

Witness Statement

Submitted to:

House of Representatives / Committee on Appropriations / Subcommittee on the Environment
Representative C. Pingree (D-Maine), Chair of the Committee

Submitted by:

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Good morning, Chairperson Pingree, Ranking Member Joyce, and members of the Committee.

Thank you for the invitation and opportunity to speak with you today regarding the importance of America's forests, of our nation's timber and wood products industries, and of the rural communities which reside within these forests – but in particular, to speak of the essential role that the vision, commitment, and innovation of our federal government should play in enhancing our nation's forests, and our nation's environmental future.

I serve the University of Arkansas, the state's land-grant university, as dean of the Fay Jones School of Architecture and Design. While I will speak to the specifics of Arkansas's forests and its timber and wood industries today, I also speak on behalf of many schools across the United States engaged in similar endeavors. I offer here an Arkansas case study in the effectiveness, value, and essential importance of innovative research and development in the cause of America's forests.

Two questions frame our work:

“What does it mean to be a nation of forests, of forested states?”

“What is the value of funding innovation in our forests, in the cause of the nation?”

By focusing on the potential of Arkansas forests, timberlands, and wood products industries, the Fay Jones School, together with our School of Forestry and Natural Resources, and with significant assistance from the US Forest Service and its Wood Innovations Grants programs and the Forest Products Laboratory, has been able to stimulate both greater environmental health for this essential, renewable resource and greater economic development in the state, with attention to our rural communities and a more sustainable, low-carbon future.

In 2017, a US Forest Service Wood Innovations grant funded research into the viability of building new residence halls at the University of Arkansas out of mass timber. Design research studios funded by this grant developed residence hall prototypes constructed from mass timber. In validation of this effort, the University built a new \$79,000,000 residence hall out of mass timber, currently the largest such building in the United States. The FPL has now provided further funds to our School for important research on the completed building. Our School of Forestry has also received Wood Innovation Grant funds and with this, we are forming a state-wide consortium of forestry, timberlands and wood products stakeholders, so as to maximize the economic and environmental benefits of Arkansas' forests.

Collectively, the effect of this funding and the design research it yielded has been remarkable, as the University of Arkansas has become perhaps the most significant supporter of advanced timber construction in higher education, with more than \$100 million in construction so far, with the new \$20m Anthony Timberlands Center for Design and Materials Innovation, a home to our numerous wood

initiatives and a new applied research center, now in the early stages of design. We are now a critical actor in the stimulation of the architecture, engineering and contracting industries.

The impact of these initiatives now extends statewide, as our “proof-of-concept” informs significant private enterprise in Arkansas. Structurlam, the leading mass timber manufacturer in North America, based in Canada, is investing \$90 million and hiring 130 Arkansas employees for its first U.S. facility, producing Cross Laminated Timber panels in Conway, Arkansas. Structurlam’s first primary project will be Walmart’s new mass timber headquarters in Bentonville, a 3,000,000 s.f campus, which will use 1.1 million cubic feet of Arkansas-sourced timber. And more projects, public and private, are on the way.

In total, and in constant growth, this is the Arkansas Timber Project, stimulated by innovation funds from the USFS and collateral partners.

I will be emphatic in summary:

The United States of America is a forest nation. The forests are inextricably engaged with our history, our society, our politics, our culture, our economy, our environment – our past, our present, our future.

The forests of the United States must therefore be wisely conserved, stewarded and employed for the greatest good, for the greatest number, for the greatest benefit. These last words echo, of course, the credo of Gifford Pinchot, the founder of the USFS.

This ambition – the purpose and goal – can only be achieved through the concerted, far-sighted efforts of both public institutions and agencies AND private stakeholder and corporate interests and organizations.

The ideals, purposes, activities, people and funding mechanisms of the USFS are central to this larger goal. The specific work and collaborative funding of the Forest Products Laboratory, and the specific funding of the USFS Wood Innovations Grant program are demonstrably essential, valuable and impactful across a broad range of actors and audiences in this mission.

If what we have achieved in Arkansas is any measure of effectiveness and value, then on behalf of my colleagues, partners, and allies, in Arkansas and across the country, all engaged in the larger “America’s Forests” project, I confirm today the absolute value of a federally-supported emphasis, with enhanced and accelerated funding, on America’s forests, on America’s timber and wood industries, and on America’s timber and wood innovation initiatives – to the greater good of our society and our nation.

Thank you.