

Forests in the Farm Coalition Ask for Improvements on Next Farm Bill

As Congress begins writing the next iteration of the Farm Bill, the Forests in the Farm Bill (FIFB) Coalition today released a set of forest-related recommendations that would improve the bill's ability to support private and family-owned forests and the benefits they provide.

Private owners own half of the forests in the U.S. These forests play an integral role in our environment, and in sustaining America's rural economies, by providing more than 50 percent of the nation's wood supply.

Programs within the Farm Bill provide private and family forest owners, in addition to farmers, with the resources to conduct conservation practices to improve wildlife habitat, protect water quality and conserve healthy forests.

The FIFB Coalition asks Congress to address, with both policy improvements and funding, six key priorities in the next Farm Bill:

- Grow jobs and rural economies through forestry;
- Conserve and enhance habitat for forest-dependent wildlife;
- Keep forests as forests;
- Address fire and forest health;
- Improve and streamline forest and conservation programs; and
- Support forest research, education, and information needs

The FIFB Coalition, which has been in existence for more than 15 years, includes more than 85 forest groups representing all aspects of the forest sector, including forest owners, conservationists, hunters, anglers, forest industry and natural resource professionals.

It is co-chaired by the American Forest Foundation, National Association of State Foresters, National Wild Turkey Federation, and The Nature Conservancy.

"While the nation's 22 million family woodland owners can and will put in their own blood, sweat, and resources into caring for their forests, many of them need a helping hand to get the work done," said Tom Martin, President and CEO of the American Forest Foundation. "Congress has made a lot of progress in previous Farm Bill iterations to help woodland owners. We are excited to work with them to expand on this, so the clean water and air, wildlife habitat, wood products, and recreation these owners provide, can continue."

"Strong support for Farm Bill forestry programs will help state forestry agencies work with landowners to conserve, project, and enhance America's trees and forests," said Bill Crapser, Wyoming State Forester and President of the National Association of State Foresters. "Forests are America's 'green infrastructure' and the backbone of rural America; these resources provide jobs, places to recreate, and many other public benefits. State Foresters look forward to working with Congress to ensure we have the strongest Farm Bill for forests yet."

"The NWTF recognizes the role that family forests play in conserving critical wildlife habitat," said Becky Humphries, CEO of the National Wild Turkey Federation. "Without the resources provided through past Farm Bills, many family landowners would be unable to achieve the full potential on their property for all the benefits that a well-managed forest provides. We look forward to working with our partners in this coalition as well as our friends in Congress to ensure that the forestry provisions in the next Farm Bill continue the tremendous track record that has been accomplished."

"Forests are vital to America for many reasons—so keeping them healthy is necessary for landowners, industries and the over half of Americans who get their drinking water from forested water sources," said Chris Topik, Director of Restoring America's Forests at The Nature Conservancy. "Forest threats are real. Stresses of drought and fire are increasing, and forests are continually being converted for other uses. This makes the Farm Bill a critical tool for America by providing needed assistance to improve the vast agricultural, range and forest lands of our nation, and provide the food, fiber and nature we all depend on."

About the Forests in the Farm Bill Coalition: *The Forest in the Farm Bill Coalition in a diverse coalition of interests, including forest owners, conservationists, hunters, anglers, forest industry and natural resource professionals, that has worked together for over 15 years to build consensus policy solutions for the Farm Bill.*