

June 23, 2009

The Honorable Collin C. Peterson
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nick J. Rahall
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Frank D. Lucas
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Doc Hastings
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Peterson, Chairman Rahall, Ranking Member Lucas and Ranking Member Hastings:

Climate change threatens the nation's 750 million acres of forests—the same forests that provide clean air and water, carbon sequestration, renewable energy and numerous other ecosystem services at little cost to the public. Changes in precipitation, temperature, fire patterns, increased CO₂ concentrations, pest outbreaks and other influences associated with climate change have the potential to transform forest ecosystems by altering their composition and shifting their distribution.¹ In some cases, forest migration rates may not match the rate at which the climate is changing leaving open the possibility of losing important forest types and forest biodiversity.¹

Impacts associated with climate change also expose forested habitats that are home to countless numbers of birds, amphibians, reptiles and mammals. Temperature increases are expected to shift habitat to higher elevations and to northern climates and—in some cases—may eliminate components of a species' habitat, which can threaten its long-term survival. Warming trends also impact timing of bud burst, insect breeding cycles and peak food demand by migratory birds that depend on forests.

Many authorities exist to conduct forest management activities, which can help the nation's non-federal forests adapt to climate change and continue to provide wildlife habitat and other essential ecosystems services. Conducting adaptation activities will be particularly important in priority areas identified in the State Forest Resource Assessments and Strategies required by the 2008 Farm Bill. Active forest management can help forests adapt through such activities as:

- Replanting and seeding new forests with drought resistant and other trees selected for adaptation resiliency—particularly in areas of high forest fragmentation;
- Conducting fuels treatments in areas experiencing prolonged drought and at risk of catastrophic wildfire;
- Installing measures that facilitate adaptation of wildlife to climate-induced change in forest habitat including establishment of migration corridors;
- Conducting activities that minimize or prevent insect, disease or invasive infestations that are anticipated to accelerate by changes in climate; and
- Employing measures across contiguous forest landscapes that collectively achieve diverse age classes, species mix, stand structure and other characteristics that assist in forest adaptation.

Funding adaptation activities on federal forests is essential, but only addresses needs on 1/3rd of the nation's forests. Adaptation activities will need to be coordinated among federal, state and private forest ownerships as wildlife adapt to new habitats that span across political boundaries. Funding adaptation activities will help ensure non-federal forest lands can respond to new climates and continue to provide a

¹ Malsheimer, R.W. et al. 2008. Potential Effects of Climate Change on Forests. *Journal of Forestry* 106(3): 129-131.

broad array of ecosystem services. The undersigned organizations urge Congress to broaden the scope of Section 480 of HR 2454 (under consideration by the House Rules Committee) to fund adaptation activities on the nation's 495 million acres of forests held in state and private ownership by including the following (new language in **bold**):

*(4) FOREST SERVICE.—Of the amounts made available each fiscal year to carry out this subpart, 8.1 percent shall be available to the Secretary of Agriculture for use in funding natural resource adaptation activities carried out on national forests and national grasslands under the jurisdiction of the Forest Service **and for natural resource adaptation activities on state and private forest lands carried out under the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978 and consistent with adaptation activities identified in the State-Wide Assessments and Strategies found in Section 8002 of the Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008 or in accordance with other forest adaptation plans developed by the state forester through a public consultation processes.***

We greatly applaud Congress for taking on the immense challenge of addressing climate change and hope you will consider making these changes as the House Agriculture Committee and House Natural Resources Committee address HR 2454.

Sincerely,

American Bird Conservancy
American Forest & Paper Association
American Forest Foundation
American Forests
Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
C21, LLC
California Forestry Association
Council of Western State Foresters
Defenders of Wildlife
Environmental Defense Fund
Forest Guild
Hardwood Federation
Maine Forest Service
Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences
National Alliance of Forest Owners
National Association of Conservation Districts
National Association of Gateway Communities
National Association of State Foresters
National Association of University Forest Resource Programs
National Hardwood Lumber Association
National Wildlife Federation
National Woodland Owners Association
New Forests
Pinchot Institute for Conservation
Plum Creek
Society of American Foresters
The Nature Conservancy
The Trust for Public Land
The Wilderness Society
Western Pennsylvania Conservancy
Weyerhaeuser Company
Wildlife Mississippi