

December 13, 2018

The Honorable Richard Shelby, Chairman  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
S-128 Capitol,  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen, Chairman  
House Committee on Appropriations  
H-305 Capitol,  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Patrick Leahy, Ranking Member  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
S-146A Capitol,  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nita Lowey, Ranking Member  
House Committee on Appropriations  
1016 Longworth House Office Building,  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Shelby and Frelinghuysen and Ranking Members Leahy and Lowey,

Representing diverse interests across the forestry community, we write to you today to request your assistance in helping Southern forests recover from the devastation wrought by the recent hurricanes. This letter pertains specifically to hurricane recovery in the South, but we recognize there will also be a significant need to assist communities and landowners recovering from the catastrophic wildfires in the West. While some of the suggestions will be applicable in both areas, we look forward to working with you on more specific response to that devastation in the future.

As you know, healthy forests provide critical infrastructure services to urban and rural populations including watershed protection, critical habitat for species (including threatened and endangered species), and substantial economic support through forest management, wood products, and forest-dependent recreation.

The extensive effects of recent hurricanes Florence and Michael are being felt by many forest landowners. According to initial estimates, Hurricane Michael damaged or destroyed over 2,360,000 forested acres in Georgia, over 2,800,000 forested acres in Florida, and over 42,000 forested acres in Alabama. Hurricane Florence damaged over 1,200,000 forested acres in North Carolina with additional damage in other Atlantic coastal states. With the estimated economic losses from the forest destruction of Hurricane Michael alone totaling an estimated \$2,071,622,712, landowners of all forest ownership types are facing significant financial barriers to addressing the vital restoration efforts which must be undertaken.

While properly managed forests are highly resilient, if left in a damaged state, they will face significant threats, including those from invasive species and wildfires. As the wood basket of the nation and the world, restoration of Southern forests is of critical concern.

While Congress debates a continuing resolution to complete funding of the federal government through FY2019, we respectfully ask that you recognize the pivotal nature of Southern forests in the hurricane recovery process, and include the following solutions to empower landowners and ensure economic and infrastructural forestry losses are minimized:

- Extend or renew the USDA's 2017 Wildfires and Hurricanes Indemnity Program (WHIP) to provide landowners, especially where insurance is cost-prohibitive, with some recovery of lost value, and ensure that commercial silviculture in working forests that remain forests is eligible.
- Expand federal assistance to state forestry agencies that allows them to collect post-storm Forest Inventory and Analysis data in affected areas.

- Provide funding to state forestry agencies for landowner reforestation assistance programs to ensure damaged forests are promptly restored, for addressing increased post-hurricane threats to forest health from invasive species, and for additional wildfire response capacity due to increased wildfire risk from down timber.
- Support codification of the casualty loss provisions in the Forest Recovery Act (H.R. 4962) to allow all affected landowners to deduct the full value of their lost timber. Current law allows only claims by landowners in a presidentially-declared disaster area and only for a small fraction of the loss.
- Allow 100% expensing of all reforestation/establishment costs for the year in which they occur
- Allow expedited permitting for temporary wet deck storage areas.
- Expand the 2014 Farm Bill “Good Neighbor Authority” to authorize state forestry agency to help the U.S. Forest Service salvage damaged timber from federal lands.

We are confident that this assistance will empower landowners to mitigate the damage caused by these recent hurricanes and restore these forests and the infrastructure, habitat, and economic benefits they provide.

Thank you for your attention and support.

Sincerely,

American Woodcock Society

American Forest Foundation

Canfor, Inc.

Forest Resources Association

Georgia Forestry Association

Mississippi Forestry Association

National Association of Forest Service Retirees

National Wild Turkey Federation

Ohio Forestry Association

Ruffed Grouse Society

Southeastern Lumber Manufacturers Association

Sustainable Forestry Initiative Inc.

Treated Wood Council

American Forest and Paper Association

American Wood Council

Florida Forestry Association

Forestry Association of South Carolina

Kentucky Forest Industries Association

National Alliance of Forest Owners

National Association of State Foresters

National Woodland Owners Association

Rex Lumber Co.

Society of American Foresters

Southern Group of State Foresters

The Lyme Timber Company