

August 2, 2021

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Chairwoman
U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture,
Nutrition, and Forestry
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Boozman
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture,
Nutrition, and Forestry
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Stabenow and Ranking Member Boozman:

We write to express our support for the nomination of Dr. Homer Wilkes to serve as the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment (NRE). The NRE Under Secretary position is critical in overseeing a wide variety of USDA natural resource conservation and forestry programs that work across public and private lands to serve the diverse needs of communities throughout the U.S.

Dr. Homer Wilkes is a collaborative leader with a track record of working towards large-scale solutions in partnership with communities and a wide range of government agencies like the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). He currently serves as the director of the Gulf of Mexico Ecosystem Restoration Division since 2013, where he has been integral to restoring the health of the Gulf Coast ecosystem after the BP Oil Spill of 2010. Throughout his career with NRCS, Dr. Wilkes played a key role in directing engineering, natural resource and watershed projects with a strong interest in forestry and working lands conservation.

Dr. Wilkes also previously served as acting associate chief at NRCS from 2010 until 2013 and as the state conservationist in Mississippi for 16 years from 1994 to 2010. He is also a veteran having served in the U.S. Navy Reserves from 1984 through 2010. He holds his Bachelors, Master of Business Administration and Ph.D. in urban conservation planning and higher education from Jackson State University.

We are confident in Dr. Wilkes and his leadership abilities, and we enthusiastically support his nomination for the position of USDA Undersecretary for Natural Resources and Environment.

Sincerely,

American Farmland Trust
American Forest Foundation
American Forests
Ducks Unlimited
Hardwood Federation
Izaak Walton League of America

National Association of Conservation Districts
National Association of State Conservation Agencies
National Association of State Foresters
National Conservation District Employees Association (NCDEA)
National Wildlife Federation
National Wild Turkey Federation
National Woodland Owners Association
Resource Management Service, LLC
Rural & Agriculture Council of America
The Conservation Fund
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
United States Cattlemen's Association