education is a deliberate, focused, and sustained effort that helps participants objectively understand an issue relative to other issues and circumstances, judge the suitability of different management strategies, and assess the effectiveness of the implemented practice. These educational programs emphasize a sustained relationship with stakeholders – one that involves dialogue, mutual respect, and responsiveness to pressing needs at the local level.

The land-grant university system, in partnership with USDA and others, is uniquely positioned to help ensure the sustainability of forest and rangeland renewable resources and benefits that are provided to all Americans. The land-grant university system houses state research and Extension staff, offers support for county-based delivery systems, and provides a foundation to build and maintain knowledge for the increased productivity and stewardship of private forest and rangelands.

– one that involves dialogue, mutual respect, and responsiveness at the local level.

The RREA expands natural resources Extension professionals' capacity to deliver comprehensive research-based information and education to help individuals, communities, businesses, agencies, and organizations make informed decisions that support the sustainability of renewable natural resources.

Purpose of Plan

This plan establishes a unified mission and vision for natural resource Extension programs funded by the RREA. It identifies core values, strategic goals, and action items to guide these natural resource Extension education programs. This plan also provides a reporting structure that demonstrates accountability for the responsible use of federal tax dollars and provides a model framework to evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of other educational initiatives. Finally, this plan demonstrates the connectivity of RREA to related programs within the land-grant system and addresses the depth and breadth of renewable natural resource issues.

Mission

The RREA expands natural resources Extension professionals' capacity to deliver comprehensive research-based information and education to help individuals, communities, businesses, agencies, and organizations make informed decisions that support the sustainability of renewable natural resources.

Vision for 2016 and Beyond

Extension is a highly respected, essential provider of client-focused, research-based educational programs across rural, urban, and suburban settings. Renewable natural resources Extension professionals are integral to informed natural resources decision making that results in economically and environmentally sustainable forests and rangelands.

Core Values

The RREA strategic plan is guided by the principle that natural resource Extension programs are an efficient precursor to well-managed forests and rangelands, and that these lands benefit society, sustain ecosystem processes and services, create economic opportunities, and meet the individual needs of those who own and/or manage these lands.

Renewable Resource Extension Act



photo courtesy of Beth Richardson

RREA-supported Extension programming is:

- Research-based and stakeholder-driven, relying on locally identified needs and audience-appropriate educational methods to convey research-based, relevant information.
- Created with diverse audiences in mind, serving audiences regardless of their race, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, economic status, or education.
- Held accountable for the public funds utilized by reporting and monitoring outputs, outcomes, and impacts to stakeholders.
- Collaborative and partnership-based within and across public and private organizations and across temporal and spatial boundaries, creating a positive synergy that better serves stakeholders and clientele.
- Cognizant of current, innovative, and effective instructional and learning systems and the principles and practices of adult and youth education.

Cross-Cutting Issues

The issues identified in the 2005 plan remain a priority, and they continue to be reflected in the strategic goals outlined later in this plan. A number of other issues have emerged that intersect with, or cut across, these previously identified issues. The relevance of these issues will vary among states, but their impact will collectively shape the future of our renewable natural resources. RREA state-level programs should consciously assess the educational needs of stakeholders for these cross-cutting issues and develop strategies or partnerships to ensure that stakeholders can gain the awareness, knowledge, and skill to make informed decisions.

Biomass for Energy

Biomass harvested from forests and rangelands is a renewable and sustainable energy source that can contribute to our nation's energy independence, help mitigate greenhouse-gas emissions, improve forest and rangeland health, and provide economic opportunities for both rural and urban Americans. Landowners and managers in some regions have better access to well-developed biomass markets, infrastructure, and management techniques than those in other regions. Cooperative Extension has a unique opportunity to use its national, extensive, and collaborative network of natural resource professionals to provide research-based information about biomass and bio-energy opportunities and tradeoffs. The role of Extension is to help decision-makers access and use relevant research, success stories, and case studies, and take advantage of demonstration and information sharing. In addition, the role of Extension is to provide these decision-makers with research-based tools to analyze and understand the tradeoffs associated with this potentially land- and resource-intensive form of energy.



