



December 23, 2008

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
United States House of Representatives
235 Cannon HOB
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Richard Durbin
United States Senate
309 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Harry Reid
United States Senate
528 Hart Senate Office Bldg
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Steny Hoyer
United States House of Representatives
1705 Longworth H.O.B.
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader Reid, Speaker Pelosi, Senator Durbin and Representative Hoyer:

The National Association of State Foresters (NASF) represents the directors of forestry agencies from the fifty states, eight U.S. territories and associated states, and the District of Columbia. We hold that a healthy U.S. forest products industry is central to maintaining and enhancing forest ecosystems while also providing employment opportunities in rural America. Today, the forest and wood products industry is facing many challenges including foreign competition, high energy costs and high fiber costs that have reduced companies' competitiveness in the global marketplace. In the past year alone, the Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that nearly 11,000 wood, paper and paper products jobs were lost.¹

As you consider how to deliver aid through an economic stimulus package, NASF urges you to invest taxpayer dollars in providing future employment opportunities in forest-based communities as well as infusing capital into the management of our nation's public and private forests. State foresters have the primary responsibility of delivering numerous federal programs administered by the USDA Forest Service State and Private Forestry program (S&PF). Through existing initiatives, state forestry agencies can ensure rapid deployment of federal funds at the local level. Investment in any or all of the following land stewardship activities on non-federal lands (through S&PF) are "shovel-ready" and can provide green jobs over the next two to five years.

Reducing the Threat of Wildfire. An investment of \$200 to \$600 million delivered through S&PF State Fire Assistance can help put an estimated 3,300 to 11,000 people to work reducing fuels on state and private forest lands. This investment will result in fuels reduction treatments on an estimated three to eight million acres of state and private forest lands. NASF recommends investing an additional \$10 to \$25 million to train 160 and 400 new firefighters.

Restoring Forests Ecosystems. A \$250 to \$500 million investment in S&PF Cooperative Forest Protection and Cooperative Forestry can employ an estimated 4,300 to 8,300 people in an effort to restore non-federal forest ecosystems through suppression of insect and disease outbreaks, reforestation, and

¹ Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2008. Employees on nonfarm payrolls by industry sector and selected industry detail. Last accessed on-line on December 23, 2008 at: <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/empst.t14.htm>

restoration of watersheds and streams. We recommend an additional \$25 to \$55 million to support an estimated 350 to 850 jobs to better manage resource information.

Improving Health of Urban and Community Forests. Investing between \$90 and \$221 million in S&PF Urban and Community Forestry programs can employ an estimated 1,300 to 3,200 people to conduct urban tree inventories and health assessments, plant trees, respond to threats of urban tree insects (e.g., Emerald Ash Borer) and diseases, and remove and utilize infested trees. Most state forestry agencies have tree-planting grant programs that could be utilized to have new trees planting initiatives begin by as early as spring 2009.² Co-benefits of these investments in our nation's urban and community green infrastructure include:

- Improving human health as trees remove toxic pollutants from the air and water supply;
- Saving cities and municipalities money by reducing the need for storm water retention structures; and
- Annual savings in energy costs to homeowners by the strategic placement of shade trees thereby reducing the need for additional power plants.

Utilizing Excess Woody Biomass. The existing forest products industry is considering ways to add value to current mill by-products and timber harvesting residuals as they face a recessing wood-products manufacturing economy. Investing \$500 million in the S&PF Economic Action Program (EAP) can help communities and businesses expand existing or develop new markets for small-diameter, previously unmerchantable trees (e.g., Combined Heat/Power, Pelletizing applications) through woody-biomass utilization grants. It is reasonable to expect that an additional 10 percent of these funds should be used to effectively administer the program and provide technical and financial assistance (i.e. through both federal and state agencies) in a way that is responsible and accountable to the taxpayer.

NASF also supports efforts outside Forest Service S&PF including **funding programs designed to improve the nation's green infrastructure** through modernizing timber bridges, improving rural transportation networks, and carrying out maintenance on forest roads and trails. Investing between \$18 and \$45 million over the next two to five years can put an estimated 300 to 750 people to work improving timber bridges on state and private forest lands. An estimated \$500 million is needed to maintain or decommission road networks and improve trails and recreation facilities owned and managed by state forestry agencies. Similar needs exist on National Forest System lands.

In many cases, schools and other public institutions are heated by aging boilers and are prime candidates for conversion to bioheating. For instance, 422 boilers found in public buildings in Nebraska are more than 40 years old.³ Ten counties along Colorado's Front Range anticipate replacing boilers in 500 existing schools and heating 300 new schools in the next 25 years.⁴ In many cases, these institutions are unable to raise adequate funds to convert to utilizing woody-biomass to heat and/or cool their facilities. NASF supports investing \$400 million into a **revolving, no or low interest loan fund** to help cover the capital costs requirements to convert to biomass heat. Funds could help cover the capital costs and feasibility studies (including biomass supply assessments) and would be paid back during the project's estimated payback period. In addition to reducing the amount of CO₂ into the atmosphere, the program can be expected to keep energy dollars local, new green jobs in rural areas, help reduce the threat of catastrophic

² Nebraska Forest Service. 2008. Green Actions for Economic Stimulus: Community Tree Planting. Last accessed online on December 23, 2008 at:

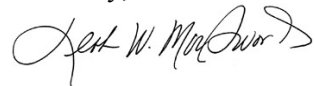
³ Nebraska Forest Service. 2008. Woody Biomass Energy: Nebraska's Untapped Resource. Last accessed online on December 22, 2008 at: <http://westcentral.unl.edu/forestry/biomass.pdf>

⁴ Front Range Fuels Treatment Partnership. 2006. Living with Fire: Protecting Communities and Restoring Forests. Last accessed online on December 22nd, 2008 at: <http://www.centerwest.org/publications/pdf/fire.pdf>

wildfire and provide energy cost savings in rural communities most vulnerable to price shocks in institutional heating costs.

State forestry agencies are uniquely positioned to assure rapid delivery of federal funding assistance to where it is needed most to produce immediate on-the-ground results. State agencies have the capacity and the oversight expertise to assure that an influx of federal funds will be immediately and appropriately targeted to support and generate wood sector jobs. Since current state budgets reflect overall economic conditions, federal stimulus funds should not be tied to matching requirements; this will ensure immediate action.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Leah W. MacSwords". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "L" and "W".

Leah W. MacSwords
NASF President