

May 7, 2010

The Honorable Al Franken  
United States Senate  
320 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Franken:

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 Minnesota, 7.3 million acres of private forests provide for and support 52,914 jobs, \$2 billion in payroll, \$115 million in state income and severance taxes, \$4.6 billion in sales, and \$2 billion towards 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, similar to that of the 2008 Farm Bill, for all relevant federal programs and to appropriately recognize the carbon benefits of biomass energy in any climate or renewable energy legislation considered by the Senate. The Farm Bill definition is substantially similar to the language in the House Waxman-Markey bill language. This language 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 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 our nation's private working forests make their full contribution to national renewable energy and climate change policy.

Sincerely,

Forest Capital Partners  
Forest Landowners Association

Minnesota Forest Industries  
Potlatch Corporation