Alabama Forestry Association • American Forest Foundation • Appalachian Mountain Club
Arkansas Forestry Association • Boone and Crockett Club • C2I • California Forestry Association
CarbonVerde, LLC • Columbia Forest Products • Connecticut Forest & Park Association
Conservation Forestry, LLC • Florida Forestry Association • Forest Resources Association
Georgia Forestry Association • Green Diamond Resource Company • Hardwood Federation
Indiana Forestry & Woodland Owners Association • L&C Carbon LLC • Louisiana Forestry Association
Michigan Forest Products Council • Michigan Forestry Association • Minnesota Forestry Association
Mississippi Forestry Association • Mississippi Land Trust • Mississippi River Trust
National Association of Conservation Districts • National Association of Forest Service Retirees
National Association of State Foresters • National Alliance of Forest Owners
National Lumber & Building Material Dealers Association • National Woodland Owners Association
New Forests, Inc. • Northland Forest Products • Ohio Forestry Association
Oregon Small Woodlands Association • Plum Creek • Small Woodland Owners Association of Maine
Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests • Society of American Foresters
Tennessee Forestry Association • Texas Forestry Association • The Lyme Timber Company LP
Vermont Woodlands Association • Virginia Forestry Association
Washington Farm Forestry Association • Western Landowners Alliance
Western Pennsylvania Conservancy • Wisconsin Woodland Owners Association

December 12, 2013

Dear Representative:

As unplanned development pushes deeper into America's forests, inflated tax values make it increasingly difficult for forest landowners to hold on to the timberland they have stewarded for generations. The tax benefits of donating a conservation easement helps families to keep their forest land in production and pass it down to their children, but unless Congress acts, these incentives will greatly decrease at the end of 2013. The undersigned organizations urge you to co-sponsor the Conservation Easement Incentive Act, H.R. 2807, and make the tax incentive for conservation easements permanent this year.

America's forests offer many public benefits, providing vital wildlife habitat, recreational opportunities, good paying jobs and significant carbon sequestration. Family-owned forests are cherished and carefully stewarded by their owners, but property and estate taxes based on development values often force them to sell for second home development and other uses that fragment forest habitat and increase fire suppression costs. By donating a conservation easement to a land trust in their community, forest owners can give up those future development rights while retaining ownership and management of the land.

Development rights sometimes comprise a family forest owner's single largest asset, but previous law prevented modest-income landowners from deducting more than a small portion of their generous donation. This incentive, enacted in 2006, allows agricultural landowners to deduct up to 100% of their income and carry forward the remaining value of their donation for up to 15 years.

This important conservation tool has been retroactively renewed on three occasions, but an on-again, off-again incentive makes it very difficult to educate potential donors. Donating a conservation easement is a lengthy and expensive process that many landowners will not begin unless they know this incentive will be in place at the end.

Please join Congressmen Jim Gerlach (R-PA), Mike Thompson (D-CA) and 149 other Representatives as a co-sponsor of the Conservation Easement Incentive Act. To sign-on to H.R. 2807, please contact Lori Prater in Congressman Jim Gerlach's Office (5-4315).

Thank you for your continued commitment to conservation and the viability of working forests across America.

Sincerely,

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