

**Society of American Foresters  
The Nature Conservancy  
National Association of State Departments of Agriculture**

March 16, 2006

The Honorable Charles Taylor, Chairman  
Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Norm Dicks, Ranking Member  
Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Re: Fiscal Year 2007 Appropriation for the USDA Forest Service

Dear Mr. Chairman/Ranking Member:

The Society of American Foresters, The Nature Conservancy and the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture urge the Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies to appropriate \$130 million for the USDA Forest Service Forest Health Management Program. We also applaud your leadership in past years in securing funding for this vital program at levels significantly above the Administration's request.

Our proposed figure would provide a slight increase over the program's current funding level. As a result, the Forest Service could continue programs vital to protecting America's forests from highly damaging introduced insects and diseases, including such threats as the Asian long-horned beetle, emerald ash borer, sudden oak death, the hemlock woolly adelgid, and gypsy moth. The Forest Health Management program also counters other introduced insects that have attracted less attention, but that still damage America's forests. These include a pathogen killing redbay and sassafras trees in coastal Georgia and South Carolina; and several insects and pathogens on the islands of Hawai'i and Guam.

Such a funding level will also enable the USFS to continue vital support for the pest eradication and containment programs carried out by the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. Forest Service expertise in the pests' biology and detection and management methodology is crucial to the success of these programs. Failure to complete eradication of the Asian long-horned beetle will expose to destruction hardwood forests reaching from New England into Minnesota and smaller areas of the West. Particularly threatened are the hardwood timber, maple syrup, and autumn foliage tourism industries of the Northeast, and street trees across the Nation valued at \$600

billion.

The threat posed by the emerald ash borer is particularly critical. If it spreads from Michigan, Ohio, and Indiana to the rest of the country, it could cause undiscounted losses of city trees worth \$20 to \$60 billion. Losses to the timber industry would be \$25 billion in Eastern states. It is vitally important that the Forest Service effort targeting this insect not be reduced.

The Forest Service has the lead responsibility for detecting and combating any outbreaks of sudden oak death in the hardwood forests of the East. While these detection efforts can be scaled back to some extent after several years of intense surveys, they must not be halted completely as the risk of this pathogen being spread by infected nursery plants has not been eliminated. Furthermore, greater vigilance is needed to prevent introductions from Europe or elsewhere of other pathogens threatening to cause similar levels of damage.

Finally, the Forest Service needs adequate funding to expand its Early Detection project. This program has been responsible for detecting more than a dozen introduced insects, including two which threaten the economically important pine forests of the Southeast: the Mediterranean pine beetle and Sirex wood wasp. Steady or increasing funding is necessary to expand this program to cover all states and to develop and deploy methodologies to detect the highly damaging wood-boring beetles.

The agency bearing the principal responsibility for eradicating newly introduced forest pests is not the USDA Forest Service, but rather the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS). USDA APHIS falls outside your jurisdiction. However, the Subcommittee cannot achieve its goal of protecting the Nation's forests' health as long as funding shortfalls undermine USDA APHIS eradication programs. The Society of American Foresters, The Nature Conservancy and the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture encourage the Subcommittee to work with the Agriculture appropriations subcommittee to find ways to increase funding for forest pest line items in the USDA APHIS Emerging Plant Pest account.

Sincerely,

**Michael Goergen Jr.**  
**Executive Vice President**  
**Society of American Foresters**

**Jimmie Powell**  
**Director of Government Relations**  
**The Nature Conservancy**

**Richard Kirchhoff,**  
**Executive Director & CEO**  
**National Association of State Departments of Agriculture**