



August 20, 2009

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary of Agriculture
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Mr. Secretary:

The National Association of State Foresters (NASF) strongly applauds the vision you have outlined for America's forests. The speech you delivered on August 14th in Seattle, Washington, reinforces important priorities for State Foresters and makes it easy for NASF to support a shared vision with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). We are particularly pleased to see you recognize that Forest Service responsibilities extend well beyond national forests and urge more visible support for the agency's state and private role.

While all forests are environmental and economic assets for the nation, nonfederal forests shoulder a disproportionate burden in terms of development threats and offer far greater opportunities to generate rural wealth as working forests. Increased federal investment focused on these forests through Forest Service State & Private Forestry and other USDA programs is a sound investment for the nation. Federal support for nonfederal forests will increase the scale and pace of the forest stewardship work required to achieve the collective vision you have outlined.

NASF also applauds your recognition of the role that private sector markets play in generating rural wealth, facilitating forest management, and keeping forests forested. There is a strong link between economics and environmental benefits. Markets facilitate forest management activities that contribute to clean water, climate change mitigation, and habitat diversity. NASF is committed to working with USDA and the Office of Ecosystem Services to develop new markets that help conserve working forests.

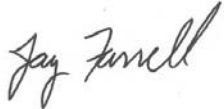
State Foresters employ forest resource professionals that serve landowners and administer water quality best management practices (BMP) programs that help deliver clean drinking water in every county in the nation. NASF is proud of our long partnership with USDA and considers State Foresters to be a unique asset for USDA. Current initiatives that contribute to your shared vision for the nation's forests include:

- Redesign – a collaborative effort with Forest Service State & Private Forestry to ensure effective delivery of federal funding for focused on-the-ground outcomes.
- State Assessments & Resource Strategies – state-level processes with key stakeholders to identify and address priority landscape-level needs.

- Joint Forestry Team – formal coordination between NASF, the Forest Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) to ensure efficient delivery of agency efforts supporting private forestry.

In conclusion, NASF appreciates your leadership in presenting a shared vision for the nation's forests based on an all-lands approach. Please let NASF know how State Foresters can be of further assistance as USDA moves forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jay Farrell".

Jay Farrell
Executive Director