



Thursday, March 31, 2016

The Honorable Pat Roberts
Chair, Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry Committee
United States Senate

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Chair, Energy & Natural Resources Committee
United States Senate

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Ranking Member, Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry Committee
United States Senate

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
Ranking Member, Energy & Natural Resources Comm.
United States Senate

Dear Chairmen Roberts and Murkowski and Ranking Members Stabenow and Cantwell:

The National Association of State Foresters urges the Senate to pass legislation allowing the USDA Forest Service to sell isolated parcels of land and utilize those funds for acquisition of access and inholdings. HR 1214 passed the House of Representatives and was sent to the Senate for consideration on September 17, 2015. It passed the House on a roll call vote of 403-0. The Administration has proposed similar language in the Forest Service Budget Justification for 2017 (Appropriations Language Changes, Small Tracts Act Conveyance Authority, page 60). This is legislation that has broad based support and is desperately needed.

These small isolated parcels which would be available for sale, are largely unmanaged “no-man’s lands.” Many are among or near residential neighborhoods and are often the sites of trash dumping, wildfire ignitions, etc. The agency spends untold amounts of time dealing with law enforcement, trespass and easement issues; time which could be much better spent managing the actual main body of the forest. The agency estimates there may be as many as 25,000 small isolated parcels which fit the definition in the legislation.

Clearly defined ownership patterns make for much more effective and efficient management. As State Foresters, we would rather focus our limited resources on assisting landowners, preventing and fighting fires where these patterns are better defined. The Forest Service shares that perspective.

We urge the Senate to pass this important legislation in this legislative session. It is simply good government.

Sincerely,

Paul DeLong
President, National Association of State Foresters
State Forester of Wisconsin

Executive Director
Jay Farrell

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