

April 6, 2010

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Jack Kingston
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairwoman DeLauro and Ranking Member Kingston:

The tight budget climate has forced some tough choices regarding the amount and location of domestic federal spending during the upcoming fiscal year. We believe it is critically important to continue making solid investments in key federal programs that help provide the science, education and incentives necessary to conserve the nation's private forests. Investing in various research and forest conservation initiatives within the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) are critical as new demands related to climate change mitigation, renewable energy development, and job creation are placed on forests.

Forest Research

Long-term investment in research, education and extension is the foundation for advancing the health, productivity and sustainability of the nation's forests. Reliable, objective and innovative information is a must as the nation turns to its forests to address priorities related to renewable energy and climate mitigation. We support funding the following programs within the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) at the following levels:

- **\$35 million for McIntire-Stennis Act.** Provides the base capacity funding for long-term research and graduate education including for 19 new 1890 institutions.
- **\$8 million for the Renewable Resource Extension Act.** Provides the necessary funding for informing forest landowners, policy makers and the public about renewable energy, climate, new technologies and ecosystem services.
- **\$428 million for the Agricultural and Food Research Initiative.** Provides competitive grants to enhance agriculture, food systems and natural resources in areas related to energy independence and climate change (among other NIFA priorities)

Forest Conservation

The 2008 Farm Bill provided an important expansion of funding and access for forest owners to conservation programs. The acreage and funding levels set in the 2008 farm bill were arrived at through a lengthy process of debate and compromise. We are pleased to see full funding for the Healthy Forests Reserve Program in the Administration's proposal and urge Congress to maintain this funding level.

We have strong concerns regarding the Administration's proposal to take away well over \$1 billion from the conservation baseline, or nearly a quarter of the widely-lauded conservation increase in the 2008 Farm Bill. These cuts come from critical conservation programs, including the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Conservation Stewardship Program, Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program and others. We are disappointed that President Obama's budget continues the unfortunate pattern set by the previous Administration of proposing cuts to conservation programs below mandatory levels established in the Farm Bill. We urge you to stay the course and uphold the mandatory funding levels agreed to in the 2008 Farm Bill and reverse the proposed cuts in conservation as Congress has done over the past three fiscal years.

We strongly recommend the committee fully invest in the nation's natural resources by fully funding forest-related research initiatives within the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture. Further, we urge Congress maintain its commitment to the funding levels included for conservation programs in the 2008 Farm Bill. We look forward to working with you and the related USDA agencies to ensure funding for these programs is effectively and efficiently delivered to conservation priorities on-the-ground.

Sincerely,

American Forest Foundation
Appalachian Mountain Club
Environmental Defense Fund
Family Forest Foundation
Forest Resources Association
Kentucky Forest Industries Association
Louisiana Forestry Association
National Association of Conservation Districts
National Association of University Forest Resources Programs
National Association of State Foresters
National Wild Turkey Federation
National Wildlife Federation
Northern Forestry Alliance
NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation
Society of American Foresters
Washington Farm Forestry Association

CC: House Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations