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Executive Director

600 New Hampshire Ave., NW Suite 500
Washington, DC 20037

August 30, 2018

The Honorable James E. Hubbard
Under Secretary, Natural Resources & Environment
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Washington, DC

Dear Jim:

On behalf of the over 650 member companies and more than 390,000 employees who depend on good management of our Federal Forests, we congratulate you on your confirmation as Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment. We look forward to working with you to address the myriad challenges facing our National Forests and the communities who rely on them for jobs, recreation, clean water, and wildlife.

We know you are well aware of the magnitude of the problem. Over 70 million acres of federal forests have been designated at risk from insects and disease under the 2014 Farm Bill, and forest health threats continue to increase. Back to back record fire seasons have disrupted the work of the agency, damaged valuable stands of timber, and compromised watersheds, air quality, and habitat across the West. Our Eastern National Forests are suffering too – large pine beetle outbreaks in the South, loss of early seral forests in the Lake States and Northeast. These threats don't confine themselves to the National Forests – the spillover effects are felt on neighboring State and private lands as well. In every case, active management – including commercial timber sales – can be part of the solution.

Concrete actions – moving quickly to offer economically sound timber sales, allowing flexibility in existing contracts, and taking rapid actions to recover and restore damaged forests – can create value both for the public who recreate on our National Forests and the workers who rely on National Forest timber for their livelihoods. It is imperative that the Forest Service meets its FY 2018 timber program targets and gets off to a good start on an increased FY 2019 program.

We know you understand the need for additional legislative and administrative reforms to help restore our forests and create rural prosperity. Out-of-control litigation continues to undermine the work of collaborative groups, waste millions of dollars in unnecessary bureaucratic process, and delay needed project implementation. The Forest Service has also recognized the need to streamline internal regulations through its Environmental Analysis and Decision Making (EADM)

process. We will work with you to advocate for the legal, regulatory, and policy reforms needed to improve the management and health of our federal forests.

As a former State Forester, you also understand the tremendous potential to leverage the work of partners – including States, Counties, hunting and angling groups, and other conservationists to get needed work done on the National Forests. The potential of Good Neighbor Authority has yet to be fully realized and may yet be expanded in the upcoming Farm Bill. We stand ready to work with you to strengthen these partnerships and get more work done on the ground.

Once again, congratulations on your appointment and confirmation as Under Secretary. We are confident that with your leadership, the restoration of our forests and our communities will be a high priority for the Forest Service and the entire leadership at USDA. Secretary Perdue understands that the National Forests can be working forests that help create jobs while protecting the values we all hold so dear.

We look forward to meeting with you to discuss the path forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Bill Imbergamo", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Bill Imbergamo
Executive Director