



January 29, 2014

Board of Advisors  
Office of the Chancellor  
University of Alaska Fairbanks  
3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Signers' Hall  
P. O. Box 757500  
Fairbanks, Alaska 99775

RE: Support for Alaska's Forestry Profession through Education

Dear Board of Advisors:

The Society of American Foresters (SAF) represents the forestry profession in the United States. Its core values are that forests are fundamental for human welfare, can be sustained through meeting environmental and economic needs and that Foresters serve society through providing sound knowledge and professional management of forested landscapes. The Alaska members of the SAF represent the forest products industry, forestry consultants, municipal, state and federal government, tribal forestry, and academia.

Alaska SAF has concerns over the state of forestry education in Alaska. In recent years there has been a major reduction in the focus of applied forestry research and education at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks (UAF). Student enrollment in Forestry has been difficult to monitor and as professors retire they are not replaced with new talent. In addition, successful research programs that originated in the School of Natural Resource and Agricultural Sciences (SNRAS) have been detached taking resources, personnel and money away from the school. SAF recognizes that universities need to be remunerative; however, we feel that there are missed opportunities that could promote a stronger forestry program.

Alaska's economy relies on the development of its natural resources. With the existence of the traditional timber markets and potential new biomass markets there will continue to be a need for forest managers who understand Alaska's forest resource. Alaska SAF feels there is an opportunity for UAF to more fully develop an applied forestry curriculum that focuses on the needs of Alaskans, relevant markets, forest resource use and sustainability.

UAF is uniquely situated to house such an applied forestry program. It has relevant existing research programs that focus on the development, utilization and sustainability of Alaska's forest resource. UAF is the only program nationwide that can utilize the boreal forest as an example of forest research and forest application study on a daily basis. In addition, the University has been granted 50,000 acres of land within close proximity to the Fairbanks campus where many forestry research projects exist. This land grant represents a significant site for development of state-of-the-art management practices that can be applied to a large portion of Alaska. There are also collaborative research and education efforts between UAF's School of Natural Resources and Agricultural Sciences and the Alaskan Coastal Rainforest Center. These programs strive to serve Alaskans by utilizing and studying forest resources to meet their goals.





It is important to note a nationwide upward trend in forestry students. Because of national trends and Alaska's unique forest resource, UAF has the opportunity to be a leading national forestry program. We feel that promoting the forestry program would pique interest in young Alaskans to pursue a career in forestry and forest products while not having to leave Alaska to do so. In addition, UAF could become a research hub where people pursuing advanced degrees would want to study.

Alaska SAF feels that UAF could be a leader in forestry education if it further promotes and develops the forestry program. We feel the first step in accomplishing this is to fill the vacant forestry positions within the forest science department. A second objective could be to develop the curriculum from an applied management perspective. Finally, the university could actively recruit prospective forestry students from around the state and country.

Alaska SAF thanks you for taking the time to hear our concerns over forestry education in Alaska and we hope you will consider further promotion and development of the forestry program at UAF.

Sincerely,

Charles Sink

Charles Sink, Chair, CF  
Alaska Society of American Foresters