

1 **Final Report of the Sub-committee on Policy Process to the**
2 **New England SAF Executive Committee**

3

4 March 08, 2010

5

6 Executive Committee Members:

7 In the second half of 2009 our subcommittee members responded to your direction to review the
8 policy process of the New England Society of American Foresters. This final report to the
9 Executive Committee includes actionable items to improve that process, and to meet the
10 member-valued purposes identified by our members in the recent membership survey.

11 We considered in detail the member responses to our membership survey, researched like
12 processes in other organizations with similar missions and membership profiles, and reviewed
13 the guidance and effectiveness of our existing process.

14 We believe that your consideration of the following recommendations will empower our
15 members not only to fulfill these needs, but that it will also engage them in an organization in
16 which they want to be more involved.

17

18 Respectfully submitted,

19

20 Ron Lemin Jr., Chair, New England SAF (ex officio)
21 Pete Howland, Policy Chair, New England SAF (ex officio)
22 Mary Beth Dewey, Chair, Green Mountain College Chapter
23 Dave Field, Maine Division
24 Peter L. Greeno, Membership Chair, New England SAF
25 Jeff Hutchins, Chair, University of Massachusetts Chapter
26 Ken Laustsen, Maine Division
27 Charlie Levesque, Granite State Division
28 Spencer Meyer, New England SAF Representative, Maine Division
29 Chris Pryor, Chair, Massachusetts Chapter
30 Charlie Thompson, Massachusetts Chapter

31 **Executive Summary of the Recommendations to Support an**
32 **Effective Policy Program and to Bolster Membership Engagement**

33
34
35

March 8, 2010

36 In the July 2009 membership survey our members identified four recurring member-valued
37 purposes that they desire from the New England Society: Empower our members - give them the
38 potential to impact; Effectively build public awareness of forestry issues and the value of
39 foresters; Provide a sound, unified foundation for regulatory initiatives; and Strengthen our
40 organization - increase member value by being actively relevant.

41 To meet these concerns we focused the recommendations that follow on ensuring:

- 42 1. Relevancy – products must be timely and about issues immediately important to the state
43 or region for which it is being drafted;
- 44 2. A Targeted Audience – speak to the right people to ensure its use;
- 45 3. Quality Control – there needs to be a formal review process so issues reflect membership
46 but also to make sure a quality product goes out the door; and
- 47 4. Effective Communications – so that the product is effective in serving its purpose.

48 We recommend that the Executive Committee redefine how we approach policy efforts at the
49 New England Society. From redefining how we approach policy, increasing our effectiveness
50 with sustained communication efforts, to engaging and empowering our members; our
51 recommendations are as follows.

- 52 • *Ensure that Policy Chair vacancies are filled through a thorough candidate search for*
53 *a clearly defined role*
- 54 • *Create a Communications and Outreach Chair position to facilitate full use of position*
55 *statements and to meet member-valued purposes*
- 56 • *Focus the initiatives of our policy efforts on State regulatory initiatives*
- 57 • *Clearly identify selection criteria for our position statements*
- 58 • *Restructure the standing Policy Committee into an issue-specific, ad hoc committee*
59 *structure*
- 60 • *Ground all initiatives in forest science with direct input from issue experts*
- 61 • *Provide for a structured member comment period*
- 62 • *Seek a vote of the membership for each position statement*
- 63 • *Ensure the timeliness of position statements throughout the development process*
- 64 • *Officially adopt the Operations Manual*
- 65 • *Actively clean our member email lists in order to enable maximum response and*
66 *participation*

67 We believe that these actions will strengthen our Society, and ask that you put these suggestions
68 before our membership.

69 **Recommendations to Support an Effective Policy Program and to**
70 **Bolster Membership Engagement**

71
72 March 8, 2010

73 *Ensure that Policy Chair vacancies are filled through a thorough candidate search for a*
74 *clearly defined role*

75 The NESAF Policy Chair position is an opportunity for member involvement that should be open
76 to all members. We recommend that the Executive Committee fill all Policy Chair vacancies
77 through a thorough candidate search. In addition, clarify the role of the Policy Chair to aid in that
78 search.

- 79 ➤ Clearly define the roles and responsibilities of the Policy Chair by adding a job
80 description to the Operations Manual through a vote of the Executive Committee;
- 81 ➤ Update Section 4 of the Operations Manual to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the
82 Policy Chair as mentioned above through a vote of the Executive Committee;
- 83 ➤ Require the current and future Executive Committees to fill the Policy Chair position
84 through a thorough candidate search, and to make the position available to all members
85 through an update to Section 2 of the Operations Manual through a vote of the Executive
86 Committee;
- 87 ➤ Form a task force to initiate a thorough candidate search through a vote of the Executive
88 Committee.

