



National Association of Conservation Districts

Testimony of Mr. Charles Holmes
Board Member, National Association of Conservation Districts
Chairman of Forest Resource Policy Group (RPG), NACD
House Agriculture Subcommittee on Conservation, Energy, and Forestry
Formulation of the 2012 Farm Bill: Energy and Forestry Programs
May 18, 2012

Good morning Chairman Thompson, Ranking Member Holden, and Members of the Subcommittee. On behalf of the National Association of Conservation Districts and our 3,000 member districts and 17,000 supervisors across the country, I thank you for the opportunity to be here today.

I currently serve as the Board Member from the State of Alabama for NACD as well as the Chair of the Forest Resource Policy Group, a subcommittee of NACD's Natural Resources Policy Committee. My wife and I own Holmestead Company, a sole proprietorship in Marian, Alabama, where we are a cow-calf and tree farm operation. My family has used a variety of conservation practices over the nearly 200 years on our land, including cross fencing, rotational grazing, padded water troughs, and prescribed burns. We received our first farm plan in 1939 and have been a certified tree farm since 1941. We have a mix of pine and hardwoods on our property and in 1999 we reintroduced longleaf onto our property. We currently have a forest management plan and a Registered Forester to assist with forest management.

The importance of conservation cannot be stated enough. Conservation is a common sense, long-term solution with a high return on investment. The desire to put conservation practices on the ground is why NACD supports the framework of the 2012 Farm Bill designed by the Senate and specifically the Forestry Title. The Forestry Title helps provide resources to landowners who are looking to protect and conserve wooded and forest land on their property. Conservation Districts and private landowners have been directly involved with many of the programs within the Forestry Title, such as the Forest Stewardship Program and the Forest Legacy Program. Also, many Districts are working on insect infestation and the negative impacts that critical issue is having on landowners.

For starters, Conservation Districts throughout the country have been strong participants and supporters of the Forest Stewardship Program. The Stewardship Program provides technical assistance, via our State partners, to nonindustrial private forest owners to help with long term forest management. Since the program's creation, it has produced over 270,000 resource management plans for more than 31 million acres of private forest land. Developing sound resource management plans and conservation plans is one of the principle tenants of NACD.

NACD is one of four partners, along with the National Association of State Foresters, which I have the pleasure of sharing the panel with today, as well as the Forest Service and the Natural Resources Conservation Service, that make up the Joint Forestry Team. The Team provided

input in the common forest management plan template to be used by the Forest Service, NRCS and partner organizations. The template the Team helped develop serves as the primary guidance to NRCS forestry technical service providers. I served as the chair of the Joint Forestry Team in 2010 and saw firsthand the benefit and resources that the Team can bring to the table to benefit not just the Stewardship Program, but the forest industry as a whole.

On my own land in Alabama, I have seen the direct benefit of the Forest Stewardship Program. My work with longleaf pine restoration has been, in part, a product of the Stewardship Program. To date I have restored more than 700 acres of longleaf pine in an effort to restore native forests to the southeastern United States.

Second, the Forest Legacy Program has been an important part of Conservation Districts work since its creation. The Legacy Program has allowed landowners to help protect environmentally important forest areas from expansion. The Program works with local and state entities to develop conservation plans to be carried out. NACD focuses on developing and sustaining cooperative working relationships between federal, state, and local agencies to achieve conservation through a locally led process. The Legacy Program continues to work to make that strategy a reality. While the 2012 Farm Bill framework now includes a program cap of \$200 million annually, I do not believe the cap will have a negative impact on being able to successfully carry out responsible conservation.

Insects continue to wreak havoc on our forests. Pine beetle has been particularly devastating to forests throughout the western United States. Insect infestation and disease has a direct impact on our members and furthermore puts their livelihood in danger due to a loss of timber and an increased risk of wildfire. Conservation Districts feel that more needs to be done to address this mounting problem, and the framework we have seen is a step in the right direction.

