

September 21, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
The Capitol, H-232
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
The Capitol, S-230
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi, and Minority Leader McCarthy:

We, the undersigned organizations and members of the Forest Climate Working Group, are writing today to express our strong support for the bipartisan REPLANT Act (S. 4357 and H.R. 7843), which would enable the US Forest Service to address the millions of acres of national forests in immediate need of reforestation and keep up with future demands.

The Forest Climate Working Group (FCWG) is our country's only forest-climate coalition that represents every aspect of U.S. forests from government agencies, landowners, forest products, outdoor recreation, conservation and wildlife groups, academics, and carbon finance experts. Together, we represent diverse and bipartisan stakeholders that are committed to advancing scientifically informed forest policy that incorporates forests, forest products and natural working lands solutions as a key part of climate change mitigation. Reforesting national forests through the REPLANT Act will yield significant climate mitigation benefits by sequestering carbon in growing trees, while creating jobs in rural communities and protecting America's water supplies.

America's 193 million acres of national forests are at a crossroads. They are a critical part of our daily lives, providing clean drinking water, supporting jobs and the economy, naturally capturing carbon from the atmosphere, and supporting our outdoor heritage. National forests are the single most important source of water in the United States, providing water to 66 million people in 3,400 communities, including cities.

Yet our national forests are facing new challenges that we need to address. These public lands are being rapidly and intensely damaged by extreme wildfire, drought, and pests supercharged by a changing climate. We must speed up the process of reforesting millions of acres of degraded forestland to restore their ability to collect and filter drinking water, naturally capture carbon dioxide, generate wood and related forest jobs, and provide for wildlife and recreation. In some national forests this is a "now or never" chance to reforest burned over areas that are not reforesting on their own. Without action, we risk losing these forests forever.

The REPLANT Act will address this crisis by modernizing the Reforestation Trust Fund (16 U.S.C. §1606a) which was established by Congress in 1980 to reforest our national forests. The Reforestation Trust Fund is funded by reliable, plentiful tariffs on designated wood products. There is just one catch: due to an

outdated \$30 million cap, most of these revenues are unavailable for addressing ever-increasing critical reforestation needs.

This bipartisan legislation, introduced by Senators Udall, Portman, and Stabenow and Representatives Panetta, Simpson, Schrier and LaMalfa, will remove this outdated cap, enabling the Forest Service to address almost 8 million of acres of national forests in need of reforestation¹, which includes 1.3 million acres of forests in need of immediate treatment. This 1.3 million acre priority list is growing by approximately 200,000 acres each year because funding has not kept up with even the most urgent reforestation needs. Through the REPLANT Act, the Forest Service will be able to treat these priority lands and plant or naturally regenerate more than 1.2 billion trees over the next decade alone, creating nearly 49,000 jobs.

Now more than ever, America is turning to our public lands for physical, spiritual, economic and environmental renewal. By recently passing the Great American Outdoors Act, Congress made significant, strategic investments in repairing these lands. The REPLANT Act builds on this momentum by ensuring we can reforest millions of acres of national forests and enjoy their benefits for generations. We urge you to prioritize and pass this vital legislation.

Sincerely,

1. American Forest Foundation
2. American Forests
3. Binational Softwood Lumber Council
4. California Forestry Association
5. Forest Landowners Association
6. Forest Stewards Guild
7. Green Diamond Resource Company
8. Hancock Natural Resource Group
9. Land Trust Alliance
10. Michigan State University, Department of Forestry
11. Molpus Woodlands Group
12. National Alliance of Forest Owners
13. National Association of Conservation Districts
14. National Association of Forest Service Retirees
15. National Association of State Foresters
16. National Association of University Forest Resources Programs
17. National Wildlife Federation
18. New England Forestry Foundation

¹ USFS field staff report 1.378 million acres need reforestation as of 2019. Geospatial analyses suggest even greater need for reforestation than the data reported by USFS field staff. The USFS Rapid Assessment of Vegetation Condition after Wildfire (RAVG) dataset suggests that potential acreage could be as much as three times greater (<https://data.fs.usda.gov/geodata/rastergateway/ravg/index.php>). A recent estimate by The Nature Conservancy suggests total reforestation need on USFS land could reach 7.7 million acres (Fargione et al, 2018 and updated analysis in press Cook-Patton et. al, 2020).

19. Open Space Institute
20. Pinchot Institute for Conservation
21. Port Blakely Timber
22. PotlatchDeltic
23. Rayonier
24. Society of American Foresters
25. Sonen Capital
26. Spatial Informatics Group – Natural Assets Laboratory (SIG-NAL)
27. Sustainable Forestry and Land Retention Network
28. Sustainable Forestry Initiative
29. The Climate Trust
30. The Forestland Group
31. The Trust for Public Land
32. The Westervelt Company
33. Weyerhaeuser
34. WoodWorks – Wood Products Council