89 While there may be short periods of time when we have a vacancy during the search, it is crucial
90 that we open the opportunity through an announcement to all members, and that we seek a
91 specific skill set to fill this critical role. The Policy Chair position should be one of tracking
92 relevant issues, seeking qualified leaders for short term task forces on those issues, and providing
93 continuity and consistency in document quality and form.

94 Highly valued skills include a history of working on policy initiatives, knowledge of key players
95 and issue experts throughout the region, and superior skills in facilitation of team projects where
96 interests may be broad. Potential candidates include members who have substantial connections
97 throughout NESAF and experience in policy initiatives. The candidate should know the issue
98 experts that we can tap for review and/or committee representation. In recognition of the time
99 investment required, candidates should not hold additional Executive Committee responsibilities.
100 Substantial flexibility is needed to respond to time-sensitive initiatives.

101 We recommend that the Executive Committee follow the candidate search models of the Forest
102 Science Coordinator and Website Administrator Coordinator. The first Policy Chair is crucial
103 and will set the expectations for future appointees.

104 In addition, considerable time investments are needed to respond well, and to make the best use
105 of the more limited time of committee members. Attracting highly qualified candidates in
106 recognition of this time investment necessitates a stipend.

- 107 ➤ Propose a stipend in the budget for the Policy Chair position through a vote of the
108 Executive Committee and subsequent member approval at the annual business meeting.

109 ***Create a Communications and Outreach Chair position to facilitate full use of position***
110 ***statements and to meet member-valued purposes***

111 Timely and relevant position statements are not effective at initiating external change without
112 effective communications. As a crucial step to having effective position statements we need a
113 sustained focus on external communications and outreach. While our bylaws currently specify
114 the authority to call on an ad hoc communications committee, we need sustained effort to see any
115 substantial results.

- 116 ➤ Direct a task force to define the position, the responsibilities, potential products, and the
117 appropriate guidance documents in support of this position through a vote of the
118 Executive Committee;
- 119 ➤ Form a standing position by adding language to Article 9 of the NESAF bylaws through a
120 referendum for a vote of membership;
- 121 ➤ Adopt the guidance and position description through a vote of the Executive Committee;
- 122 ➤ Change the name of the ad hoc ‘Communications’ committee under ‘Special
123 Committees’ in Article 8 of the NESAF Bylaws to ‘Communications and Outreach’
124 through a referendum for a vote of the membership;
- 125 ➤ Fill the position through a thorough candidate search through a vote of the Executive
126 Committee;

127 Traditional position statements from Chapters, Divisions, and NESAF will back up any letters,
128 comments, or forums where we imply a position; having this position statement in place first also
129 helps us as it is our means to get approval from the national office of SAF. We can then outreach
130 based on that position statement in a variety of other forms.

131 Each candidate search should include notice of the opportunity to all members, and should not
132 have other Executive Committee Responsibilities. The position should have an external focus to
133 compliment our current internal communications positions and to make best use of the policy
134 efforts.

135 The appointee will work with Policy Chair to review the communications effectiveness of all
136 policy documents. The responsibilities should include maintaining the presence of the New
137 England Society in appropriate media and developing media contacts through timely media
138 outlets, both traditional and electronic. Long-term relationships and networking are paramount.

139 This position will also further meet member needs by providing an education and outreach focus
140 that communicates the values and positions of SAF throughout New England. Potential
141 audiences include landowners, legislators, or media. The chair should have the ability to organize
142 members on an ad hoc committee basis to produce timely and relevant materials.

143 In addition, considerable time investments on communications and outreach are needed to
144 portray a positive, external face to the Society. Attracting qualified candidates in recognition of
145 this time investment necessitates a stipend.

- 146 ➤ Propose a stipend in the budget for the Communications and Outreach position through a
147 vote of the Executive Committee and subsequent member approval at the annual business
148 meeting.

149 ***Focus the initiatives of our policy efforts on State regulatory initiatives***

150 Relevancy is crucial to maintaining both member and external interest in the work of our
151 organization and any position statements therein. Responsibilities of the Policy Chair need to be
152 focused on informing the Executive Committee of those issues that concern our Divisions and
153 Chapters.

154 ➤ Add specific guidance to Section 4 of the Operations Manual that focuses the initiatives
155 of our policy efforts on State regulatory initiatives through a vote of the Executive
156 Committee

157 The Policy Chair should closely follow all Chapter and Division statement processes and offer
158 assistance where possible. This assistance requires that the Chair maintain active relationships
159 with Policy Chairs at each level within the organization. Enhance the appearance of an active
160 policy process with timely, relevant submissions to our internal newsletters. Any position
161 statements should be initiated upon request by our members, Chapters or Divisions in response
162 to current, specific initiatives.

