

June 10, 2020

The Honorable Larry Kudlow
Director
National Economic Council
Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable Jared Kushner
Senior Advisor to the President
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Director Kudlow and Mr. Kushner:

As representatives of the nation's forest products industry, we write to you today to request that H-2B non-immigrant labor that performs essential forestry-related work be excluded from any further Presidential Proclamations or Orders that would restrict immigrant or non-immigrant labor from entry to the United States.

Public and private forestlands rely heavily on non-immigrant labor through the H-2B visa program to perform essential services that sustain the health and viability of our nation's forests. This work includes tree planting, seed collection used to produce the next generation of tree seedlings, herbicide application, fire suppression and forest fuel reduction that is critical to reducing the risk of fire, and the removal of vegetation that interferes with the electrical power grid. Every year more than 1.6 billion trees are planted on over 2.6 million acres of public and private forestlands across the United States. Forestry workers temporarily in the U.S. on H-2B visas perform most of the tree planting on public and private forestlands, which includes Federal lands administered by the United States Forest Service.

The work performed by H-2B forestry workers has a broad national interest, as the public needs forests to be protected from wildfire and replanted following a timber harvest or catastrophic events such as hurricanes, insect and disease infestations or wildfire. As the wildfire season is projected to be above normal in the western U.S., the non-immigrant H-2B workforce will be called upon for fire suppression and forest renewal. In addition, workers clearing vegetation so that it does not interfere with electrical transmission lines are considered "essential critical infrastructure workers" by the Department of Homeland Security's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency. Further, H-2B forestry workers are critical in meeting the President's commitment and support of the World Economic Forum Trillion Trees Initiative.

The forest products industry is dedicated to hiring American workers who want these jobs. Before hiring H-2B forestry workers, employers must first advertise these positions to Americans. The work is remote, itinerant, and demanding manual labor performed on challenging terrain and under changing weather conditions. Every year it becomes more difficult to find U.S. workers for forestry work, even in times of high unemployment.

We appreciate the administration's recognition of the forest products industry and their employees as both critical and essential during the COVID-19 pandemic and exempting forestry from the April 22 Proclamation that temporarily banned some immigration into the United States. We urge you once again to ensure H-2B forestry workers are excluded from any efforts that would restrict or ban (even temporarily) the entry of non-immigrant labor into the United States. These workers are essential to the sustainability commitment of the forest products industry, the United States Forest Service, state and county forest lands across America, and the reliability of the nation's electrical infrastructure.

Thank you for your consideration.

Alabama Forestry Association
American Forest Resource Council

Arkansas Forestry Association
Arkansas Timber Producers Association
Associated Logging Contractors – Idaho
Black Hills Forest Resource Association
Empire State Forest Products Association
Federal Forest Resource Coalition
Florida Forestry Association
Forest Landowners Association
Forest Resources Association, Inc.
Forestry Association of South Carolina
Georgia Forestry Association
Great Lakes Timber Professionals Association
Intermountain Forest Association
Kentucky Forest Industries Association
Louisiana Forestry Association
Maple Flooring Manufacturers Association
Michigan Forest Products Council
Minnesota Forest Industries
Minnesota Timber Producers Association
Mississippi Forestry Association
National Alliance of Forest Owners
National Association of State Foresters
North Carolina Forestry Association
Northeastern Loggers Association
Ohio Forestry Association, Inc.
Oregon Forest & Industries Council
Pennsylvania Forest Products Association
Pennsylvania Forestry Association
Railway Tie Association
South Carolina Timber Producers Association
Southeastern Lumber Manufacturers Association, Inc.
Southern Loggers Cooperative
Tennessee Forestry Association
Texas Forestry Association
Virginia Forestry Association
Washington Forest Protection Association
Western Wood Preservers Institute
West Virginia Forestry Association

c.c. The Honorable Sonny Perdue
The Honorable Eugene Scalia
The Honorable Chad Wolf
The Honorable Mark Meadows
