

November 12, 2015

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Chairman
Interior, Environment, and Related
Agencies Subcommittee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Udall
Ranking Member
Interior, Environment, and Related
Agencies Subcommittee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Murkowski and Ranking Member Udall,

The undersigned organizations are strong supporters of the Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) program funded by the USDA Forest Service (Forest Service). We rely on the inventory data and analysis of America's forests provided by the program, which make up the backbone of scientific knowledge on the current state of the nation's forests.

We urge the Congress to retain the Senate bill language providing \$80 million in FY2016 for the FIA program to move the program toward providing an accurate and timely inventory of America's forests. We also urge the inclusion of language ensuring that this funding would, at minimum, maintain historic federally funded remeasurement cycles – every 7 years in the east and every 10 years in the west.

This critical information is needed to support sound policy and forest management decisions, both public and private, and is increasingly important for decisions regarding new and expanding markets. The FIA program is utilized by a large set of diverse stakeholders interested in the state of America's forests. These include forest resource managers at mills, land managers, conservation groups, university students and faculty, and State and Federal agencies, such as the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

As engaged partners, we are interested in working with Congress and the Forest Service to make program delivery as efficient as possible and to support additional federal investment to implement many of the useful tools outlined in the new FIA Strategic Plan – including full urban inventory, increased plot density, and improved carbon and biomass estimates.

There is a need to make FIA data more robust and more useful for emerging uses, such as accurate information regarding carbon stocks, forest sustainability monitoring, wildlife habitat assessments, and much more. Given the increasing pressures facing our forests – from wildfire, insects and disease and development – the FIA program is more important now than ever before.

Sincerely,

American Forest & Paper Association
American Forest Foundation
American Wood Council
Hardwood Federation
National Alliance of Forest Owners

National Association of State Foresters
Southeastern Lumber Manufacturers
Association
Sustainable Forestry Initiative, Inc.