photo courtesy of Mark Megalos

Climate Variability

The increased climate variability witnessed over the past several years presents significant challenges to the nation's forests and rangelands and the more than 11 million private individuals, companies, and organizations that own or manage them. Two critical strategies for landowners to employ are adaptation and mitigation. Adapting to the effects of climate change involves management actions that make forests and rangelands more resilient to wide variations in precipitation, temperature, or extreme weather patterns (e.g., ice storms, flooding, drought, etc.) and the disturbances that eventually occur. Mitigation refers to the potential of forests and rangelands to lessen the effects of climate change by sequestering, or "storing," large quantities of carbon that might otherwise be released into the atmosphere as greenhouse gases. Additional increases in greenhouse gases may further exacerbate climate variability. Scientists are constantly uncovering new knowledge and un-

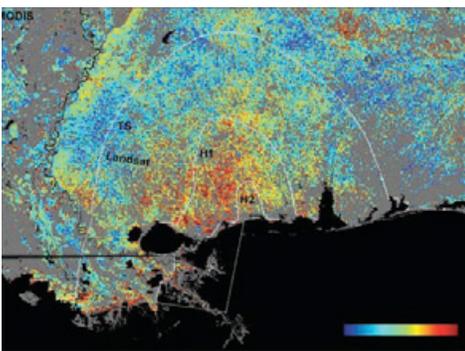


photo courtesy of NASA

Renewable Resources Extension Act

Private landowners and managers depend on Extension to objectively interpret and transfer new knowledge that can be practically and economically applied to forest and rangeland ecosystems.

Understanding of our climate and its impact on natural and human systems. Private landowners and managers depend on Extension to objectively interpret and transfer new knowledge that can be practically and economically applied to forest and rangeland ecosystems.

Ecosystem Services

Clean air, safe drinking water, forest products, habitat for fish and wildlife, and carbon storage are all examples of ecosystem-derived public resources, or “ecosystem services,” that come from natural processes and may be enhanced by careful management in working forests, rangelands, and agricultural landscapes. Sometimes these services are achieved through land protection in natural areas. They may also be achieved through conservation, active management, and/or restoration of our forest and rangelands, watersheds, and airsheds. Society does not currently recognize the connection between these valuable ecosystem services and the forests and rangelands that produce them. Many ecosystem services originate on private lands. People who own, manage, and restore lands that produce these services historically have been compensated only through established markets for traditional products, such as food, fiber, and timber. Often, individuals who produce these services receive less income or at least a deferment in potential income. Across the country, innovative programs are now emerging that focus on compensation for ecosystem services through new markets. These programs attach value to nature’s benefits, establish a price for them, and connect buyers and sellers in an “ecosystem marketplace.” These markets may provide financial incentives for landowners to protect and enhance ecologically significant processes that are important to all people, regardless of where they live. Extension educators can provide educational programs that highlight current and future ecosystem services that may be marketable. Educators can also provide insight into issues surrounding ecosystem services and compensation or unintended consequences that may arise from production of ecosystem services.

Fish and Wildlife Resources

Fish and wildlife are public resources found on government, tribal, and private lands. They provide individual and societal benefits such as recreational opportunities, food and other products, economic opportunities, and indicators of forest and rangeland health. They also impact the environment by affecting plant communities and driving and influencing ecological processes and functions. The health of many fish and wildlife populations is directly linked to the management of their habitats on forest and rangelands. Educational programming that focuses on the sustainable



photo courtesy of Dwayne Elmore

Renewable Resources Extension Act

management of fisheries and wildlife resources seeks to impart methodology to inventory, monitor, and manage species and their habitats while balancing trade-offs. Extension educators also provide landowners and managers with information and tools regarding trade-offs associated with managing for different species and outcomes.

Forest and Rangeland Food Safety and Security

A safe and secure food supply is essential to individual and national prosperity. With an increase in global food demand, forest and rangelands will become more important in the sustainable production of food crops. These lands can make an important contribution to food safety and security through a variety of agroforestry and grazing practices. Agroforestry is a unique land management approach that in-

*photo courtesy
of Kris Irwin*



A safe and secure food supply is essential to individual and national prosperity. With an increase in global food demand, forest and rangelands will become more important in the sustainable production of food crops.

tentionally combines trees with other plants or livestock on forest and agricultural lands, including rangelands. Examples of existing practices include the management of invasive species on western rangelands to improve forage production, managed livestock grazing in southern pine plantations, and the production of maple syrup in the Northeast to make value-added food products. The increased pressure of diversified products provides new economic opportunities and risks for many landowners and managers, many of whom lack experience with food production systems, particularly those integrated with natural ecological systems. As such, they may miss important economic opportunities or implement management practices that do not sustain a working landscape. Owners can generate regular and significant income from food produced through rangeland grazing or through agroforestry production. These production systems, when appropriately managed, can enhance the environmental quality of the landscape, generate family-based jobs and revenue, and contribute to the stability of rural communities.

