

2021 NAFSR Accomplishments Report

Changes in NAFSR and Agency Leadership: 2021 was a year of transition for both NAFSR and the Forest Service. The agency bid a fond farewell to Chief **Vicki Christiansen** and welcomed **Randy Moore** as the agency's 20thth Chief in a 116-year history. The transition from one experienced and respected career professional to another was seamless.

Our welcoming letter to Randy expressed our desire to continue the open and welcoming relationship NAFSR has built with the Chief's office. In 2021, we had multiple coordination contacts with the Chief(s) via text, email, calls and an occasional Zoom session. I was able to meet with Chief Christiansen at the Yates Building while in Washington, DC over Memorial Day weekend. Our coordination with agency leadership also included similar communication/sessions with Deputy Chiefs and key staff, and some Departmental officials on a variety of current issues.

As for NAFSR, we bid adieu to **Jim Caswell** and **Larry Payne** as our Chair and Vice-Chair respectively and thank them both for their invaluable service. The good news is, they have both agreed to remain active in our organization and continue helping us in an advisory capacity. We are grateful to **Jane Darnell** for agreeing to bring her experience and talents into the Vice-Chair position. Both Jane and I appreciate all your help and support as we transition into our new NAFSR roles.

I know we were all pleased to accept **Doug Crandall's** offer to serve as our Congressional Liaison. Doug has always had tremendous respect and credibility in the agency, the Department and on Capitol Hill. He will be an enormous asset for NAFSR in fulfilling the advocacy part of our mission. Another new piece that seems to be working out was the formation of a "kitchen cabinet" to assist Jane and I during the Chair and Vice-Chair transition. It currently consists of Jim Caswell, **Jack Troyer**, **Rich Stem**, Jane Darnell and me. It may be a function worth keeping in some fashion.

Several new Board members joined or replaced outgoing Board members this year. Thank you all for serving on our Board and for your assistance in responding to the many inquiries we received from the public requesting information or help. While on the topic of our Board, we voted this year to purchase a liability insurance policy that would cover our Officers, Board members, and Committees performing in their NAFSR roles. The Board also voted to increase our annual dues from \$25 to \$30, and lifetime membership dues from \$250 to \$300.

Our financial situation continues to improve as does our membership. **Johnny Hodges** reported that we had a net gain of 38 members in 2021. We once again express gratitude to Johnny and our webmaster **Bill Disbrow** for their invaluable service. Johnny pushed out 32 official announcements, notices, and updates of NAFSR work accomplishments to the Board and membership. Bill once again, has kept our organization's "front door" current and looking good. He made improvements on the website that make it more interesting and easier to find information.

NAFSR created two new Standing Committees (Restoration and Recreation) in 2021, realigned and repurposed the existing Fire Committee, chartered a Communication Team and approved a communication strategy because of the team's work. We also developed an operations statement on: "*Standing Committees and Teams Responsibilities and Expectations*". Accomplishments of our three primary committees are summarized in this document.

NAFSR continues to stay engaged in climate change matters on many fronts. **Rich Guldin** remains faithfully involved and on point with the science and other climate change issues on our behalf. As you all probably know, the Job Corps program was on shaky ground for a brief period during the last Administration. Thankfully this historic and beneficial program survived. We appreciated them and continue to appreciate **Joan Golden's** continued involvement on this front.

NAFSR took a very active role on the forest management and catastrophic fire front in 2021. We prepared a landmark position paper titled *America's Forest Management Crisis - A National Catastrophe*, and gave it wide distribution, including Senate and House leadership and germane Committees (17 members in all), all Western Governors, Association of Counties for each State, NGA, WGA, NACO, National Association of State Foresters, TNC, B&C, TU. In addition, individual Board members shared the position paper with their local contacts. We also wrote an Op Ed titled *The Science is Clear, Catastrophic Wildfire Requires Forest Management*. The Op Ed was picked up and published in several regional newspapers around the west last Fall. Both documents are posted on our website.

