

**January 20, 2011**

The Honorable Frank Lucas  
2311 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Collin Peterson  
2211 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Lucas and Ranking Member Peterson:

The undersigned organizations, representing millions of conservation, forest industry, landowner, and community leaders from across the country, write to congratulate you on your new Agriculture Committee leadership roles and highlight areas in which we'd like to work with you in preparation for the 2012 Farm Bill reauthorization.

In addition to focusing on the 2012 Farm Bill reauthorization, we also look forward to working with you, in the short-term, to maintain funding for conservation programs at the levels set in the 2008 Farm Bill as the fiscal year 2012 appropriations process unfolds. While we recognize the need to reduce federal deficits, doing so at the expense of farm and forest conservation will undermine efforts to ensure clean air and water, habitat for wildlife, forest products manufacturing, rural jobs, and healthy communities in the future. The proactive conservation activities supported by Farm Bill programs, over the long-run, save money by avoiding the need for expenses like water treatment facilities.

Our coalition of organizations, known as the Forests in the Farm Bill Coalition, which originally came together prior to the 2008 Farm bill reauthorization, once again is working to develop consensus-based policy recommendations for the 2012 Farm Bill reauthorization. While we have a diversity of views on a number of issues, we are united in our support for policies in the 2012 Farm bill that promote the healthy management and conservation of America's private and family-owned forests so that these forests can continue to provide the multitude of public benefits on which every American relies—from water and wildlife habitat to forest products, renewable energy, recreation and rural jobs.

With this broad goal in mind, we believe Congress should work through the 2012 Farm Bill and other vehicles to:

- **Provide sufficient funding** for USDA conservation and forestry (including agroforestry) programs to help satisfy the unmet need for more conservation practices.
- **Streamline program requirements** for forest landowners to improve delivery of conservation and forestry programs, maximizing resources available for more conservation practices.
- **Boost capacity to provide technical assistance and outreach** for family and other private forest owners, especially landowners who are currently not engaged in conservation or management of their lands. State forestry agencies, non-governmental

organizations and other private sector technical service providers should be utilized to reach landowners whose forests provide vital services and benefits to the American public.

- **Focus conservation and forestry programs to accomplish landscape level conservation goals.** Maximize ability of programs to address important forest issues and threats, especially those identified by the state forest resource assessments and strategies, and state wildlife action plans. This should include continued support for regular updates to these state level efforts.
- **Promote policies for sustainably producing forest biomass for renewable energy and forest products** from well-managed forests.
- **Encourage and facilitate the development of markets and incentives for ecosystem services** from private forests, building on the 2008 Farm Bill's directive.
- **Strengthen forest research, education, extension offices, and forest inventory capacity** to address current and future forestry and conservation needs.
- **Implement education strategies** to ensure a future pool of forestry professionals.

We recognize that each of these recommendations could be accomplished through a number of policy changes in the 2012 Farm bill and through other vehicles. Our coalition is currently working to develop more detailed policy recommendations. We request the opportunity to discuss these goals and explore the appropriate policy changes with you.

We look forward to this opportunity and thank you again for your leadership and support for America's private and family-owned forests.

Sincerely,

American Bird Conservancy  
American Forests  
American Forest & Paper Association  
American Forest Foundation  
American Loggers Council  
American Rivers  
Appalachian Mountain Club  
Association of Consulting Foresters  
Association for Temperate Agroforestry  
Biomass Thermal Energy Council  
CarbonVerde  
Conservation Forestry  
Defenders of Wildlife  
Forest Guild  
Fountains America  
Hardwood Federation  
National Alliance of Forest Owners  
National Association of Forest Service Retirees  
National Association of State Foresters

National Association of University Forest Resource Programs  
National Network of Forest Practitioners  
National Wildlife Federation  
National Wild Turkey Federation  
National Woodland Owners Association  
Northern Forest Center  
Pinchot Institute for Conservation  
Ruffed Grouse Society  
Sustainable Forestry Initiative  
Sustainable Northwest  
Society of American Foresters  
The Conservation Fund  
The Nature Conservancy  
The Pacific Forest Trust  
Trust for Public Land  
Wildlife Mississippi

Cc: Secretary Vilsack, US Department of Agriculture