

May 12, 2010

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
United States Senator
511 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Cantwell:

Private working forests are a critical part of our nation's environmental and economic infrastructure. In addition to open space, recreation, wildlife habitat, clean air and water, and a supply of the products we use daily, working forests are an important source of jobs and a strong economy. In fact, in Washington State, 8 million acres of private forests directly support more than 34,000 jobs, \$1.5 billion in payroll, \$69 million in state property taxes, \$10 billion in sales, and nearly 2% of our state's GDP.

Maintaining and developing viable markets for the goods and services produced by working forests ensures that we can conserve them and the many public benefits they provide for the long term.

As the Senate considers renewable energy and climate change legislation, we urge you to support biomass energy as an important emerging market for working forests. Renewable forest biomass for energy is a means to help our nation meet its renewable energy and climate change goals. We strongly urge you to include a broad renewable biomass definition for all relevant federal programs, similar to that of the 2008 Farm Bill, and to appropriately recognize the carbon benefits of biomass energy in any climate or renewable energy legislation considered by the Senate.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, a broad definition for renewable biomass, such as contained in the 2008 Farm Bill is a common sense and practical approach that enables biomass participation in emerging markets, appropriately considers the sustainability of our lands, and provides economic options to help preserve working farms and forests on the landscape and the many public benefits they provide. We strongly support this view and urge that the expert opinion of USDA be reflected in national policy. We also urge that biomass definitions not impose restrictions that would foreclose market opportunities or introduce new federal regulation of public and private lands.

We also strongly urge that the full carbon benefits of renewable energy from biomass be appropriately acknowledged in Senate legislation. Unlike fossil fuels, which emit carbon into the atmosphere from geologic sources that are not renewable, carbon associated with the combustion of biomass is part of a natural

cycle that maintains a carbon balance by removing emitted carbon from the atmosphere through photosynthesis and storing it in plants, trees and soil. This balance is reflected in widely-accepted science acknowledging that the combustion of wood biomass for energy in countries with increasing forest inventories, like the United States, does not increase atmospheric carbon. It is also embedded in the policies and analysis of the Environmental Protection Agency, the Energy Information Agency and other authoritative and credible government and non-government organizations.

We look forward to working with you to help Washington's private working forests make their full contribution to national renewable energy and climate change policy.

Sincerely,

American Forest Resource Council
Avista Corporation
Green Diamond Resource Company
Family Forest Foundation
Forest Capital Partners
Forest Landowners Association
Longview Timber, Corp.
Plumcreek Timber
Pope Resources
Port Blakley Tree Farms
Potlatch Corporation
Rayonier
Sierra Pacific Industries
Washington Farm Forestry Association
Washington Friends of Farms and Forests
Washington Forest Protection Association
West Fork Timber Co, LLC.
Weyerhaeuser Company