

The Honorable Betty McCollum
Chairman, Appropriations Subcommittee on
Interior, Environment and Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Chairman, Appropriations Subcommittee on
Interior, Environment and Related Agencies
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable David Joyce
Ranking Member, Appropriations Subcommittee
on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Udall
Ranking Member, Appropriations Subcommittee
on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

March 15, 2019

Dear Chairwomen McCollum and Murkowski and Ranking Members Joyce and Udall:

As Congress begins the process of drafting the Fiscal Year 2020 budget, we appreciate that spending choices must be made that coincide with our nation's priorities. As the Committee seeks to maximize the effectiveness of every federal dollar, we would like to highlight the role effective partnerships can play in addressing our nation's forest challenges. For this reason, the undersigned organizations support investments in key federal programs that support state and private forestry activities throughout the United States. A critically-important component of the Forest Service's budget, these programs help tackle some of the most pressing issues in forestry while conserving and improving America's forestlands; enhancing and protecting our drinking water; contributing to healthy, livable communities; and encouraging forest product innovation and utilization. Even further, these investments help the nation deliver important economic growth across the sector, especially in rural communities.

The USDA's Forest Service State and Private Forestry Program area (S&PF) has a long history as an important part of the Forest Service and the profession of forestry. Private forests constitute most of the nation's forests and over 90 percent of our domestically-produced forest products. Providing this important technical and financial assistance to private landowners and the resource managers responsible for managing more than 60 percent of America's forests helps to increase the pace of work and on-the-ground results, improve the resilience of the nation's forests, and protect communities and the environment from forest pests, invasive species, and wildland fires.

In FY 2020, funding for the following State and Private Forestry and related programs that support them will help improve the health of the nation's forests and encourage economic growth in a sector that sustains more than one million jobs in the United States. Our funding level requests include:

- **\$29 million for the Forest Stewardship Program:** Administered in cooperation with state forestry agencies, this program plays a fundamental role in keeping forests as forests. Forest insects, diseases, and wildfire know no bounds between federal and non-federal forests and assisting some of the 22 million private forest owners in managing non-federal forests can help minimize the impacts to federal lands, ultimately saving the federal taxpayer millions of dollars. A forest landowner with a forest stewardship plan is almost three times more likely to actively manage their land than one without a plan, in turn creating jobs and developing the rural economies on which private forest lands rely to produce ninety percent of the nation's wood supply. Additionally, landowners with stewardship plans are actively managing their lands, producing even more benefits for wildlife, clean water, and forest health.

- **\$51 million for Forest Health Management on Cooperative Lands:** Pests and disease are national problems affecting private and public lands. Nationally, their impact is in the tens of billions of dollars. The USFS Forest Health Management Program supports efforts to prevent, contain, and eradicate these costly and dangerous pests and pathogens affecting trees and forests. Since these pests know no bounds, it is critical to maintain robust funding for forest health management in both federal and cooperative lands accounts.
- **\$87 million for State Fire Assistance and \$18 million for Volunteer Fire Assistance Programs:** Ninety percent of the nation’s wildfires are human-caused and most of these starts are on state and private lands (which often spread to federal lands). Initial attack is the key to reducing large fire costs and these programs are critical to these suppression efforts. State and volunteer fire crews provide much of that initial attack response and are deployed to assist on federal fires and other emergency or disaster situations, in compliance with national safety and training standards.
- **\$20 million for Landscape Scale Restoration:** The USFS works collaboratively with states and other partners using State Forest Action Plans to target limited resources to the highest priority forest needs across ownerships to achieve results with meaningful local, regional, and national impacts. The 2018 Farm Bill officially codified the Landscape Scale Restoration program and authorized \$20M in annual appropriations, the amount of our request. In an era when our forests are facing an increasing number of challenges, this program allows for a small federal investment to be matched and leveraged by states and put towards the most pressing threats to the forests that sustain American communities.
- **\$83 million for Forest Inventory and Analysis:** This is our country’s forest census, which has been ongoing since 1930. The collection and reporting of this information in a timely manner is vital for forest industry and others in planning their future economic investments based on availability of forest raw materials, as well as for keeping our nation’s forests healthy by tracking impacts to forests from fire, insects and disease, urbanization and development, and other threats.

While not specifying suggested budget levels, we want to also call your attention to the need for funding research, which provides the basis for policies that improve the health and quality of urban and rural communities, including helping to expand markets. A combination of responsible forest management combined with a healthy forest market will benefit the forest landscape and the communities that live in and around them.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Alabama Forestry Association

American Forest Foundation

American Wood Council

Arkansas Forestry Association

American Forest & Paper Association

American Forest

American Woodcock Society

Boise Cascade Company

Empire State Forest Products Association

Florida Forestry Association

Fontana Wood Preserving

Forest Resources Association

Gross & Janes Co.

Idaho Forest Group

Indiana Forestry & Woodland Owners

Association

L&C Carbon

McCord Tie and Timber, Inc.

National Alliance of Forest Owners
National Association of State Foresters
National Wild Turkey Federation
Pennsylvania Forestry Association
Ruffed Grouse Society
Society for the Protection of New Hampshire
Forests
Spartanburg Forest Products
The Hardwood Federation
The Westervelt Company
Vermont Woodlands Association
Virginia Forestry Association
Forest Products Industry
National Labor Management Committee
Forestry Association of South Carolina
Hancock Natural Resource Group

Indiana Chapter of the Ruffed Grouse Society
Kentucky Forest Industries Association
Massachusetts Forest Alliance
Mississippi Forestry Association
National Association of Forest Service Retirees
National Audubon Society
Ohio Forestry Association, Inc.
Rayonier
SC Pole and Piling Inc
Society of American Foresters
Sustainable Forestry Initiative
Tank Fab Inc
The Nature Conservancy
Treated Wood Council
Viance LLC
Western Pennsylvania Conservancy