

April 6, 2009

The Honorable Diane Feinstein
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Norman D. Dicks
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Simpson
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Feinstein, Chairman Dicks, Senator Alexander and Mr. Simpson:

The undersigned organizations collectively believe in the importance of up-to-date inventory and analysis on forests in the United States. The USDA Forest Service Forest Inventory and Analysis Program provides critical information that enables sound policy and forest management decisions. Unfortunately, this program has never been fully implemented due to budget constraints. ***We strongly support fully funding this program at a minimum of \$73 million in fiscal year 2010 to truly provide an accurate, up-to-date picture of America's forests.***

The Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) Program is the nation's forest census, collecting data on everything from forest species composition, to forest growth rates, to forest health data. FIA data serves as the base for determining trends in forest ownership, assessing wildlife habitat, wildfire, insect, and disease risks, predicting spread of invasive species, determining locations for forest products facilities, and for many other uses. Now, more than ever, as we tackle our nation's need for energy independence and climate mitigation, we rely on the FIA program to provide information about biomass and carbon sequestration in forests.

The FIA program has yet to be fully implemented nationally. There are several states that have not been inventoried under the program, and many others that lack timely updates. The 1998 Farm Bill mandated the USDA Forest Service to partner with the states and non-governmental interests to implement a nationally consistent, annual inventory program in all states, ensuring timely availability of data and developing state level reports every five years. While FIA has made tremendous progress towards these goals, more funding is needed to accomplish the objectives.

We urge Congress to provide the necessary funding to meet the original goals of the program and provide policy makers, forest managers, private investors, and others with the most up to date information to enable sound decisions regarding the nation's forests.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

American Forest and Paper Association
American Forest Foundation
American Forests
Association of Consulting Foresters
Environmental Defense Fund
Forest Guild
Hardwood Federation
Maine Forest Service

National Association of State Foresters
National Association of University Forest Resource Programs
National Woodland Owners Association
Pinchot Institute for Conservation
Society of American Foresters
The Nature Conservancy
Weyerhaeuser
Wildlife Mississippi