

The Honorable Ken Calvert
Chairman Appropriations Subcommittee on
Interior, Environment and Related Agencies
US House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Betty McCollum
Ranking Member Appropriations Subcommittee
on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies
US House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Calvert and Ranking Member McCollum:

The President's fiscal year (FY) 17 appropriations request and anticipated FY18 budget proposal reflect difficult budget decisions. They also reflect the ever-increasing costs of wildfires and the budget constraints that challenge presents. We request that Congress fix the escalating wildfire funding problem. Without a solution to this critical issue, it will be difficult to address the many challenges facing America's forests, including wildfires, insects, and diseases. The deleterious impacts to the economies of rural American communities as well as the watersheds and wildlife habitat they depend upon continue to be significant.

In this tight budget climate, the undersigned organizations support investments in key federal programs that support state and private forestry in our rural communities. Even though we recommend funding levels for key rural programs at levels we've previously recommended, we recognize this is a difficult budget climate and look forward to working with the Committee and with the new Administration as budget details are released. These programs help to conserve and improve America's forests and are critically important to sustain. Additionally, they enhance and protect our drinking water, contribute to healthy, livable communities, and encourage forest product innovation and utilization which helps the nation to foster strong economic growth.

The USDA Forest Service State and Private Forestry Area (S&PF) as well as key program areas in the National Forest System, Wildland Fire Management, Forest and Rangeland Research, and Capital Improvement and Maintenance, serve as linchpins for the conservation of America's rural forests. Providing this important technical and financial assistance to private landowners and the resource managers responsible for managing more than 60 percent of America's rural forests helps to increase the pace of work and on-the-ground results, improve the resilience of the nation's forests, and protect communities and the environment from forest pests, invasive species, and wildland fires.

In FY 2017 and FY 2018, funding for the following State and Private Forestry and related programs will help improve the health of the nation's rural forests and encourage economic growth in a sector that sustains more than one million jobs in the United States. Our funding level requests include:

- **\$29 million for the Forest Stewardship Program:** Administered in cooperation with state forestry agencies, this program plays a fundamental role in keeping forests as forests. Forest insects, diseases, and wildfire know no bounds between federal and non-federal forests. Assisting some of the 22 million private forest owners in managing non-federal forests can help minimize the impacts to federal lands, saving the federal taxpayer millions of dollars. A forest landowner with a forest stewardship plan is almost three times more likely to actively manage his or her land than one without a plan, leading to jobs and rural economic stimulus. Those who have stewardship plans are actively managing their lands for wildlife, clean water, and forest products. Ninety percent of the nation's wood supply comes from private forest lands.
- **\$107 million for the Forest Health Management Programs – \$59 million Federal Lands and \$48 million Cooperative Lands:** Pests and disease are national problems affecting private and public lands. Nationally, their impact is in the tens of billions of dollars. The USFS Forest Health Management Program supports efforts to prevent, contain, and eradicate these costly and dangerous pests and pathogens affecting trees and forests.

- **\$87 million for State Fire Assistance and \$15 million for Volunteer Fire Assistance Programs:** Ninety percent of the nation’s wildfires are human-caused and most of these starts are on state and private lands (which often spread to federal lands). Initial attack is the key to reducing large fire costs and these programs are critical to these suppression efforts. State and volunteer fire crews provide much of that initial attack response and are deployed to assist on federal fires and other emergency or disaster situations, in compliance with national safety and training standards.
- **\$23 million for Landscape Scale Restoration:** The USFS works collaboratively with states and other partners using State Forest Action Plans to target limited resources to the highest priority forest needs across ownerships to achieve results with meaningful local, regional, and national impacts.
- **\$83 million for Forest Inventory and Analysis:** This is our country’s forest census, which has been ongoing since 1930. The collection and reporting of this information in a timely manner is vital for forest industry and others in planning their future economic investments based on availability of forest raw materials.

While not specifying suggested budget levels, we want to also call your attention to the need for funding research, which provides the basis for policies that improve the health and quality of urban and rural communities, including helping to expand markets. A combination of responsible forest management combined with a healthy forest market will benefit the forest landscape and the rural communities that live in and around them.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Adelante Consulting, Inc.

Aldo Leopold Foundation

Alliance of Landowner Associations

The American Chestnut Foundation

American Forest & Paper Association

American Forest Foundation

American Forests

American Wood Council

Arkansas Forestry Association

Association of Consulting Foresters

CarbonVerde

Center for Heirs' Property Preservation

Connecticut Forest & Park Association

Florida Forestry Association

Forest Resources Association

Forest Stewards Guild

Forestry Association of South Carolina

Green Forests Work

The Hardwood Federation

Indiana Forestry and Woodland Owners' Association

Intermountain Forest Association

Kansas Forestry Association

Kansas Tree Farm Committee

Kentucky Forest Industries Association

L&C Carbon

The Lyme Timber Company

Maine Woodland Owners

Michigan Forest Association

Minnesota Forest Industries

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 Wild Turkey Federation

National Wildlife Federation

National Woodland Owners Association

The Nature Conservancy

New York Forest Owners Association

Northern Forest Center

Oregon Small Woodlands Association

Rayonier Advanced Materials

Resource Management Service, LLC

Ruffed Grouse Society

Society of American Foresters

Sustainable Forestry Initiative

Texas Forestry Association

Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership

Vermont Woodlands Association

Virginia Forestry Association

Washington Farm Forestry Association