Climate Change, Carbon, and Forestry

Global climate change, driven by emissions of CO2 and other greenhouse gases (GHGs), has begun to alter temperature and precipitation patterns, with measurable effects on flora and fauna. Storage of CO2, in addition to reducing emissions of GHGs, presents an important option for minimizing the impact of global climate change. Climate change will impact forested ecosystems, but forests can also play a role in mitigating climate change by increasing CO2 sequestration through informed silvicultural choices in working forests. Forest management decisions can also increase forests’ resilience and ability to adapt to altered precipitation and temperature patterns. The greatest challenge to employing forests in the fight against climate change is their conversion to other land uses.

The Forest Guild is actively engaged in research and policy to promote the protection and management of forests as part of the solution to climate change. We feel that ecologically, economically, and socially responsible forestry—"excellent forestry"—can increase forest resistance, resilience, and adaptation to climate change, while also sequestering CO2.

Policy: Speaking for Forests

The Forest Guild’s professional membership recently approved a Forest Guild Climate Change Policy Statement. This policy statement focuses on outlining management that (1) enhances forests’ ability to adapt to climate change and (2) mitigates the effects of climate change through increased carbon sequestration and storage. This Policy Statement was developed by a subgroup of the Guild’s Climate Change Working Group and unanimously supported by the Guild’s Membership and Policy Development Council. In a voting period that closed on September 5, 2008, 96% of Forest Guild professional members participating voted in favor of Forest Guild Climate Change Policy Statement. This Policy Statement may be found by clicking here.

In the Northeast, the Forest Guild is engaging in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) process to ensure that its policies don’t inadvertently focus on maximizing carbon storage and institutionalizing damaging forest management practices at the expense of other forest values. Climate change policy discussions often involve the expanded use of woody biomass for energy, which is the subject of a related Forest Guild program. Read more about biomass from forests. Outreach: New Mexico Forestry and Climate Change WorkshopThe Forest Guild, New Mexico Forest and Watershed Restoration Institute, and a broad group of partners hosted a workshop on November 20, 2008 in Albuquerque about climate change and forests in New Mexico. The goal of the workshop was to provide foresters and other natural resource professionals with information about climate change's projected impacts on New Mexico's forests to incorporate into their management decision making. 130 forest managers, researchers, landowners, students, and activists attended. For more information, click here.
Research: Climate Change, Carbon, and the Forests of the NortheastThe Forest Guild's December 2007 report entitled Climate Change, Carbon, and the Forests of the Northeast first and foremost declares that the Northeast’s forestlands must be retained as forests. Fragmentation or conversion of forestland to other uses not only releases carbon that forests are currently storing, but also damages the region’s long-term ability to sequester more carbon in forests and wood products. This report marks the first time that climate change impacts, carbon policy recommendations, and forest management challenges in the Northeast have been interconnected and distilled into practical, attainable strategies for use by forest managers. Read the full report here or the report fact sheet. Some updates to the carbon trading section of Climate Change, Carbon, and the Forests of the Northeast are available on the Rural Climate Change Policy website.