Publisher’s Note

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The Journal of Forestry is pleased to publish “Managing Forests because Carbon Matters: Integrating Energy, Products, and Land Management Policy.” The article, which summarizes and assesses the most recent science regarding forests and carbon accounting, biomass use, and forest carbon offsets, was compiled by the Society of American Foresters’ Task Force on Forest Climate Change Offsets and Use of Forest Biomass for Energy, which also coordinated more than 25 external reviews of the draft report.

In addition to organizing, analyzing, and presenting the latest information on forests, carbon accounting, carbon offsets, and biomass energy, this article provides important policy recommendations that will encourage forest management designed to maximize the carbon and energy benefits that forests and forest products provide, while simultaneously sustaining ecosystem health and traditional forest biomass uses.

According to the task force, US environmental and energy policies need to be linked to or at least based on the mutual recognition of four basic and science-informed premises:

- sustainably managed forests can provide carbon storage and substitution benefits while delivering a range of environmental and social benefits, such as timber and biomass resources, clean water, wildlife habitat, and recreation;
- energy produced from forest biomass returns to the atmosphere carbon that plants absorbed in the relatively recent past; it essentially results in no net release of carbon as long as overall forest inventories are stable or increasing (as is the case with US forests);
- fossil fuel–produced energy releases carbon into the atmosphere that has resided in the earth for millions of years; forest biomass–based energy uses far less of the carbon stored in the earth, thereby reducing the flow of fossil fuel–based carbon emissions to the atmosphere.

This effort could not have been done without the dedicated volunteer leaders who wrote and reviewed this article. SAF members on the Task Force put in more than 2,000 hours of work, including more than 20 conference calls and other meetings. It demonstrates SAF’s abilities to summarize and analyze science and to provide practical, important information for policymakers. There is no doubt that the scientific information in this article will inform the development of sound forest carbon policies, and this could not have been done without the contributions of the volunteer members of the task force. SAF could not have paid a contractor to do this work, and even if it had, the result would not have been as thorough as what you are about to read. The forestry profession owes this group of people a great deal, and I personally thank each one of them for both their work and for their commitment to this profession.

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