

June 6, 2008

The Honorable Tom Harkin, Chairman
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Saxby Chambliss, Ranking Member
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Collin C. Peterson, Chairman
Committee on Agriculture
1301 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Bob Goodlatte, Ranking Member
Committee on Agriculture
1305 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairmen and Ranking Members:

The Forests in the Farm Bill Coalition has come together specifically to increase opportunities for America's private forest landowners to provide economic and environmental benefits to the larger society. The organizations listed below, as participants of the Forests in the Farm Bill Coalition, wish to express our appreciation to you for the advancements made for private forest landowners and forests in the 2008 Farm Bill.

In particular, we appreciate improving opportunities for forest landowners to participate in the Environmental Quality Incentive Program, which make explicit that forest management practices are compatible with environmental quality and serve to optimize environmental benefits; affording forest landowners cost-share assistance to forest resources damaged in natural disasters; developing a state-based process for assessment and planning to identify critical forest resource areas and address threats to those areas; and improving coordination of programs and actions at the federal level related to the national conservation priorities for forests. The new Farm Bill also extends funding for the Healthy Forest Reserve Program to provide a cost-share and easement program to assist forest landowners in a range of management and conservation practices. Additionally, the Community Forests and Open Space Program will enable local governments to own and manage blocs of forested lands for the multiple uses to meet local needs.

These provisions represent great advances on behalf of private forest landowners. Working forests are vital to our rural economies. It is in our collective interest to help ensure that family forest landowners can afford to keep their land in forest management where they choose to do so, and that millions of acres of forested land remain forested and managed to provide jobs and timber, clean water, opportunities for fishing, hunting and enjoyment of the outdoors, habitat for fish and wildlife and defense against changing and more unpredictable climate.

We also want to express our appreciation to your staff for their willingness and tireless efforts to work with us on these issues, particularly in light of budgetary constraints. We look forward to working with you to continue to address the needs of our rural economies and our environment as they relate to our forest resources.

Sincerely,

American Forest Foundation
Society of American Foresters
The Nature Conservancy
Forest Resources Association
Hardwood Federation
Mississippi River Trust
Wildlife Mississippi

National Association of State Foresters
National Wild Turkey Federation
Environmental Defense Fund
American Forest and Paper Association
Pacific Forest Trust
Trust for Public Land
Western Pennsylvania Conservancy