Landowners and managers need educational programs that address food production and marketing, but within the context of other pressing societal issues such as climate change, bioenergy and traditional products, and maintenance of wildlife populations. These related issues will influence the management options available to owners. Landowners and managers will benefit from Extension's role in developing educational materials for sustainable production, helping identify and support horizontal and vertical production networks, increasing access to applied research on value-added products, and creating educational resources to help producers sell their commodities in existing and emerging markets.

Intergenerational Land and Other Land Ownership Changes

The changes in forest and rangeland owner demographics require particular attention to the unique educational needs of current and future owners. Intergenerational and other land transfers over the next several decades may parcelize family land holdings and fracture rural and suburban landscapes. New landowners are often less familiar with organizational or agency assistance, may not have a personalized connection to the land, and may not have the awareness and skills to manage the property. This has real ecological and economic relevance to society. Families will lose the opportunities associated with the continuity of ownership, particularly the opportunity to enhance long-term sustainable working landscapes.



*photo courtesy Chuck Bargeron
(UGA: 1150026)*

Since European discovery and settlement almost 500 years ago, nearly 6,300 species of non-native plants, animals, insects, and pathogens have been introduced to North America.



*photo courtesy Loke T. Kok
(UGA: 0580002)*

New landowners may have distinctly different ownership objectives from current owners, which, if unmet or misinformed, may result in unsustainable practices such as exploitive harvesting or conversion to non-forest or -range uses. In turn, local governments could experience budgetary and administrative burdens associated with overseeing increased numbers of parcels and new ownership needs. The loss in societal benefits will increase if parcelization turns to fragmentation, as the environmental services these forests provide will undoubtedly diminish. Educational programs can address the needs of owners who desire a property transfer to members of their own family or others. These programs can also address needs and learning preferences of new owners and the importance of promoting the values and practices involved with a land ethic. The succession of property ownership requires professionals who are sensitive to the potential for difficult discussions of mortality, possible divergent ownership objectives, and the dynamics of families' cultural norms within and among generations.

Invasive Species

Since European discovery and settlement almost 500 years ago, nearly 6,300 species of non-native plants, animals, insects, and pathogens have been introduced to North America. Many of these introduced biological agents are undesired because they destroy valuable cultivated agricultural and forest crops, displace native species, and alter the status of functioning, healthy ecosystems. Non-native species are often intentionally introduced for commercial production, landscaping, pest control, or land conservation, but once established result in negative economic and environmental consequences. Non-native species can interfere with personal and societal objectives when evolved ecological processes are disrupted; similarly, native species can interfere with individual and societal objectives if their populations or habitats are disrupted. Research and development, implementation of integrated control measures, extensive educational outreach efforts to individuals and communities, and regulatory actions can address the challenges associated with invasive species. In addition, Extension-led programs can help restore the ecological integrity of forest and rangeland ecosystems negatively affected by invasive and disruptive species.

Urbanization

Urbanization and population growth continue to influence the function, structure, and productivity of our nation's forests and rangelands. Unplanned or poorly planned urban and suburban growth often leads to parcelization, fragmentation, and, in many cases, the complete loss of working forests and rangelands. Parcelization occurs when tracts of land are divided into smaller, separately owned and managed parcels and is most detrimental when leading to fragmentation. Fragmentation is the breaking up of large contiguous tracts of forests and rangelands into smaller remnant tracts known as "patches." Together, parcelization, fragmentation, and land conversion have adverse effects on the economic, ecological, and social values as-



photo courtesy of Sarah Ashton

sociated with working forests and rangelands. Research, education, and outreach in planned growth and urban forest management can play a key role in maintaining the economic, ecological, and social integrity of forests and rangelands in urban and suburban settings

