



June 2, 2009

The Honorable Jeff Bingaman  
 United States Senate  
 Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski  
 United States Senate  
 Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Bingaman and Ranking Member Murkowski:

The National Association of State Foresters (NASF) is a non-profit organization comprised of the directors of all state and territorial forest management agencies in our country. Our members have a public trust responsibility for managing and protecting two-thirds of the nation's forestland, which is held in non-federal ownership. NASF commends your leadership in restoring the nation's industrial sector—including the forest products industry—by introducing the "Restoring America's Manufacturing Leadership through Energy Efficiency Act" (S. 661).

State Foresters view our nation's forests as a strategic national resource that require active management in order to meet fiber needs, reduce impacts of insect and disease, decrease risk of catastrophic wildfire and provide for a range of habitats needed by the full spectrum of forest species. Maintaining healthy and productive forests is only possible if diverse and robust markets are available to landowners and forest managers to practice sustainable forestry. Markets for traditional forest products (e.g., lumber, pulp, piling, poles) have provided the majority of the economic return to landowners and have helped reward them for keeping forests as forests.

S. 661 comes at a time when the nation's forest products industry faces significant competition from global competitors creating a situation where U.S. imports of forest products have grown at a faster rate than American exports. Further, the current economic downturn and housing slump have reduced the demand for paper products and dimensional lumber resulting in a loss of traditional markets all across the country. Over the past three years alone, 15 percent of the forest products industry's workforce—found mostly in rural areas—has been left without a job as a result of mill closings.

State Foresters believe funding programs that maintain and diversify markets are essential investments even in challenging budget times. We support the provisions found in S. 661 that finance the development and implementation of new and commercially available technologies designed to improve the competitive position of the existing forest products industry and other manufacturers. NASF thanks the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee for its commitment to maintaining domestic markets for traditional forest products and is confident your investment will help maintain the health and productivity of the nation's forest at a time when they are being called upon to address national priorities related to renewable energy and climate mitigation.

Sincerely,

Leah W. MacSwords  
 President