In conclusion, these Farm Bill programs show a track record of success, and every dollar spent has seen a return. Because of the 2008 Farm Bill, we are better prepared to meet future resource needs, and we must continue to fund these programs in the 2012 Farm Bill. The Forestry Title is critical in ensuring the health and sustainability of our forests for generations to come.

Chairman Thompson, Ranking member Holden, thank you again for the opportunity to testify this morning. I am happy to answer any questions you and the subcommittee may have.

**Committee on Agriculture
U.S. House of Representatives
Required Witness Disclosure Form**

House Rules* require nongovernmental witnesses to disclose the amount and source of Federal grants received since October 1, 2008.

Name: Charles Holmes

Organization you represent (if any): Board Member representing Alabama and Chair of Forest Resource Policy Group (RPG), National Association of Conservation Districts

- 1. Please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants and subcontracts) you have received since October 1, 2008, as well as the source and the amount of each grant or contract. House Rules do NOT require disclosure of federal payments to individuals, such as Social Security or Medicare benefits, farm program payments, or assistance to agricultural producers:**

Source: _____ **Amount:** _____

Source: _____ **Amount:** _____

- 2. If you are appearing on behalf of an organization, please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants and subcontracts) the organization has received since October 1, 2008, as well as the source and the amount of each grant or contract:**

Source: U.S. Forest Service **Amount:** \$572,500

Source: U.S.D.A. Natural Resources **Amount:** \$1,901,500

Please check here if this form is NOT applicable to you: _____

Signature: Charles Holmes _____

** Rule XI, clause 2(g)(4) of the U.S. House of Representatives provides: Each committee shall, to the greatest extent practicable, require witnesses who appear before it to submit in advance written statements of proposed testimony and to limit their initial presentations to the committee to brief summaries thereof. In the case of a witness appearing in a nongovernmental capacity, a written statement of proposed testimony shall include a curriculum vitae and a disclosure of the amount and source (by agency and program) of each Federal grant (or subgrant thereof) or contract (or subcontract thereof) received during the current fiscal year or either of the two previous fiscal years by the witness or by any entity represented by the witness.*

PLEASE ATTACH DISCLOSURE FORM TO EACH COPY OF TESTIMONY.

Charles A. Holmes

National Association of Conservation Districts Board Member Representing State of Alabama Chair, Forest Resource Policy Group

Charles A. Holmes was born September 17, 1951, in Demopolis, Alabama, in Marengo County. Charles is married to Virginia (Jenny) Cooper, and they have three sons, William, Webb, and Cooper.

Charles is owner of Holmestead Company, a purebred horned Hereford and Brahman cross cow-calf , stocker and timber operation. This land was homesteaded in 1819 by Charles' great great – Grandfather, William Moore. The Family farm and historical and agricultural buildings are open as a teaching property.

He is a graduate of the Marion Military Institute, also attended Auburn University studying agricultural economics and summer exchange at Christ Church College, Oxford, England studying British-American history, religion and British architecture.

Charles is a past president of the Alabama Association of Conservation Districts and continues this effort as a Director on the National Association of Conservation Districts Board where he was instrumental in bringing the water quantity and quality issue to the forefront at the state and national levels. He was successful in bringing the conservation districts to the forefront of recognition and prominence as a network of dedicated and capable common sense conservationists within our state. He has been recognized by the Alabama Wildlife Federation there highest honor, Conservationist of the Year, National Cattleman's Beef Associations, Environmental Stewardship Award which recognizes cattlemen whose natural resource stewardship practices contribute to the environment and enhance productivity and profitability, United States Department of Agriculture's national winner of the Earth Team Award for dedication to conservation and outstanding efforts in the recruitment, training, and management of a superior volunteer program for the Perry County Soil and Water Conservation District. Charles was also awarded the Special Service Award by the National Association of Conservation Districts where he has served as Board Member since 1988 and also presently serves as Chairman of the Forestry Committee, this committee focuses on the conservation issues associated with America's public and private woodlands. This includes the development of working relationships between NACD, USDA Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, the National Assoc. of State Foresters, USDA Extension Service, the forest products industry and local conservation districts. Charles was honored in August of 2011 by being inducted into the Southeastern NACD Conservation Hall of Fame following his father, A.D. Holmes, Jr. and Pearson Compton, NACD Founder, who got Charles' father involved in NACD. Charles served on the farm bill implementation committee that will make recommendations to Congress of the conservation provisions of the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002. Charles is now serving on NACD 2012 farm bill task force.

