March 15, 2019

The Honorable Betty McCollum
Chair, Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
US House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable David Joyce
Ranking Member, Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies US House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair McCollum and Ranking Member Joyce:

Improving the future health and sustainability of the nation's forests and grasslands requires a strong investment in USDA Forest Service Research and Development (R&D), with benefits to forests, wildlife, and fish. The undersigned organizations and professional societies urge Congress to **increase funding for *all* Forest Service R&D to a minimum of $310 million in FY 2020 including all necessary increases for the Forest Inventory and Analysis program and at least $227 million for the remaining Forest and Rangeland Research program areas.**

Building on over 100 years of critically important research, Forest Service R&D programs inform policy and land-management decisions that improve health and use of the nation's forests and grasslands, including aquatic systems. Funding for these important activities is critical to sustaining the nation's natural resources. Showing value in this investment requires R&D leaders and scientists be attuned and responsive in providing relevant and timely information and support with an ability to effectively deliver assistance to all users. Notable recent Forest Service R&D contributions include:

Using Science to Guide Drought Management Response
Forest Service R&D has been a leader in reviewing impacts of drought on U.S. forests and rangelands to help better manage for drought resiliency and adaptation going forward. Forest Service R&D assessments and guidance offers assistance to federal, state, and private organizations in implementation strategies to sustain healthy, resilient ecosystems that continue to produce vital goods and services.

Helping to Identify Pragmatic Solutions for Species at Risk
Through long-term monitoring and collaborative research efforts with state agencies and other partners, Forest Service R&D informs land management decisions that benefit wildlife and people by providing an understanding of wildlife-habitat relationships for multiple species and communities. This includes informing conservation efforts that have helped to avoid Endangered Species Act listings for several forest and rangeland wildlife species.

Improving Smoke and Fire Management Capabilities
The Prescribed Fire Combustion and Atmospheric Dynamics Research Experiment is a landmark study improving predictions of fire spread and smoke behavior. This behavior prediction tool with the Blue Sky Smoke Management Model allows fire managers to better understand where flames and smoke from wildland fires will go to alert affected communities sooner and reduce human health effects.

Developing Innovative Solutions to Managing Invasive Species
Forest Service R&D also develops innovative solutions to manage invasive pathogens and species that can decimate native plant and animal populations. These investments resulted in a cost-effective way to quickly identify presence or absence of invasive species in an aquatic environment; trees with a natural resistance to emerald ash borers; and the first nonlethal treatment for white-nose syndrome —a lethal fungal disease that has reduced bat populations by upwards of 80% in certain parts of the country.

Expanding and Protecting US Market Opportunities for Forest Resources
The Forest Products Laboratory drives innovation and expansion of commercial applications for forest products. The work at the Lab on woody biofuels, advanced composites and wood structures, and value- added wood products promotes healthy forest ecosystems and economies by creating, enhancing, and protecting markets for forest products. In partnership with universities, scientists from Research Stations across the country, and partners in the private sector, the Lab is exploring potential of mass timber structures by conducting work on building codes and wood utilization models to increase use of wood in building construction and invigorate existing and create new markets for wood products.

Calculating the Value of Urban Forests and Trees
City leaders can calculate the value of new tree plantings in terms of property value increases, future energy savings, air pollutant uptake, and storm water runoff reduction helping cities protect and restore environmental quality and enhance economic opportunity.

Quantifying the Role of Forests in Providing Clean Air and Water
This research directly linking trees to clean air and water underscores the economic value and benefits trees and forests provide to all residents and communities. Recent R&D work shows that forests, which make up 26% of US land area, are the source of 46% of the US water supply—generating far better returns than other land uses. This understanding of how to manage forested landscapes to enhance production of sustained, low cost clean water supplies and improved air quality are cost effective and critically important to human health providing a value of nearly $7 billion every year.

Advancing forest science is integral to improving the health and welfare of U.S. forests and citizens, increasing the competitiveness of U.S. products in the global marketplace, and adapting to unforeseen future challenges. Continuing the trend of reductions in the R&D budget will result in significant gaps in the knowledge base and data sets necessary to address the many threats facing our nation's forests and associated wildlife could result in competitive losses in the global economy. ***Therefore, our organizations request a funding level of $310 million for USFS R&D with particular emphasis on research projects uniquely suited to R&D expertise and the furthering of agency and partner objectives.***

Sincerely,

American Forests
American Woodcock Society
American Wood Council
Arkansas Forestry Association

Ecological Society of America
Florida Forestry Association
Forest Resources Association
Forestry Association of South Carolina
Hancock Natural Resource Group
Indiana Forestry & Woodland Owners Association
Kentucky Forest Industries Association
L&C Carbon
Mississippi Forestry Association
National Association of Forest Service Retirees
National Audubon Society
Ohio Forestry Association, Inc.
Rayonier
SC Pole and Piling Inc
Society for the Protection of NH Forests
Sustainable Forestry Initiative
The Hardwood Federation
Treated Wood Council
Viance LLC
Boise Cascade Company
Empire State Forest Products Association
Fontana Wood Preserving
Gross & Janes Co.
Idaho Forest Group
IN Chapter of the Ruffed Grouse Society
McCord Tie and Timber, Inc.
National Alliance of Forest Owners
National Wild Turkey Federation
Pennsylvania Forestry Association
Ruffed Grouse Society
SFP
Society of American Foresters
Tank Fab Inc
The Westervelt Company
Vermont Woodlands Association