

**Testimony of Tom Martin, President, American Forest Foundation  
For the House Appropriations Committee:  
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and related Agencies  
April 16, 2013**

Investments in the US Forest Service Forest Stewardship Program and the US Forest Service Forest Health Management Program will help family forest owners get ahead of increasing threats from invasive pests and pathogens, wildfire, and development pressures. It is also critical that funding for US Forest Service Forest Inventory and Analysis and overall Forest Service Research and Development programs are improved and maintained, so these programs continue to provide the information and technical resources for landowners to make informed decisions about America's forests. Investments in forestry programs will help strengthen rural communities, support rural jobs, and ensure that communities that rely on the clean water and air, wildlife habitat, and forest products from family-owned forests, don't face additional costs for these goods and services.

The American Forest Foundation (AFF) urges the Subcommittee to maintain FY 2012 funding for the above mentioned programs and the FY13 funding recommendation for the Forest Inventory and Analysis Program, that support improved forest stewardship on our nation's 251 million acres of family-owned forests and ensure the next generation is equipped to conserve and manage these forests – for the benefit of all Americans. Given the tight budget climate, we understand tough decisions must be made. However, we believe these programs should at a minimum be maintained so we don't lose ground in efforts to conserve and manage America's family-owned forests.

Family forest owners are facing a "perfect storm" of threats. Wildfires, forest pests, pathogens and invasive species, pressures from development, and declining forest products markets make it harder than ever to keep America's family-owned forests healthy and productive. At the same time, less than 5% of family forest owners are taking an active role in the stewardship of their forests. Many are under the impression that leaving their woods "alone" is the best option, meaning few have sought out the advice needed to address these pending threats. It is therefore essential we ensure these families have tools, technical information, and policy support to keep their forests as forests, for current and future generations.

The American Forest Foundation is a nonprofit conservation organization that works on the ground with the over 10 million family woodland owners, through a variety of programs including the American Tree Farm System® and our focused place-based projects designed to achieve specific ecological or economic outcomes in priority places. . Our mission is to help these families be good stewards and keep their forests healthy for future generations.

Families and individuals steward more of America's forests than the federal government or corporations. Families and individuals own 35 percent of our nation's forests.<sup>1</sup> These private

---

<sup>1</sup> USDA, May 2008, *Who Owns America's Forests?*

forests provide myriad public benefits—clean air, clean water, recreation, renewable resources that build our homes and communities, and good-paying rural jobs. Family forest owners invest their own time, resources, and energy into keeping their forests healthy and ensuring their children and grandchildren have the same opportunities. Those who actively manage their land, likely received some technical or financial help or got their start by getting support from a consultant, an agency forester, or an industry forester. Most families have not sought out this help, and many don't even know they need it.

### **Forest Health Investments Needed**

The threats are daunting. For example, close to 500 species of tree-damaging pests from other countries have become established in the country, and a new one is introduced, on average, every 2 to 3 years. At least 28 new tree-killing pests have been detected in the United States in just the last decade. Some of these will cause enormous damage; for example, thousand cankers disease threatens black walnut, with an estimated growing stock of \$539 billion, across the eastern U.S. The USFS Forest Health Management (FHM) Program is a critical resource supporting efforts to prevent, contain, and eradicate dangerous pests and pathogens affecting trees and forests. The program provides critical assistance to other federal agencies, state agencies, local agencies and private landowners.

In FY 2012, the FHM Program helped combat native and invasive pests on over 351,000 acres of Federal lands and over 615,000 acres of Cooperative lands—an impressive figure, but still nearly 150,000 fewer Cooperative land acres treated, compared with 2011 totals. Any further cuts to this program will necessitate deeper reductions in support for communities already facing outbreaks and expose more of the nation's family-owned forests to the devastating and costly effects of the Asian Longhorned Beetle, Emerald Ash Borer, Hemlock Woolly Adelgid, Thousand Cankers Disease, Western Bark Beetle and other pests.

### **Invest in a more focused, impactful Forest Stewardship Program**

Over the last few years, there have been significant cut backs in outreach and technical assistance provided to woodland owners, as agency budgets have shrunk, and industry has cut back or eliminated their outreach foresters. This greatly concerned woodland owners across the country that AFF works with, who rely on programs like the Forest Stewardship Program and state forest agency service foresters. The Forest Stewardship Program has been the backbone of the American Tree Farm System, providing the support to woodland owners to ensure they have management plans and can therefore be certified and access certified wood products markets.

These cuts are also of great concern because of the growing number of “unengaged” woodland owners—those 95% of woodland owners who are not actively managing their land, and therefore have forests that are more susceptible to the threats mentioned above.

To address some of this loss AFF is currently piloting, together with several state forest agencies, conservation groups, and industry partners, a number of innovative landowner outreach tools, using micro-targeting and social marketing strategies, to more efficiently and

effectively engage “unengaged” woodland owners. To date, we’ve seen a 12% response rate—woodland owners who are saying “yes” to being engaged—compared with a 3-4% response rate that forest agencies, extension agents, and organizations typically see.

Tools like these, combined with a more focused Forest Stewardship Program that concentrates on landowner outreach and assistance in priority areas like those identified in each state’s Forest Action Plan, have significant potential to leverage the Forest Stewardship Program further and lead to even greater impact on the ground.

It’s because of this work underway to improve the impact of the Forest Stewardship Program, we ask that you maintain this program’s funding.

### **Maintaining Essential Information for Forest Management of Family-Owned Woodlands**

Both of these programs, the Forest Stewardship Program and the Forest Health Program, must be grounded in sound science and sound forest information. That’s where the US Forest Service’s Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) Program and the Research and Development Programs (R&D) come in. These programs provide irreplaceable data about our forests and give landowners the tools to know how to manage the growing threats they face.

As our nation’s forest census, the FIA program provides critical updates on forest health and market trends—better equipping forest owners nationwide to mitigate the impact of impending threats and concerns. FIA also provides a census of the trends in family forest ownership, demographics, and trends, so we can better understand how to work with this significant ownership group, most of whom, as mentioned above are “unengaged” in active forest management.

In particular, the USFS Research and Development Program provides the science to help manage invasive species in urban and rural forests. AFF believes it is vitally important to conduct research aimed at improving detection and control methods for the Emerald Ash Borer, Hemlock Woolly Adelgid, Sudden Oak Death, Thousand Cankers Disease, Gold-spotted Oak Borer and other non-native forests pests and diseases. USFS research scientists have had the leading role in developing detection traps & evaluating treatments that make walnut lumber safe to continue moving in commerce. We urge this work to continue, and look forward to more progress on genetic restoration of impacted tree species, among other projects.

The R&D function is not only essential for providing forest management research, it is also on the leading edge of providing new information about the use of wood products, which can help create new markets for products from family-owned woodlands. This information helps position wood in growing markets, like green building markets, where understanding the environmental impacts of building materials is key. We urge the Subcommittee to call on R&D to invest an additional \$6 million in green building research through the Forest Products Laboratory to continue this important work.

To conclude, AFF recognizes the Subcommittee must find areas to reduce spending. We ask the Subcommittee to consider the impact these reductions will have on the country's nearly 11 million family forest owners and every American who benefits daily from the positive externalities of well-managed, working forests. We urge the Subcommittee to work to maintain FY12 funding levels for the US Forest Service's Forest Stewardship Program, Forest Health Management Program, Research and Development Program, and the FY13 funding recommendation of \$72 million for the Forest Inventory and Analysis Program.

I thank the Subcommittee for the opportunity to provide some insight on these programs and appreciate consideration of my testimony.