Water and Wetlands

Wetlands, areas of earth saturated by water all or part of the year, are integral to ensuring the availability of clean water and stabilizing fluctuations in hydrologic cycles, yet they are regularly under severe pressure from pollution, development, and other sources of degradation. Wetlands provide flood and erosion control, shoreline stabilization, water quality improvement, and ground water replenishment. Moreover, wetlands are ecologically productive and concentrated areas of biodiversity. Inhabitants include microbes, plants, insects, amphibians, reptiles, birds, fish, and mammals. Effective educational programming can be used to inform decisions about the protection, conservation, and management of forests and rangelands that positively impact wetlands and water. These actions improve water quality and quantity and provide recreational and economic opportunities for individuals and communities while protecting watersheds and providing fish and wildlife habitat.



photo courtesy of Mel Baughman

Strategic Goals

Goal 1: Ensuring Healthy Ecosystems

Natural resource Extension professionals will increase the capacity of landowners, managers, and professionals to sustain ecosystems that meet both human and ecological needs.

Strategies

- 1.1 Educate landowners, managers, and natural resource professionals on sustainable management practices for forests and rangelands to restore and/or maintain ecosystem functions and processes.
- 1.2 Increase early detection and management of ecosystem threats.
- 1.3 Develop and/or participate in partnerships to increase the educational reach to respond to threats to healthy ecosystems (for example, citizen scientists, peer-to-peer learning, and social media).

Goal 2: Enhancing Economic Benefits

Natural resource Extension professionals will improve decision-making by providing the knowledge and tools for an increased understanding of the potential benefits derived from current and emerging economic opportunities available from forests and rangelands.

Strategies

- 2.1 Develop, deliver, and evaluate research-based educational resources, tools, and programs that quantify the direct and indirect economic benefits derived from working forests and rangelands.
- 2.2 Communicate the economic values, impacts, trends, and trade-offs associated with working forests, rangelands, and associated natural resources.
- 2.3 Develop partnerships with cooperating state and federal agencies, organizations, businesses, and landowners to characterize the potential and profitability of economic opportunities available on forest and rangelands.
- 2.4 Develop, deliver, and evaluate research-based educational resources, tools, and programs that allow audiences to capitalize on the economic benefits associated with owning and managing working forests.

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Natural resource Extension professionals will increase

Goal 3: Enhancing Resource Management on Working Forests and Rangelands

To sustain working forests and rangelands, natural resource Extension professionals will offer forest and rangeland owners and managers the knowledge, skills, and ability to assess and respond to risks, threats, opportunities and trade-offs.

Strategies

- 3.1** In cooperation with partners and stakeholders, identify and prioritize the critical issues and ecological drivers that influence forest and rangeland management.
- 3.2** Develop, deliver, and evaluate research-based educational resources, programs, and tools that help guide decision making processes that enhance working landscapes.
- 3.3** Develop partnerships with cooperating state and federal agencies, NGOs, and businesses to increase the educational reach of sustainable land management approaches to new audiences.
- 3.4** Enhance the two-way linkage between researchers and Extension educators so that current research is relevant to forest and rangeland management and the exchange of knowledge is efficient and effective.

Goal 4: Building Capacity Through Enhanced Connections

Natural resource Extension professionals and their administrators will develop and apply innovative strategies that reach and engage stakeholders more effectively and efficiently.

Strategies

- 4.1** Increase collaborative efforts internally between research and Extension and externally with other partners.
- 4.2** Increase the use of state-of-the-art distance education technology.
- 4.3** Prioritize professional development opportunities that are multidisciplinary and highlight interaction with existing and potential partners.
- 4.4** Encourage, where appropriate, participation in multi-state and regional projects and programs to increase efficiency and effectiveness.
- 4.5** Develop and use landowner and professional volunteer programs to increase efficiency and effectiveness.

the capacity of landowners, managers, and professionals to sustain ecosystems.

Funding Strategy

With a Federal appropriation of \$4,068,000 for 2010, RREA funding is well below its annually authorized level of \$30,000,000. Funds are needed now to move forward on an aggressive agenda to deal with the major issues outlined in this strategic plan. These formula and competitive program funds are essential for building capacity at both the 1862 and 1890 institutions in program areas such as climate change, wildlife loss, bioenergy production, and forestland, rangeland, and wetland loss mitigation. Formula funds allow for continuity within programs that serve stakeholders and also for state-level flexibility to respond to priority needs. Competitive funds allow for further engagement of partners and responsiveness to nationally identified priorities.