163 To effectively impact forestry in New England, focus position statements on specific regulatory
164 initiatives. These are largely State specific, and even more so, should reference specific
165 initiatives. The target is rarely regional, even if the topic is applicable to a broader region.

166 In effect, we are seeking one time champions from the States that request assistance. They then
167 serve as issue experts in a larger ad hoc committee with discussion facilitated by policy chair to
168 create well targeted positions.

169 ***Clearly identify selection criteria for our position statements***

170 The SAF Bylaws identify 6 criteria in Section II-D-1.b identify specific selection criteria for
171 determining whether an issue requires adoption of a position. These same selection criteria are
172 applicable and appropriate measures for consideration at all levels within the New England
173 Society.

174 ➤ Add selection criteria to Section 4 of the Operations Manual through a vote of the
175 Executive Committee

176 The recommended selection criteria include:

- 177 1) Is the issue likely to have major public impact?
178 2) Is the Issue relevant to matters presented in *Forest Policy Principles*?
179 3) Is the issue within the knowledge and skills of the forestry profession?
180 4) Is the issue of general interest to the level of the Society that is considering it?
181 5) Is there time for SAF to act responsibly on the issue?
182 6) Does SAF have the resources to act responsibly on the issue?

183 ***Restructure the standing Policy Committee into an issue-specific, ad hoc committee structure***

184 Restructuring the existing standing Policy Committee into an ad hoc committee structure offers
185 the most members an opportunity to take part in position statement development and
186 acknowledges the basic reality that we cannot achieve a full array of issue expertise with any
187 given set of members.

- 188 ➤ Remove existing language that defines the standing Policy Committee as defined in
189 Article 8 of the NESAF Bylaws through a referendum for a vote of the membership;
- 190 ➤ Define the authority to create ad hoc policy committees with language under ‘Special
191 Committees’ in Article 8 of the NESAF Bylaws by seeking a referendum for a vote of the
192 membership;
- 193 ➤ Move and clarify the language defining our Policy Chair position from Article 8 to
194 Article 9 by seeking a referendum for a vote of the membership.

195 Chapters and Divisions requesting NESAF position statement development should have
196 members willing to serve in this capacity. Given that these issues are primarily State level
197 regulatory initiatives, they are likely a portion of the issue experts that are necessary. This new
198 structure recognizes that the Policy Chair’s responsibility is not to write position statements but
199 to coordinate the skills of issue experts to facilitate position statement development. Each
200 specific issue should have a specific ad hoc committee. The Policy Chair shall serve on each ad
201 hoc committee and will remain directly involved.

202 Providing these ad hoc committees is a crucial part of the tiered-approach to member
203 engagement opportunities. They should be short term appointments, (3-6 months), with the
204 understanding that tasks which are expected to take longer should be broken down into smaller
205 segments that are achievable.

206 Regardless of the issue experts that are available, or the focus of the project at hand, all members
207 should have the opportunity to join. Notification of such opportunities should always be made to
208 the entire membership through email when possible and through postal mail to all others. In each
209 case consideration should be given to whether there are sufficient members to effectively
210 represent the membership and to include sufficient issue based knowledge.

211 ***Ground all initiatives in forest science with direct input from issue experts***

212 While members, Chapters, and Divisions may provide excellent potential pools of issue experts,
213 these knowledge bases may be focused on the regulatory initiative. At the onset of any new
214 initiative the Forest Science Coordinator should identify potential issue experts based on the
215 current research in the field of interest. The Policy Chair and ad hoc committee members should
216 seek input, comment and/or review from identified experts regardless of SAF or New England
217 Society membership.

- 218 ➤ Add appropriate guidance that directs the Policy Chair to seek direct input from non-SAF
219 and non-NESAF members to Section 4 of the Operations Manual through a vote of the
220 Executive Committee;

- 221 ➤ Add appropriate guidance that clarifies the need to seek direct input from identified issue
222 experts regardless of membership to the Position Statement Process portion of Section 4
223 of the Operations Manual through a vote of the Executive Committee;
- 224 ➤ Add appropriate guidance that clarifies the responsibility of the Forest Science
225 Coordinator to identify issue experts for position statement development to the Forest
226 Science Coordinator portion of Section 4 of the Operations Manual through a vote of the
227 Executive Committee.

