



December 6, 2006

The Honorable Mike Crapo
United States Senate
239 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Crapo:

The Society of American Foresters (SAF), representing over 15,000 professional forest managers, researchers, and consultants, strongly supports incentives for private forestland owners to encourage conservation and recovery of endangered and threatened species on their land. The *Endangered Species Reserve Act of 2006* (S 4087) has the potential to help conserve millions of acres of forested habitat and at the same time assist in the recovery of many of the species that rely on this habitat. SAF believes the incentives for voluntary species conservation in this legislation will help foster the private landowner cooperation needed to effectively recover endangered and threatened species.

Approximately 90% of endangered and threatened species rely on forests for habitat, food, or nesting sites. Since approximately 2/3 of the nation's forests are privately owned, private forestland owners play a critical role in protecting and recovering endangered and threatened species and their habitat. Along with this responsibility comes great cost and liability, often times threatening a forestland owners ability to retain their land. The *Endangered Species Reserve Act* will help relieve some of this burden, providing tax incentives as well as incidental take protections for landowners who enter into the program.

We do believe the *Act* could be improved by clarifying the connection with critical habitat designations and giving priority to those landowners who conserve critical habitat, recognizing that there is a limit to the credit provisions in the bill. There is also discussion of monitoring the agreed upon habitat plans in the legislation. This could be further clarified.

Additionally, we urge you to ensure private forests enrolled in agreements under this program can remain working forests while at the same time provide species benefits. Maintaining forest management opportunities under these easements is critical to ensuring restoration and maintenance of species habitat and overall forest sustainability.

Thank you for your leadership on this important issue. We look forward to working with you as this legislation moves forward.

Sincerely,

Marvin D. Brown
President

PRESIDENT

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