RREA has received only one significant increase since the inception of the program in 1978. In 2002, the RREA appropriation was increased by \$908,000 and the impacts of this increase were immediately witnessed through enhanced programming in forest and rangeland ecosystem management. The history of this program has shown that capacity building for Extension forestry and rangeland programs results in changes on the ground. Recent national estimates show that every \$1 invested in RREA returns a value to local and state communities of \$9.

The development of a new funding model for RREA containing both a formula-funded base program and a flexible, grant-based strategic incentives program will improve on-the-ground impacts in ways not previously possible. The following table depicts how the RREA program should grow to meet the increasing and changing needs of Extension renewable natural resources clients. The fifty percent increase in base funding in the first two years from 2011 levels is essential to improving the capacity of our natural resource Extension programs at both 1862 and 1890 institutions.

photo courtesy of Dwayne Elmore

Fiscal Year	Base	Strategic Initiatives	Total
2012	\$6,000,000	\$6,000,000	\$12,000,000
2013	\$9,000,000	\$9,000,000	\$18,000,000
2014	\$11,000,000	\$11,000,000	\$22,000,000
2015	\$13,000,000	\$13,000,000	\$26,000,000
2016	\$15,000,000	\$15,000,000	\$30,000,000

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The development of a new funding model for RREA containing both a formula-funded base program and a flexible, grant-based strategic incentives program will improve on-the-ground impacts in ways not previously possible.

The strategic, initiative-focused funds would address major regional and national issues through the use of Extension's proven and effective model of understanding audience needs, improving knowledge, and changing behavior in ways that benefit individuals and society. These funding levels match the base program levels and would be available through a competitive process that would involve criteria such as the effective use of both proven and new and innovative delivery technologies; peer-learning systems; multi-state, regional, and national programming efforts; interaction with the research and education communities at land-grant universities; proven capacity in educational program development; and educational leadership in key natural partnerships. The RREA program provides funding for Extension educators to transfer and translate new research findings that result from the federally funded McIntire-Stennis Cooperative Forestry Research programs at participating universities. This researcher-Extension relationship results in valuable multi-directional flows of information between universities and users.

Measuring Impact & Reporting

Natural resource Extension professionals will use the criteria set forth in the 2012-2016 RREA Planning and Reporting Guide to develop their RREA fiscal year plans of work and to report annual program accomplishments and impacts. The method used for collecting the quantitative impacts is based on the "Logic Model" planning, management, and evaluation tool. The Logic Model links inputs with desired outcomes and is useful in communicating the need for, and utility of, a program or project with stakeholders. As was the case with the 2005-2009 Strategic Plan, land-grant university programs and projects funded through RREA will be asked to report on indicators and criteria set forth under each goal. States will vary in the manner and extent to which they address cross-cutting issues and strategic goals. Additionally, universities will be asked to share how the cross-cutting issues introduced in this plan are addressed under the broader goals. Please see the FY 2012-2016 Planning and Reporting Guide for more details. Qualitative data will also continue to be collected and reported through the summation of the state "popular reports."

In addition, the RREA will be responsive to the reporting and communication needs of its funders, program managers, stakeholders, and other relevant clients. An RREA accomplishment report will be developed and delivered to these recipients on an annual basis. This report provides details on individuals and acres reached and impacted, businesses created or influenced, wildlife and range improvements and impacts, and other benefits resulting from the implementation of the RREA plan.

Conclusion

In enacting the Renewable Resources Extension Act of 1978, Congress recognized the importance of private forests and rangelands and provided an effective and focused program to meet the needs of owners and managers of these lands. RREA has increased the impact of our land-grant university researchers and Extension specialists. It has increased the visibility of local, state, regional, and national Extension programming. It has increased the amount of internal and external collaboration, resulting in more efficient uses of resources, and perhaps most importantly, it has increased the sustainability and productivity of our nation's working forests and rangelands. Today, these lands are witnessing unprecedented pressure from the many threats outlined in this plan. The 2012–2016 Renewable Resources Extension Act Strategic Plan will provide a valuable base for those within and outside of the Extension system to individually and collectively take actions to preserve, conserve, manage, and restore these lands and their resources in a socially, economically, and ecologically sustainable manner. This plan, along with the companion planning and reporting guide, is a comprehensive tool that can be used for a variety of purposes including but not limited to program planning, promotion of Extension's role in natural resource management, education for current and potential partners, and program accountability.



photo courtesy of Nicholas T.

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