228 This new structure again recognizes the Policy Chair’s responsibility to coordinate the skills of
229 issue experts to facilitate position statement development. The Policy Chair should maintain a
230 list of potential researchers who to whom they can seek expert advice, but the Forest Science
231 Coordinator has an important role to see that our position development process has the potential
232 to be grounded in science. Potential resources might include working with other SAF Societies
233 such as the New York Society for their expert advice even if the final document is adopted
234 separately.

235 ***Provide for a structured member comment period***

236 Providing a comment period will give the Executive Committee and any ad hoc committee a
237 preview of membership consensus and potential pitfalls of the current initiative. It is also a
238 crucial part of the tiered-approach to member involvement opportunities.

- 239 ➤ Add guidance to Section 4 of the Operations Manual to provide a member-wide comment
240 period after position statement development by the ad hoc committee through a vote of
241 the Executive Committee

242 Several models exist; however we suggest that the comments be accepted on a line-item basis
243 that allows for specific changes to an already well-vetted document while minimizing broad re-
244 write edits. The ad hoc committee should respond to many of the comments indicating what
245 changes were incorporated or why no change was incorporated. They should produce a final
246 table-based document with comments and responses listed by line. See the U.S. Climate Change
247 Science Program model that was used for the U.S. Synthesis and Assessment Reports. These
248 comment opportunities should be offered to all members directly after a position statement is
249 voted out of the ad hoc committee, and should be done for every position statement regardless of
250 the scope or focus of the regulatory initiative. Notice should be sent online whenever possible,
251 with notice sent to members without electronic capability prior and in anticipation to the
252 comment period.

253 ***Seek a vote of the membership for each position statement***

254 As a standard throughout many member based organizations, voting on items such as position
255 statements puts ownership in the hands of the members. Provide for a member vote on all
256 position statements.

257 ➤ Add appropriate guidance to Section 4 of the Operations Manual to follow the balloting
258 procedures as found in the SAF Bylaws through a vote of the Executive Committee

259 Second only to being a member, this is yet another critical step to providing a tiered-approach to
260 member involvement opportunities. Notice of a voting opportunity should be sent online
261 whenever possible, with notice sent to members without electronic capability prior and in
262 anticipation to the voting period.

263 ***Ensure the timeliness of position statements throughout the development process***

264 Given the fast pace of changes in regulatory initiatives in conjunction with membership
265 commitment concerns, set effective timelines to ensure that any work produced by our members
266 is completed in a timely fashion.

267 ➤ Add appropriate timeline guidance to Section 4 of the Operations Manual through a vote
268 of the Executive Committee

269 The process in whole, as developed in the prior action items is listed here with suggested and
270 mandatory timeframes.

- 271 1) The entire position statement development process should have a suggested 3-6 months
272 timeframe. This includes an allocated minimum of 7 weeks for the membership vetting
273 process;
- 274 2) Once that ad hoc committee votes a position statement out of committee it should
275 immediately go to a member comment period of 2 weeks. Notification and comments
276 should be done in an electronic format; notify postal members prior to impending
277 opportunity to comment such that they have a full two weeks to comment coinciding with
278 the electronic comment opportunity;
- 279 3) Immediately following the comment period the ad hoc committee should have a
280 suggested ideal of 2 and maximum of 4 weeks to respond to the comments and produce
281 the final edited document;
- 282 4) The final edited document is immediately sent to the national SAF policy office to start
283 review process; in addition a copy is immediately sent to the Executive Committee;
- 284 5) The Executive Committee should have 1 week to recommend a vote membership. If the
285 position statement does not appropriately fill the mission of the Society and they do not
286 recommend a vote of the membership it goes back to the ad hoc committee for review.
287 They can make this determination through email or in person;
- 288 6) Upon the recommendation of a vote of the membership members will have 2 weeks to
289 respond. Notification and voting should be done in an electronic format; notify postal
290 members prior to impending opportunity to vote such that they have a full two weeks to
291 vote coinciding with the electronic voting opportunity.

292 ***Officially adopt the Operations Manual***

293 The Executive Committee had not officially adopted the current Operations Manual. There is a
294 need for clear and consistent guidance to ensure a high quality of work over a sustained period of
295 time. Support our appointments by officially adopting the Operations Manual, and providing a
296 copy to new responsible parties.

- 297 ➤ Adopt the Operations Manual through a vote of the Executive Committee

298 ***Actively clean our member email lists in order to enable maximum response and participation***

299 Provide clear and consistent guidance to the Website Administrator and Membership Chair to
300 work proactively to maintain clean email lists.

- 301 ➤ Add guidance that instructs both positions to this end under the charters of both positions
302 in Section 4 of the Operations Manual through a vote of the Executive Committee

303 Not only do we desire to engage more members more quickly; we want to ensure membership
304 retention by making the best use of new processes such as this one to provide additional value to
305 our members.