

The Honorable Ken Calvert
Chairman
Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior,
Environment, and Related Agencies
US House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Betty McCollum
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior,
Environment, and Related Agencies
US House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Calvert and Ranking Member McCollum:

The President's FY17 budget reflects the difficult budget decisions that the ever increasing costs of wildfires and budget constraints present. Even in this tight budget climate, the undersigned organizations believe that investments in key federal programs to conserve and improve America's forests—rural and urban, private and public— are critically important. These investments create jobs, mitigate pollution and carbon emissions, enhance and protect our drinking water, contribute to healthy, livable communities, and encourage forest product innovation and utilization, helping the nation to foster strong economic growth in rural areas.

The US Forest Service State and Private Forestry Deputy Area (S&PF) serves as a lynchpin for the conservation of America's forests. S&PF supports a broad range of programs in partnerships with state and national forestry and conservation organizations interested in America's forests. Providing this important technical and financial assistance to private landowners and the resource managers responsible for managing more than 60 percent of America's forests helps to increase the pace and scale of landscape scale restoration work, improve the resilience of the nation's forests, and protect communities and the environment from forest pests, invasive species and wildland fires.

FY 2017 funding for the following S&PF programs will help improve the health of the nation's forests and encourage economic growth in a sector that sustains more than one million jobs in the United States. Our funding level requests include:

- **\$29 million for the Forest Stewardship Program:** Administered in cooperation with state forestry agencies, this program plays a fundamental role in keeping forests as forests. Forest Insects, diseases and wild fire know no bounds between federal and non-federal forests. Assisting some of the 22 million private landowners in managing non-federal forests can help minimize the impacts to federal lands saving the federal taxpayer millions of dollars. Almost 90 percent of those who have stewardship plans are actively implementing them to manage for wildlife, clean water, climate mitigation, and forest products.

- **\$100 million for the Forest Health Management Programs – \$52 million Federal Lands and \$48 million Cooperative Lands:** Pests and disease area national problem affecting private and public lands. The USFS Forest Health Management Program supports efforts to prevent, contain, and eradicate these costly and dangerous pests and pathogens affecting trees and forests.

• **\$31 million for the Urban and Community Forestry Program:** Benefiting more than 220 million people, this program provides assistance to communities managing local, urban, and community forestry resources to keep trees and forests in our communities healthy. These urban forests provide quantifiable energy savings, stormwater impact reduction, and human health benefits in return.

• **\$87 million for State and \$15 million for Volunteer Fire Assistance Programs:** Initial attack is the key to reducing large fire costs and these programs are critical to these suppression efforts. State and volunteer fire crews are deployed to assist on federal fires and other emergency or disaster situations, in compliance with national safety and training standards.

• **\$23.5 million for Landscape Scale Restoration:** S&PF works collaboratively with states and other partners using State Forest Action Plans to target resources to the highest priority forest needs across ownerships to achieve results with meaningful local, regional, and national impacts.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

American Forests

American Forest Foundation

National Association of State Foresters

National Association of Conservation Districts

The Pinchot Institute for Conservation

Society of American Foresters

The Nature Conservancy