

July 6, 2012

The Honorable Frank Lucas
U.S. House of Representatives
Rayburn House Office Building, Room: 2311
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Collin Peterson
U.S. House of Representatives
Rayburn House Office Building, Room: 2211

Dear Chairman Lucas and Ranking Member Peterson,

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 your recently released House 2012 Farm Bill proposal.

We applaud the Chairman, Ranking Member, and other Members of the House Agriculture for their bipartisan effort to produce a comprehensive Farm Bill. We understand the Committee's difficult position in responding to budget constraints while maintaining effective programs. Many of our organizations remain very concerned with funding reductions to programs that will reduce on-the-ground conservation work, but we appreciate the Committee's leadership in driving important policy changes in the forest, conservation and energy programs that will improve the program effectiveness for forest management and conservation.

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. At the same time, 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 322,000 jobs, so maintaining healthy, productive forests is essential to stemming this job loss.

Farm Bill programs give forestland owners the tools they need to manage healthy and sustainable forests, keep their forests as forests amidst growing threats and challenges, and successfully market their sustainable forest products. We therefore appreciate the Committee's attempt to maintain forest owner access to important conservation programs and improve new market opportunities for strong rural communities.

Thank you for your work and leadership in producing this difficult piece of legislation. Your perseverance and dedication to effective conservation is not lost on the forest community. We look forward to working with you closely as the process continues to unfold and we look toward implementation.

Sincerely,

American Forests
American Forest Foundation
Appalachian Mountain Club
CarbonVerde
Environmental and Energy Study Institute
Empire State Forest Products Association
Forest Resources Association
Florida Forestry Association
Hardwood Federation
Indiana Forestry & Woodland Owners Association
Kentucky Forest Industries Association
Louisiana Forestry Association
National Association of Conservation Districts
National Alliance of Forest Owners
National Association of Forest Service Retirees
National Association of University Forest Resources Programs
National Association of State Foresters
National Wild Turkey Federation
National Woodland Owners Association
Northern Forest Center
Ohio Forestry Association
Pinchot Institute for Conservation
Texas Forestry Association
The Nature Conservancy
Quail Unlimited
Ruffed Grouse Society
Small Woodland Owners of Maine
South Carolina Forestry Association
Society of American Foresters
Sustainable Forestry Initiative
Virginia Forestry Association
Western Pennsylvania Conservancy