

March 18, 2014

The Honorable Tom Vilsack  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.  
Washington, DC 20250

Mr. Michael Boots, Acting Chairman  
White House Council on Environmental Quality  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Secretary Vilsack and Chairman Boots,

We the undersigned organizations wish to thank you for your leadership and express strong support for the role that increased use of wood products in buildings can play in supporting strong rural economies, mitigating climate change, and protecting the nation's forests and the environment. We look forward to continued partnership on the work you began at the White House Rural Council Symposium on Building with Wood, to increase understanding among federal, state, and local government and private sector partners, on how wood can be used in building construction to meet environmental, energy, and sustainability goals.

In addition to furthering USDA's mission, we strongly believe the work you are doing to build understanding of wood products will also contribute to meeting the goals of President Obama's Climate Action Plan. Wood products, especially when used in building construction, provide a number of environmental benefits, not the least of which is reducing greenhouse gas emissions and storing carbon. Each year, forest products help offset roughly one percent of all annual U.S. greenhouse gas emissions and we estimate significantly increasing wood use in buildings could lead to a thirty percent increase in the amount of emissions offset by forest products. Wood products also use much less energy in their manufacturing and produce less air and water pollution than many alternative building materials.

In addition to these benefits, increasing the demand for wood products will also help protect America's forests. U.S. forests support almost one million family-wage jobs, sequester carbon that offsets over twelve percent of our annual U.S. greenhouse gas emissions, clean our air and water, and provide wildlife habitat and recreational opportunities. As forests face increasing threats, from development pressures to wildfire to insects and diseases, strong markets for wood products are essential to forest conservation and the protection of all of the benefits our forests provide. This positive conservation effect from strong forest markets, especially when combined with investments in forest conservation programs like the USDA Forest Service Forest Legacy Program and other conservation tools, will help reduce forest loss.

According to the recent *USDA Forest Service 2010 Resource Planning Act Assessment, Future of America's Forests and Rangelands* (2012), we could see as much as 34 million acres of forests lost to development by 2060. Strong markets provide incentives and financial means for landowners and land managers to keep their land in forest and implement treatments that can protect against devastating wildfires and insect and disease infestations, all of which are predicted to worsen in the face of a changing climate.

Thank you again for your leadership on this important issue and we look forward to working with you in the future as partners in your efforts to protect America's forests and all the benefits that come from forests, mitigate climate change and increase climate preparedness with forest-based solutions, and support strong rural economies.

Sincerely,

Alabama Forestry Association  
American Chestnut Foundation

American Forest Foundation  
American Forests  
American Wood Council  
APA-The Engineered Wood Association  
Binational Softwood Lumber Council  
California Forestry Association  
CarbonVerde, LLC  
Composite Panel Association  
Connecticut Forest & Park Association  
Conservation Forestry, LLC  
Dovetail Partners, Inc.'s  
Empire State Forest Products Association  
Federal Forest Resource Coalition  
Georgia Forestry Association  
Green Diamond Resource Company  
Hardwood Federation  
Hawaii Forest Industry Association  
Indiana Forestry & Woodland Owners Association  
Kentucky Forest Industries Association  
L&C Carbon LLC  
Louisiana Forestry Association  
LP Building Products  
Lyme Timber Company  
Maine Quality Homes, LLC  
McShan Lumber Company  
Mississippi Forestry Association  
Montana Forest Owners Association  
National Alliance of Forest Owners  
National Association of Forest Service Retirees  
National Association of State Foresters  
National Association of University Forest Resource Programs  
National Lumber & Building Material Dealers Association  
National Network of Forest Practitioners  
National Wild Turkey Federation  
National Woodland Owners Association  
North Carolina Association of Professional Loggers, Inc.  
Oregon Women In Timber  
Plum Creek  
Potlatch Corporation  
Ruffed Grouse Society  
Sierra Pacific Industries  
Society of American Foresters  
Southeastern Lumber Manufacturers Association  
Sustainable Forestry Initiative  
Tennessee Forestry Association  
Treated Wood Council

The Trust for Public Land  
U.S. Endowment for Forestry & Communities  
Virginia Forestry Association  
Washington Forest Protection Association  
Westervelt Company  
Weyerhaeuser  
WoodWorks – Wood Products Council