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FOREST OWNERS SAY BOXER-KERRY MISSED OPPORTUNITY

Forests represent best opportunity to remove carbon from the atmosphere

WASHINGTON, DC – The National Alliance of Forest Owners (NAFO) called on the Senate to fully recognize the role of U.S. forests in meeting climate policy goals, offering specific comments on Senators Boxer's and Kerry's draft legislation.

David P. Tenny, President and CEO of NAFO, said, "This bill misses an opportunity to take immediate and full advantage of the carbon offsets private, working forests can provide. Our nation's forests remove enough carbon from the atmosphere each year to offset 10 percent of all industrial emissions, and 84 percent of the carbon removed by all land uses comes from forests.

"Private working forests should be our front line for reducing GHGs. The fact that responsibly managed forests play a critical role in removing carbon from the atmosphere is beyond dispute both domestically and internationally. Congress must acknowledge this in legislation and allow for vibrant markets that will tap the full potential of these forests."

NAFO outlined several missed opportunities in the Boxer-Kerry bill:

- The legislation does not immediately recognize forest management and forest products as eligible offset projects.
- Lengthy timeframes for putting forestry offset projects in place diminish their use in the marketplace.
- The U.S. Department of Agriculture is not given a primary role in developing and administering the rules for forest offsets in spite of their expertise.
- Forestry offsets are required to meet special criteria not required of any other project type.
- Definitions applied to forestry are complex and impractical.

Tenny said, "Combined, these provisions significantly diminish the role of domestic forests in providing real and cost-effective solutions to climate change. In essence, the bill places private forests on the sidelines of the climate game. That is an unfortunate message to forest owners throughout the country.

"We are fortunate the Senate Agriculture Committee has jurisdiction over the offsets provisions in this bill. NAFO looks forward to working with the leaders of the Agriculture Committee to ensure that final legislation fully includes forest offsets. The climate benefits are too great for Congress to pass them by."

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NAFO is an organization of private forest owners committed to promoting federal policies that protect the economic and environmental values of privately-owned forests at the national level. NAFO membership encompasses more than 75 million acres of private forestland in 47 states.