

Gully Branch Tree Farm

Earl and Wanda Barrs
465 Ruth Church Road
Cochran, GA 31014

July 19, 2017

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary of Agriculture
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

The Honorable Scott Pruitt
Environmental Protection Agency
Office of the Administrator – 1101A
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Secretary Perdue and Administrator Pruitt,

Thank you for spending time with us during your recent visit to Georgia. We were encouraged by your optimism and support for strengthening our economy and improving our environment by tapping the ingenuity and conservation ethic of people who own and steward our nation's private forests. We were especially encouraged by your commitment to work together to build a strong partnership between the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to provide an aligned vision and pathway for the future.

As conservation leaders committed to sustaining a healthy environment while providing wood for homes, buildings and products that improve family life across America, we are committed to working with you to achieve economic and environmental success through policies that strengthen the markets needed to sustain private forest ownership. During our discussion we identified a number of ideas to make this happen, including:

- Using wood to build tall and midrise buildings that reduce energy consumption, store carbon and sustain healthy forests.
- Ensuring that U.S. energy policy recognizes the full forest carbon cycle in the U.S. resulting in the carbon neutrality of biomass energy.
- Providing that wood grown in the U.S. qualifies for federal procurement programs.
- Ensuring that when government policies make reference to forest certification programs they consistently recognize all established forest certification programs (including the America Tree Farm System, the Sustainable Forestry Initiative and the Forest Stewardship Council). Currently the USDA's bio based program takes an inclusive approach but EPA and Department of Energy (DOE) policies do not.
- Investing in research and landowner assistance programs that provide forest owners information and tools that help them innovate.

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- Working with your fellow cabinet members to ensure that tax policy sustains the economic viability of long-term private and public investments in forest ownership.
- Continuing environmental education partnerships, like Project Learning Tree, 4-H and FFA that teach educators and the rising generation that good environmental and economic stewardship of our forests work hand-in-hand.

We look forward to working with you on these and other important endeavors that will strengthen the economic and environmental contributions of our privately owned forests while sustaining the millions of Americans who own, invest and work in them every day.

Sincerely,

Earl Wanda
Earl and Wanda Barrs

Gully Branch Tree Farm
National Outstanding Tree Farmers, 2009

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National Outstanding Tree Farmers, 1999

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