In 2007 Charles was appointed to serve on a Joint Forestry Team to put together a memorandum of understanding between the United States Department of Agriculture,

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS); USDA, Forest Service (FS); the National Association of State Foresters (NASF); and the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD). The purpose of this MOU is to strengthen cooperation among the Parties that result in coordinated interagency delivery of forest-related conservation assistance to private landowners in order to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of America's private working lands-forest land, cropland, pasture and rangeland. Charles was named Chairman in 2010.

He was one of the founders of Stewarts of Family Farms, Ranches and Forests. The purposes of this organization were to promote good stewardship, to safeguard the exercise of private property rights and the free enterprise system by families who own farms, ranches and forests.

He has distinguished himself with service on the following committees:

Jan. 1973 to present – Board member and past president of the Perry County Cattlemen's Association

1974 to present – Board member and past President of the Perry County Farmers Federation. Chairman of the beef cattle, timber and wildlife divisions

1976 to present- member Perry County Historical and Preservation Society

1978-80 and 1987-1998 – Board member, Alabama Beef Cattle Improvement Association

1978- 1980 – Board member Alabama State Young Farmers Committee.

1978- 1998 – Board member and past President, Alabama Hereford Breeders Association

1982- 1998- Board member, Pure Breed Beef Council

1982- 1990 – Board member, Cahawba River Commission

1984 to present – appointed to serve as a District Supervisor on the Perry County Soil and Water Conservation Board. Elected Chairman in 1998 and RC&D rep.

1985- 1998 – Board member, Chairman 96-98, Southern Academy

1985 to present – member and past Board member Southeastern Livestock Exposition

1986-1991 – past President and secretary of the West Alabama Feeder Cattle Association

1986-1991 – past President and member Presidential Advisory Council, Marion Military Institute

1986 to present – Perry County Auburn Legislative Committee

1987-1988 – President, Alabama Association of Conservation Districts

1988 to present – national Board member, N. A. C. D., for the Alabama Association of Conservation Districts

1989 to 2000 Scoutmaster, Boy Scouts of America

1991 to present – Board member, Marion Military Institute, Chairman 1999 to 2004, present Trustee MMI Foundation and Board of Advisers

1992-1998 – Board member and one of the organizers of Stewards of Family Farms, Ranches and Forests

1994-1997 – Area Vice President, Alabama Cattlemen's Association

1994 to 2006 – one of the organizers, Perry County Chamber of Commerce, a Board member since 1994, and served as President, Secretary, and Vice President.

1996 to present- Chairman Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative program for the State of Alabama

1999 to present- Chairman Forestry Committee, National Association of Conservation Districts

1999 to 2010 – member Alabama Soil and Water Conservation Committee

2004 to present – member Black Belt Action Commission, agriculture subcommittee

2007 to present- member NACD Foundation Board

2007 to present- member and 2010 Chairman, Joint Forestry Team, NACD, FS, NASF and NRCS

2007 to 2010- Chairman and Board member The Perry County Center for Economic Development

2009 to present- member Longleaf Partnership Council

Active member of St. Wilfrid's Episcopal Church, serving on the Vestry as Sr. Warden, and past Sr. Warden of the Black Belt Ministry that governs nine Parishes in the Black Belt region of Alabama.