

March 21, 2024

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Susan Collins
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeff Merkley
Chair
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Murray, Ranking Member Collins, Chairman Merkley and Ranking Member Murkowski:

As you begin preparations for the FY25 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies appropriations bill, the undersigned organizations strongly urge you to include \$30 million for the Forest Service's Wood Innovations Grants (WIG).

As the name implies, WIG provides competitive grants to projects that expand wood products and wood energy markets to support forest management and deliver economic and environmental benefits to communities. Projects funded by WIG typically demonstrate, research, or develop innovative uses of wood products, such as mass timber.

Mass timber can change the conversation around landscape-scale forest restoration efforts. Mass timber usage creates additional market demand for multiple wood products, which in turn helps keep forests as forests, and makes a greater percentage of forest-types economical. That can, in some regions, lead to better cost recovery on restoration projects, such as those that are a focus of the Forest Service to reduce the risk of wildfires. Mass timber products are also a solution to lowering greenhouse gas emissions in the built environment by storing carbon while also displacing emissions from conventional carbon-intensive building materials. Using mass timber can reduce the embodied carbon pollution of construction by 25 - 45% or more, especially when sourced from sustainably managed forests.

By growing demand for all wood products, particularly through public-private partnerships facilitated by WIG, we can protect existing rural jobs and support investment which is vital to any industry. Mass timber manufacturing creates high tech jobs in rural communities which can change the face of some of these communities by

offering opportunities that are not currently available. For example, mass timber manufacturing facilities utilize advanced manufacturing and material handling technologies, which require a workforce of technicians and engineers thus providing good paying rural jobs. Mass timber structures and the related application of this construction technology also require advanced engineering and design training.

We thank you for your consideration of our request and reiterate our strong support for \$30 million for the Forest Service's Wood Innovations Grants (WIG). Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Will Layden with the American Wood Council at wlayden@awc.org.

Sincerely,

American Forest Foundation
American Wood Council
Binational Softwood Lumber Council
Composite Panel Association
Hardwood Federation
National Alliance of Forest Owners
National Association of State Foresters
Society of American Foresters
Southeastern Lumber Manufacturers Association