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Route To:

Subject: Organization Change – Merger of Eastern Region & Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry

To: Regional Foresters, Station Directors, IITF Director, Deputy Chiefs and WO Directors

I am pleased to announce Secretary Sonny Perdue has approved the reorganization proposal that merges the USDA Forest Service Eastern Region with Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry. With this approval, the Eastern Region, headquartered in Milwaukee, WI, will house mission areas for both State and Private Forestry and the National Forest System. This permanent change becomes effective immediately.

This decision follows a two-year pilot effort in which Eastern Region and Northeastern Area managers successfully shared leadership and oversight for the two units. We extend our thanks to employees, partners and State Foresters for their continued cooperation and support for this change.

This reorganization attests to our commitment to the core values of the Forest Service. It, among others, clearly demonstrates the need for interdependence in the East. Twenty States and the District of Columbia comprise the Eastern Region. Forty one percent of the U.S. population resides in the region; yet it is the Nation's most heavily forested, with 172 million acres (42 percent of the land base) in forest land. Of that, about three quarters of the timberland in the East is privately owned. The values and benefits we associate with forests across the urban to rural landscape—clean water, recreation opportunities, forest products, urban green space, and many others—reflect a need for shared leadership and interdependence between the Eastern Region, State and local governments, tribes, the many conservation partners and citizens we serve. Further, the multiplicity of forest landowners and common management challenges has made “shared stewardship” a way of doing conservation work in the East. This merger will help us sustain and build on these efforts. We will speak with one voice; cooperatively implement active and sustainable forest management; think broadly about our challenges and work more closely together to accomplish a shared mission in a shared geographic area.

Secondly, this reorganization can help us advance our core value of conservation on the 15 national forests and prairie that we directly oversee and through our cooperative work across other ownerships. All of these forests face similar challenges that include invasive insects and disease introductions and outbreaks, wildfire, floods, heavy recreation use and many unmet critical forest restoration needs. As we know well, these difficulties do not suddenly stop at the “green” line, state boundaries or private forests. Today's effort to improve forest conditions calls for an even higher level of coordination and cooperation across all ownerships. This merger plays a role in answering that call, ensuring we live up to public expectations for conservation leadership.



Finally, this reorganization places high value on the diversity of relationships we maintain and the high level of public service we offer. These have always been defining characteristics of our work in the East. The diversity of voices and vantage points is critical to stewarding America's forests and grasslands so we provide exceptional service to meet myriad needs of citizens, maintain close ties to both rural and urban communities and apply the latest advancements to natural resources management. With this reorganization, this emphasis will remain intact; our close collaboration with the Northeast-Midwest State Foresters Alliance will be enhanced. I am fully committed to ensuring management efforts on national forests and in cooperative forestry in the East and Midwest bring to bear the full diversity of partners so we work together to sustain forests and resources for multiple benefits and future generations.

As we complete the orderly and well-coordinated reorganization, I am confident our employees will seek new opportunities and creative ways to deliver the Forest Service mission in the East, in keeping with our core values. I look forward to the role this merger will play in ensuring all forests in the East remain healthy, sustainable and productive.


VICTORIA CHRISTIANSEN
Chief