



September 19, 2025

The Honorable Bruce Westerman
House Natural Resources Chair
202 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-0404

Mr. Westerman,

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) is a procedural statute that provides the framework for assessing and publicly disclosing the environmental impacts of major federal actions. Originally intended to strike a careful balance between environmental protection and economic development, the NEPA review process has grown increasingly complex. Today it often produces multi-page documents, extends project timelines, and invites substantial litigation.

In 2023, Mississippi faced an extreme drought, and subsequent pine beetle infestation, which led to the loss of more than 167,000 acres of pine trees—an estimated timber loss of \$96 million. Many of the state's private landowners lost entire stands of timber, thus enduring severe financial setbacks. Their primary avenue for federal assistance to combat these setbacks, the USDA's Emergency Forest Restoration Program, required compliance with NEPA. An emergency restoration program used to mitigate widespread environmental damage from a natural disaster, should obviate the need for an environmental assessment. The prolonged review process deterred many landowners from applying because they needed to act quickly to eradicate the beetle and prevent its spread to neighboring forests.

With over 19.2 million forested acres in Mississippi and 76.5 percent of those acres being owned by private non-industrial landowners, it is only a matter of time before private landowners in at least a portion of the state face setbacks again. These landowners are the ones ensuring Mississippi forests are sustainably managed and healthy for future generations. Congress must act now to narrow the scope of projects requiring NEPA review and reduce delays so these landowners will have the resources needed to keep their land forested.

Mississippi Forestry Association was founded in 1938 and is the only statewide non-profit organization dedicated to sustaining Mississippi's forests. MFA seeks to unify members of the forestry community through public affairs, communications, and education programs that promote conservation, development, and wise use of forestland and resources.

Sincerely,

Casey Anderson
Executive Director