

efforts. The requirements in the SCS report for the state to “demonstrate significant efforts” to obtain the necessary funding invokes an uncertain threshold for resolving these issues, and is of concern to environmental groups. It will be a challenge for SCS, and indeed the Forest Stewardship Council, to determine where the standard must supercede the political realities faced by the agency, or when an honest effort is adequate.

These are difficult issues that will be closely tracked by all interest groups and the media. They will also be among the important lessons that will be described in the Pinchot Institute’s final report on the certification pilot projects on public lands. Whatever the outcome, this effort has been a remarkable contribution to advancing the dialogue between the agency and the citizens of Washington, and improving the stewardship of state trust lands.

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Allocating Cooperative Forestry Funds to the States: Block Grants and Alternatives

The Pinchot Institute recently released a report titled “*Allocating Cooperative Forestry Funds to the States: Block Grants and Alternatives*.” In FY 2000, Congress asked the USDA Forest Service to provide an independent study “to assess the feasibility and potential for enhanced program efficiency by block granting all or portions of the Cooperative Forestry program.” The Pinchot Institute was awarded a contract by the Forest Service to conduct this study, and convened a panel of eight independent experts to report on the merits and drawbacks to such an approach.

The Forest Service’s Cooperative Forestry program is charged with administering programs that enhance the management, protection, and stewardship of forest resources on state and private lands throughout the United States. These programs provide technical and financial assistance to rural and urban citizens to help them care for their forests and sustain their communities. The programs, which are funded through the federal government’s budgeting and appropriations process, are managed in accordance with the Forest Service’s State and Private Forestry division’s national priorities, and implemented locally through a series of grants to state forestry agencies. State forestry agencies and others have questioned whether a block-grant approach to allocate such funds would enable each state to receive a greater share of the total appropriated funds, and

allow the states greater flexibility to manage such funds.

The panel, chaired by Perry Hagenstein, invited representatives from numerous forestry organizations to offer comments on the delivery of the Cooperative Forestry programs to ensure that all relevant issues were identified and addressed. The panel’s ensuing report examines several options, including block grants, to enhance the effectiveness of Cooperative Forestry programs.

The recommendations go beyond a simple evaluation of the merits and drawbacks of administering Cooperative Forestry programs through block grants to the states. The issues in funding Cooperative Forestry programs are complex and the opportunities for better serving the public are great. The Pinchot Institute intends for this report to challenge the Forest Service, the state foresters, and other stakeholders to be open to these opportunities and innovative in their responses. The Pinchot Institute provided briefings on the findings and recommendations to Congress, Forest Service leaders, and interested stakeholders.

The report is available electronically at www.pinchot.org/pic/cfnews.htm or can be requested in hard copy by calling (202) 797-6580 or emailing neblock@pinchot.org. Questions or comments about the study should be directed to Nadine Block at (202) 797-6585, neblock@pinchot.org.

