

March 18, 2020

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary of Agriculture
Washington, DC

Dear Secretary Perdue:

As you are aware, the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak is causing widespread disruption in the economy. Wood products are no exception to this. While we do not yet know how long the outbreak will last, it is urgent that the Forest Service take immediate steps to ensure that purchasers of Forest Service timber are able to weather the disruption caused by this pandemic.

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we urgently request that you take the following steps to assist our member companies as they manage this disruption:

Immediately provide every timber sale contract, timber salvage sale contract, Forest Stewardship Contract (including Integrated Resource Stewardship Contracts and Integrated Resource Timber Contracts) holder with a one-year extension pursuant to the "significant overriding public interest" (SOPI) provisions of the National Forest Management Act;

To the extent not already provided by the SOPI determination, immediately suspend periodic payments under current timber sale contracts and Stewardship Contracts for at least 90 days.

To extent practicable, release deposits and bonds on suspended timber sales to allow purchasers to conserve cash for future operations.

It is critical that the Forest Service continue to prepare and advertise new sales as well, and to allow ongoing sales that are not suspended to continue operating. The new sales will create a tranche of appropriately priced timber that reflects current market conditions.

We appreciate the efforts of the Forest Service career professionals to offer new sales, keep existing timber sales operating, and to provide contract relief as expeditiously as possible. We believe taking the above steps will help ensure that timber purchasers are not damaged by having to comply with contract provisions that no longer align with market realities. As you are aware, retaining viable forest management capacity is critical to reducing the risk of large-scale fires and insect outbreaks on the National Forests, and to the health of our rural economies.

We thank you in advance for your consideration of this urgent request.

Sincerely,

Federal Forest Resource Coalition
American Forest & Paper Association
American Walnut Manufacturers Association
Associated Contract Loggers – Idaho
Assoc. Contract Loggers & Truckers of Minnesota
Black Hills Forest Resource Association

American Forest Resource Council
American Loggers Council
Alabama Loggers Council
Associated California Loggers
Associated Oregon Loggers
California Forestry Association

Colorado Timber Industry Association
Great Lakes Timber Professionals Association
Louisiana Forestry Association
Michigan Forest Products Council
Minnesota Timber Producers Association
Missouri Forest Products Association
Montana Wood Products Association
Oregon Women In Timber
South Carolina Timber Producers Association
Southeastern Wood Producers Association
Texas Loggers Council
Washington Hardwoods Commission
Western Pallet Association

Douglas Timber Operators
Intermountain Forest Association
Louisiana Logging Council
Minnesota Forest Industries
Missouri Forest Products Association
Montana Logging Association
Northeastern Loggers' Association
Oregon Forest Industries Council
Southern Oregon Timber Industries Assoc.
Texas Forestry Association
Washington Contract Loggers Association
Western Hardwood Association