

## **POSITION STATEMENT**

### ***LAND USE***

#### **Summary**

The New England Society of American Foresters (NESAF) supports land use in New England that maintains a healthy forest ecosystem. Forested lands provide multiple essential benefits to society. New England's forests continue to contribute fresh air, clean water, diverse wildlife habitats, renewable resources for forest products, recreational opportunities, scenic vistas, solitude and quiet inspiration. They are an integral component of our economy, ecological integrity, and traditional rural character. Random development, sprawl, parcelization, and fragmentation are increasing threats to the forests of New England. Appropriate development is important to New England's economy and is an essential component of any community. The New England Society of American Foresters supports and encourages policies and practices that balance economic development and forest land conservation. Community land use planning should be implemented that includes the use of incentives to landowners and developers to conserve forest land and forestry professionals should be actively included in land use planning efforts.

#### **Issue**

The conversion of forest land into more intensive land uses is a critical problem across the region. Development pressure from an increasing population is impacting the forested acreage in negative ways. Increasing land values and property tax are forces of change that are contributing to the loss of forest acreage and values in many areas. "Sprawl" – the incremental, unplanned development along roadways; "Parcelization" – the subdivision of parcels into smaller lots; and "Fragmentation" – the division of larger forest lands by roads or land conversion are continuing to reduce the forest's ability to provide society with multiple benefits. Deforestation is occurring in New England each year. The impacts to society include a loss of forest-based economies that help sustain the distinctive diversity of rural New England. Forests are an integral, but often overlooked component of many of our communities. Local and regional land use policies rarely include effective forest land conservation strategies.

#### **Background**

New England's millions of forested acres account for the majority of the undeveloped land base. These lands have contributed to the cultural identity of the region for hundreds of years. The ability of the forests to continue to be a productive resource is impacted by unnecessary development, that is better suited to more appropriate sites. Future development could be concentrated on under-utilized acreage best suited to accommodate the intended land use. Communities often lack the technical expertise needed to identify land use planning tools and opportunities that can direct growth in a manner that encourages forest land conservation. The involvement of natural resource professionals in land use planning should be increased.

#### **Expiration**

This position will expire five years from the date of approval. Approved on December 8, 2004 by the Executive Committee of the New England State Society of American Foresters.