Other Notable Advocacy Accomplishments include:

- Joint PLF/NAFSR comments to FWS on ESA Regs changes regarding interagency cooperation. We also sent a joint comment letter to CEQ on proposed planning changes. A big thank you to **Ranotta McNair** for her help on this and other planning related efforts.
- Letter to **Robert Bonnie** on Wildfire Commission expressing our interest in a seat at the table.
- Federal Register Notice to USDA on climate change proposals (30 pages).
- Letter on behalf of the National Museum of FS History supporting their application for receiving a wood innovation grant.
- Letter in support of Wildlife Crossings (a section in the Infrastructure Law).
- Letter to **Secretary Vilsack** regarding selection of a new Chief.
- Congratulatory letter to Chief Moore.

NAFSR joined several other organizations in signing letters of support for: The Big Game Migration/ Habitat Conservation Act, Budget Reconciliation, The Infrastructure Bill (now law), The Resilient Federal Forest Act, and wildlife crossings. In addition, Board member Sandra Holsten represented NAFSR at the American Wildlife Conservation Partners national meeting.

Her notes are posted on our website. Special thanks to **Sandra Holsten** who along with Larry Payne, served as NAFSR focal points for most of these “sign on” letters.

John R McGuire Award: I had the privilege of traveling to Colorado in September to personally present the John R McGuire award to the Pikes Peak Ranger District for their dedication in maintaining the Forest Service Memorial Grove over the years. A special thanks to the Rocky Mountaineers for hosting the event.

Infrastructure Law Funding Increases: There is certainly a good deal of money coming the agency’s way as part of the new infrastructure law, and no lack of opportunity for NAFSR to engage on many program fronts, including our offer to be at the table on the new *Wildfire Commission*. Some of our members have been involved in various facets of the new legislation including such things as landscape restoration, hazard mitigation, recreation infrastructure, planning, and fuels treatment project list development. NAFSR will continue to stay engaged in this matter as our capacity allows. It is important to bear in mind that our role is to be strategic, helpful, supportive, and forward thinking. It is not NAFSR’s role to be operational.

Fire Committee: We “rebooted” our Fire Committee in 2021 with a focus on working *strategically* with Forest Service leadership and other interagency and intergovernmental fire management officials to effectively and diplomatically engage in the many fire related issues. The restructured committee has **Mike Edrington**, **Joe Stutler**, and **Steve Eubanks** from the original Fire Committee along with new members **Rich Lasko**, **Tom Zimmerman**, **Bill Van Bruggen**, and **Jeanne Wade-Evans**. The new Fire Committee is comprised of individuals with strong fire management and line officer experience and operates under a new Charter approved by the NAFSR Board this past summer. Our thanks to **Mike Dudley** for agreeing to chair this committee for the time being. He did an excellent job of representing NAFSR at a November roundtable on catastrophic fire that was sponsored by TNC and the Aspen Institute. We look forward to his continued engagement with the group. The Fire Committee is currently developing a *position paper on managed fire*. They plan to have it finalized this winter. I would like to acknowledge **Mike Rogers** for faithfully serving as interim Fire Committee chair for much of 2021 after our long-term Chair **Al West** stepped down. The committee has done a very good job of coordinating closely on issues with Deputy Chief S&PF **Jaelith Hall-Rivera**.

Restoration Committee: This is a new committee that was established in June 2021, which was a spin off from the former restoration committee and lead that existed for the past 5-6 years. With the additional funding coming and requests for advice/assistance from the agency, we felt that we needed to constitute some new members and leader to take on what may be a time-consuming effort. Our thanks to **Kurt Wiedenmann** for the excellent job he has been doing as the new committee Chair. Their first accomplishment was the development of a new charter which indicates the committee will work strategically with Forest Service leadership and other entities to prepare NAFSR reports, briefing materials, and deliver analysis of landscape restoration initiatives, management, planning, and operations. The committee then prepared a position paper on *Forest Thinning and Prescribed Fire – A Viable Tool to Restore American Forests*, which is available on the NAFSR website. The committee has additionally been working

to gain an understanding of the Forest Service-related provisions in the *Infrastructure Law* and how NAFSR can support the agency in its implementation.

Recreation Committee: The Recreation Committee was established in May 2021. The committee includes nine NAFSR members (Board and general members) with a diverse set of experiences and geographical representation. The committee has focused on establishing key working relationships with national level Forest Service leadership and other organizations interested in recreation, including the Public Lands Foundation. Committee members have utilized their personal contacts to reach out to congressional members and staff to discuss appropriations and other proposed recreation legislation. We are grateful for **Nora Rasure's** direction and leadership as committee Chair.