

Maine Division
NEW ENGLAND SOCIETY OF AMERICAN FORESTERS

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Greetings MESAF Foresters:

Fall is fast upon us: most parts of the state have had a couple of frosts by now and we are emerging from a very wet summer season into what promises to be a spectacular autumn! Leaves are turning on the high ridges. The red maples, with their wet feet, are already spectacular in the mists of early morning. Earlier this month, your MESAF executive committee put final details into place for our annual fall meeting, **“Energizing” the Maine Forest: Threat or Opportunity?** The meeting will be held at the same place as last year, the Corbett Business Building at the University of Maine in Orono on October 14, 2008.

With gasoline and diesel prices soaring, the crisis on Wall Street, global warming, food shortages around the globe, and severe uncertainties throughout our global economy, our professional society’s emphasis on energy and the role that well-managed forests can play as a part of the solution to these complex and intertwined problems is both timely and critically important. Ethanol produced from corn, long-touted as a solution to energy independence, is beginning to be seen as a part of the problem: in terms of using an important source of food for fuel and in terms of the energy budget required to convert corn to ethanol. Many researchers, including our own University of Maine, have turned to cellulose as an abundant source of energy fiber and as feedstock for cellulosic ethanol and other liquid biofuels. Much work remains to be done to position wood cellulose in the threshold of our entry to energy independence. But the message for foresters is clear: the fiber in our forests has a value – perhaps even a destiny – as a source of energy that very few, perhaps none of us, envisioned when we began our careers.

The fall meeting this year will provide a forum to address the future role of Maine’s forests in providing raw material for society’s energy demands. The discussion will consider both the demand and supply sides of biomass, the silvicultural implications of increased biomass harvesting and then a moderated panel discussion to provide some synthesis for the issue: where does Maine stand today, what is the future of our forests with regards to biomass and what trade-offs are necessary in charting a successful future that will sustain the economic, environmental and cultural benefits of the Pine Tree State? We have put together a compelling program and look forward to having many of you participate!

At the business meeting, we will update the membership on matters of interest to our profession and solicit ideas for next year’s work plan. You will be pleased to learn that MESAF continues on very sound financial footing; we remain committed to supporting programs and organizations that help foresters and Mainers understand the importance of our forests in their daily lives.

Take a look at the program elsewhere in this mailing and send in your registration soon. We expect another standing room only crowd on October 14th. Thanks for the opportunity to serve you as MESAF Chair; it has been a pleasure serving this past year.

Kind regards, Henry Whittemore