

January 31, 2012

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow  
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry  
U.S. Senate  
328A Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Stabenow,

On behalf of the millions of forest owners, conservationists, hunters, anglers, forest product manufacturers, and natural resource professionals represented in the Forests in the Farm Bill Coalition, we are writing to you to share our views on the reauthorization of the Farm Bill.

We would like to applaud the Agriculture Committees' in both the House and Senate for their bipartisan, bicameral work to develop recommendations for the "Super Committee" deficit reduction package. Even though the efforts of the Super Committee were not successful, your leadership has helped assure that the agriculture and forest community is well positioned to continue engagement in deficit reduction discussions. We know that budget cuts are inevitable as Congress works to reduce the federal deficit, and we know the Agriculture Committees will continue to work to ensure that those cuts affecting agriculture and forestry are proportionate and fair relative to other sectors of the economy. We stand ready to assist in any way possible to pursue a course that will maintain private forest conservation across the U.S.

We also greatly appreciate the Committees' work on important policy changes that enable better forest conservation. We are aware that the Agriculture Committees' discussions in the deficit reduction process resulted in agreement on policy changes to the Farm Bill. Our understanding is that many of these policy changes will give forest owners access to additional conservation tools and are consistent with most of our key priorities including:

- Strong provisions for forests in Conservation Programs;
- Strengthened forestry outreach, education, research, and inventory programs;
- Tools to Combat forest-related invasive species; and
- Improved forest market opportunities.

While we have yet to see the specific details of these proposals, preventing us from fully endorsing them, we applaud these efforts. We hope the Agriculture Committees' retain these important policy proposals that address our forest conservation priorities and make any further improvements necessary.

The nation's private forests, which make up more than two-thirds of all U.S. forestland and supply Americans with clean water and clean air, fish and wildlife habitat, recreational opportunities, clean, renewable and sustainable energy, and forest products, are a key component of America's rural landscapes. Private forests are critical to maintaining good paying rural jobs—every 1,000 acres of privately owned forests supports 8 rural jobs. With the economic downturn, the forest industry has lost over 294,000 jobs, so maintaining healthy, productive forests is essential to stemming this job loss.

There is no guarantee that private forests will remain healthy or maintained as a significant and important land use. The Forest Action Plans completed in each state indicate there are growing threats and challenges that make it difficult to keep these lands intact and healthy, so all Americans continue to reap these environmental and economic benefits. These threats and challenges include land use changes that have the potential to breakup and permanently convert as many as 57 million private forest acres by 2030. Invasive species, insects, and diseases currently threaten roughly 58 million acres of forests and wildfires threaten as many as 400 million acres.

Farm Bill programs give forestland owners the tools they need to manage healthy and sustainable forests, and keep their forests as forests amidst growing threats and challenges.

As this process unfolds, we look forward to working with you to ensure the new Farm Bill addresses these issues. Your work in the lead up to the Super Committee process was clearly a step in the right direction, and we are more than willing to provide additional input on what works best for forest owners to help conserve and improve the management of the nation's privately-owned forests.

Thank you again for your leadership.

Sincerely,

American Forest Foundation  
American Forests  
American Rivers  
Appalachian Mountain Club  
Arkansas Forestry Association  
Association for Temperate Agroforestry  
Biomass Thermal Energy Council  
California Forestry Association  
CarbonVerde, LLC  
Conservation Northwest  
Defenders of Wildlife  
Empire State Forest Products Association  
Environmental and Energy Study Institute  
Forest Capital Partners  
Forest Guild  
Forest Resources Association  
Great Lakes Forest Alliance  
Georgia Forestry Association  
Hardwood Federation  
Indiana Forestry and Woodland Owners Association  
Kentucky Forest Industries Association  
Land Trust Alliance  
Louisiana Forestry Association  
Michigan Forest Association  
Mississippi River Trust  
Montana Forest Owners Association

National Alliance of Forest Owners  
National Association of Conservation Districts  
National Association of Forest Service Retirees  
National Association of State Foresters  
National Association of University Forest Resources Programs  
National Network of Forest Practitioners  
National Woodland Owners Association  
National Wild Turkey Federation  
North Carolina Forestry Association  
Northern Forest Center  
Ohio Forestry Association, Inc.  
Oregon Small Woodlands Association  
Pacific Forest Trust  
Pinchot Institute for Conservation  
Plum Creek Timber Company  
Quail Unlimited  
Quality Deer Management Association  
Ruffed Grouse Society  
Small Woodland Owners Association of Maine  
Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests  
Society of American Foresters  
South Carolina Forestry Association  
Sustainable Forestry Initiative  
Sustainable Northwest  
Tennessee Forestry Association  
Texas Forestry Association  
The Lyme Timber Company  
The Trust for Public Land  
The Nature Conservancy  
Vermont Woodlands Association  
Virginia Forestry Association  
Washington Farm Forestry Association  
Western Pennsylvania Conservancy  
Weyerhaeuser  
Wildlife Mississippi