

## Forester licensure: the experience in other states.

### PENNSYLVANIA COUNCIL OF PROFESSIONAL FORESTERS

#### ***Our proposal:***

increase forester responsibility  
by amending the state law that currently provides for the regulation and licensure  
of the professions of engineering, land surveying, and geology  
to include the profession of forestry.

#### ***How many states currently regulate the profession of forestry?***

Sixteen states currently have some form of voluntary or mandatory forester registration licensure (a list of these states is on the reverse side of this fact sheet). Several other states are in various stages of examining some form of state-sanctioned forester credentialing, ranging from studying the concept to having legislation under consideration.

#### ***Why is state regulation necessary when national accreditation programs are available?***

National credentialing programs — such as the Society of American Foresters *Certified Forester*® program (SAF CF) — are extremely valuable. However, because they are national in scope, they cannot be expected to take into account the special knowledge and experience required to manage forests in every part of the country. The basics of good forestry are universal. However, forests vary from state-to-state and region-to-region. As a result, the practice of forestry varies throughout the nation in order to meet the particular needs of each region's forests. A system of state licensure ensures land owners and the public that foresters who practice in a particular state have knowledge, experience, and judgment necessary to best deal with the unique needs of that state.

State licensure of foresters represents the highest level of the “credentialing hierarchy.” This hierarchy begins with voluntary accreditation and certification (such as the SAF CF program), through voluntary registration, to state licensure. The greatest benefit is delivered by licensure.

#### ***What are the principal goals of states' forester credentialing laws?***

There are three principal reasons why states have implemented forester credentialing: protection of the public, particularly forest land owners; protection of forests and the great benefit they provide to society at large; and raising the level of professionalism of the practice of forestry by recognizing individuals who have attained certain levels of education and experience and who participate in continuing education programs in order to stay current with the latest advances in science and forestry practice.

***How have forest land owners in states with credentialing laws benefited?***

Land owners in states with forester licensure/registration laws have a higher level of confidence that the individuals they retain to perform forestry services are competent. In addition, land owners who believe forestry services they receive do not meet basic standards — whether or not those services cause economic loss — have a formal outlet for their concerns: the state regulatory body charged with overseeing the profession of forestry. Finally, several studies have shown that land owners who use professional foresters receive greater value for their timber than those who do not avail themselves of such services.

***Has there been resistance or opposition to the enactment of forester licensure/registration in other states?***

Yes and, at first blush, some of the arguments raised against the licensure/registration may seem reasonable. However, closer examination typically shows these arguments to be narrow in scope and even frivolous in many cases. Legislators in states which regulate the profession of forestry have concluded the interests of land owners, the general public, and foresters themselves are best served through formal forester credentialing.

***States with mandatory licensure:*** Alabama, California, Connecticut, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire.

***States with mandatory registration:*** Arkansas, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, and South Carolina.

***States with voluntary registration:*** Michigan, New Jersey, Oklahoma, and West Virginia.

See the website of the Society of American Foresters for a report from that organization's Task Force on Forester Licensure and Registration for greater details:  
<http://www.safnet.org/policy/LRCinfo.htm>

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*The nation behaves well if it treats the natural resources as assets which it must turn over to the next generation increased, and not impaired.*  
**THEODORE ROOSEVELT, 1910.**