

May 25, 2012

The Honorable Harry Reid
United States Senate
S-221 Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
United States Senate
S-230 Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Leaders Reid and McConnell:

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 request that you bring the bi-partisan *Agriculture Reform, Food and Jobs Act of 2012*, before the full Senate for consideration in an open process, as soon as possible.

We know there are many issues facing the U.S. Senate and we are aware that there are policy matters in other titles where the Committee is still seeking consensus. But we believe that the Senate should take up a Farm Bill soon to help address some of the most pressing issues we face as a nation including job growth and economic recovery in rural America.

The nation's forests and the associated forest industry support over 900,000 family-wage jobs and generate more the \$175 billion in products every year. But with the current economic climate, the industry has lost over 320,000 jobs since 2005 and the forests that support these jobs are facing increasing threats from insect, diseases, wildfires and invasive species, development pressures, and loss of markets for forest products. This bill's provisions that help keep private forests as forests, improve the stewardship and health of private forests, and secure new and expanded market opportunities for products from forests, will help sustain America's forests and the associated jobs and industry that rely on forests.

We understand the difficult fiscal climate that Congress is dealing with and while the cuts to conservation, forestry, and energy programs in the bill will have an impact on forests; we believe the Committee-passed bill sufficiently balances the need to reduce spending while maintaining strong programs. We urge that these funding levels be maintained.

Farm Bill conservation, forestry, and energy 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. The changes made in the proposed bill largely address the Coalition's stated 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 the removal of certain authorities, such as the Watershed Forestry Assistance Program and the Cooperative Forest Markets Program, remain of concern to organizations in the Coalition, we believe these issues can be resolved moving forward.

Again, we urge you to bring the *Agriculture Reform, Food and Jobs Act of 2012* to the Senate floor as soon as possible, for consideration by the full Senate, to ensure that the nation's private forest owners and the communities and industries that rely on them, can have assurance that the tools that help keep private forests healthy and sustainable, will continue into the future.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

American Forest Foundation
American Forests
American Loggers Council
Appalachian Mountain Club
Arkansas Forestry Association
Biomass Thermal Energy Council
California Forestry Association
Empire State Forest Products Association
Environmental and Energy Study Institute
Forest Capital Partners
Hardwood Federation
Indiana Forestry and Woodland Owners Association
Kentucky Forest Industries Association
Land Trust Alliance
Louisiana Forestry Association
Michigan Forest Association
Montana Forest Owners Association
National Alliance of Forest Owners
National Association of Forest Service Retirees
National Association of Conservation Districts
National Association of State Foresters
National Association of University Forest Resources
National Wild Turkey Federation
National Woodland Owners Association
The Nature Conservancy
Ohio Forestry Association
Oregon Small Woodlands Association

Pennsylvania Forestry Association
Pinchot Institute for Conservation
Ruffed Grouse Society
Small Woodland Owners Association of Maine
Society of American Foresters
South Carolina Forestry Association
Southern Lumber Manufacturers Association
Sustainable Forestry Initiative
Texas Forestry Association
Trust for Public Lands
Vermont Woodlands Association
Virginia Forestry Association
Western Pennsylvania Conservancy