



National Association of Conservation Districts

February 19, 2009

Senator Dianne Feinstein
Chairwoman
Interior and Environment Subcommittee
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
331 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Senator Thad Cochran
Ranking Member
Interior and Environment Subcommittee
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
113 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairwoman and Ranking Member:

The National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) represents the nation's 3,000 conservation districts and 17,000 men and women who serve on their governing boards. Conservation districts are local units of government established under state law to carry out natural resource management programs at the local level. Conservation districts help state and federal partners work with landowners on a variety of conservation programs, including the State and Private Forestry programs under the USDA Forest Service (FS).

Throughout the country, the demands on our forest lands continue to increase. Multiple use management of our renewable forest resources continues to ensure a wide range of ecosystem services are provided to the general public while maintaining the productivity of the land and protecting the quality of the environment. These benefits are achieved by employing proper resource management that provides the best combination of uses. Because of changes in land ownership, land use, and other growing natural resource concerns, funding remains the critical component to ensure these benefits continue. The FS State and Private Forestry programs help provide the necessary technical and financial assistance to landowners and land managers for the continued maintenance of healthy, productive forested lands.

To ensure this assistance continues to be available, NACD supports **\$300.582 million** in funding State and Private Forestry programs in the Fiscal Year 2010 Interior Appropriations Bill. The State and Private Forestry Redesign and its competitive resource allocation process addresses the national themes: conserve working forest landscapes, protect forests from harm and enhance public benefits from trees and forests. However, these goals will be impossible if the current means used to fund wildfire suppression is not changed. Wildfire suppression must be funded in a manner that does not impact all other Forest Service programs and puts an end to "fire borrowing". This adjustment to current procedures will ensure that the appropriations we are requesting are sufficient to the critical tasks we have mentioned above.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. We look forward to working with you as we continue to provide the benefits of natural resource conservation across the country.

Sincerely,

Steve Robinson
NACD President

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