

Ms. Gail Kimbell, Chief  
United States Forest Service  
1401 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20250-0003

October 21, 2008

Dear Chief Kimbell,

We are writing to express support for the Community Forest and Open Space Conservation Program authorized in Title VIII, Section 8002 of the recently passed Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008. This new program will provide matching funds to help local government entities, Indian tribes, and non-profit organizations to create new community forests. It will also offer technical assistance to develop and implement management plans for each new community forest. To launch this program expeditiously and begin addressing this important national need, we encourage you to start the rulemaking process as soon as possible. We also urge you to include the Community Forests and Open Space Conservation Program in your FY2010 budget request for the U.S. Forest Service, with funding for the states to administer the program and to provide technical assistance as directed in the program authorization clearly included.

We share the agency's commitment to fostering strong public-private partnerships and encouraging coordinated forest stewardship across federal, tribal, state, local, and private forest boundaries. Community forests help achieve these goals by engaging a broader range of communities and citizens in forest conservation, stewardship, and governance. Community forests can also provide opportunities for innovative, collaborative efforts by communities to acquire and conserve forests threatened by conversion. Where situated near federal lands, community forests can create new opportunities for federal land managers to dialogue with local communities on shared stewardship objectives and to collaborate across boundaries leading to better landscape level management.

We also share the agency's commitment to reconnecting America's youth with our forests. Community forests, in many areas situated close to schools and community centers, give young people and their parents and teachers convenient access to forests that can become a natural classroom and playground. Expanding the number of community forests across the nation will help develop a broader appreciation for the importance of our country's forests among youth and Americans of all ages.

We realize there are many current demands on the U.S. Forest Service given the variety of issues facing our nation's forests and landowners. A strong investment in the new Community Forest and Open Space Conservation Program will help the agency fulfill its mission by directly conserving key lands and energizing more Americans to play a leadership role in conservation and stewardship of the forested landscape. We encourage you to make this important new program a priority over the next few months and to include it as part of the agency's FY2010 budget. Thank you for your consideration of this request, and please do not hesitate to contact any of us for more information.

Sincerely,

Brian L. Houseal  
Executive Director  
Adirondack Council  
Albany, NY 12210

Alice Ewen Walker  
Executive Director  
Alliance for Community Trees  
College Park, MD 20740

Deborah Gangloff  
Executive Director  
American Forests  
Washington, DC 20005

Rita Neznok  
Vice President, Public Affairs  
American Forest Foundation  
Washington, D.C. 20036

Caitlin Love Hills  
National Forest Program, Director  
American Lands Alliance  
Washington, DC 20001

Kevin Colburn  
National Stewardship Director  
American Whitewater  
Missoula, MT 59802

April E. Johnston  
Conservation Director  
American Wildlands  
Bozeman, MT 59715

Jonathan P. LaBonté  
Executive Director  
Androscoggin Land Trust  
Auburn, Maine 04212

Fergus Lea  
Chair  
Androscoggin River Watershed Council  
Bethel, ME 04217

Susan Arnold  
Director of Conservation  
Appalachian Mountain Club  
Boston, MA 02108

Sandy Batty  
Executive Director  
Association of New Jersey Environmental  
Commissions  
Mendham, NJ 07945

Jim Shallow  
Conservation and Policy Director  
Audubon Vermont  
Huntington, VT 05462

Larry Lloyd  
Conservation Specialist  
Berks County Conservancy  
Reading, PA 19601

Gary Burnett  
Executive Director  
The Blackfoot Challenge  
Ovanda, MT 59823

Valerie True  
Coalition Coordinator  
Blue Ridge Forever  
Asheville NC 28801

Tom Parker  
Owner  
Buck Creek Guide Service  
Swan Valley, Montana 59826

Joan Karpf  
Chair  
Carroll Conservation Commission  
Twin Mountain, NH 03595

Todd Schulke  
Forest Policy Analyst  
Center for Biological Diversity  
Tucson, AZ 85702

Josh Pollock  
Executive Director  
Center for Native Ecosystems  
Denver, CO 80202

Phil Chang  
Program Administrator  
Central Oregon Intergovernmental Council  
Redmond, OR 97756

Ceal Smith  
Director & Science Advisor  
The Citizens for San Luis Valley Water  
Alamosa, CO 81101

Ryan Demmy Bidwell  
Executive Director  
Colorado Wild  
Durango, CO 81302

Mary Cox  
Executive Director  
Communities Committee  
Baltimore, MD 21217

Dan Sakura  
Director of Real Estate  
Conservation Fund  
Arlington, Virginia 22209

Dave Werntz  
Science and Conservation Director  
Conservation Northwest  
Bellingham, WA 98225

George Weir  
Chair  
Consulting Foresters Association of  
Vermont  
Newfane, VT 05345

Cate Litvack  
Executive Director  
Crossroads of the American Revolution  
Association  
Princeton, NJ 08542

Fay Muir  
President  
Croton Watershed Clean Water Coalition,  
Inc.  
Bedford, NY 10506

Kate Hartnett  
Vice Chair of Planning Board  
Deerfield Conservation Commission and  
Open Space Committee  
Deerfield, NH 03037

Maribeth Beetham  
Director of Legislative Affairs  
Defenders of Wildlife  
Washington D.C. 20036-4604

Scott Greacen  
National Forest Program Coordinator  
Environmental Protection Information  
Center  
Arcata, CA 95521

Peter Rostenberg  
Fishkill Ridge Caretakers, Inc.  
Fishkill, NY 12524

Anthony Henry Smith  
Fishkill Ridge Community Heritage  
Poughkeepsie, NY 12601

Carol Daly  
President  
Flathead Economic Policy Center  
Columbia Falls, MT 59912

Lynn Forester  
Consulting Forester  
Forest\* Care  
East Dummerston, VT 05346

Howard Gross  
Executive Director  
The Forest Guild  
Santa Fe, NM 87504

Davis Govatski  
Chairman  
Friends of Pondicherry  
Jefferson, NH 03583

Peter Rostenberg  
Organizer  
Friends of Quaker Brook Haviland Hollow  
Watershed  
Fishkill, NY 12524

Emily Platt  
Executive Director  
Gifford Pinchot Task Force  
Portland, OR 97205

Craig Kenworthy  
Conservation Director  
Greater Yellowstone Coalition  
Bozeman, MT 59771

Ben Rose  
Executive Director  
The Green Mountain Club  
Waterbury Center, VT 05677

Dan Kilborn  
Chair  
Green Mountain Division, New England  
Society of American Foresters  
New England Region

Nancy Anderson  
Hogback Mountain Conservation  
Association  
Marlboro, VT 05344

Andrew T. Chmar  
Executive Director  
Hudson Highlands Land Trust  
Garrison, NY 10524

Rebecca McLain  
Policy Analyst  
Institute for Culture and Ecology  
Portland, OR 97228

Brad Redlin  
Director, Agricultural Program  
Izaak Walton League of America  
St. Paul, MN 55104

David Govatski  
Chairman  
Jefferson Conservation Commission  
Jefferson, NH 03583

Kimberly Baker  
Forest and Wildlife Protection Coordinator  
Klamath Forest Alliance  
Orleans, CA 95556

Betsy Kerlin  
Land Conservation Coordinator  
Land Conservancy of Adams County  
Gettysburg, PA 17325

Mike Petersen  
Executive Director  
The Lands Council  
Spokane, WA 99201

Russell Shay  
Director of Public Policy  
Land Trust Alliance  
Washington, DC 20036

Paul Carlson  
Executive Director  
Land Trust for the Little Tennessee  
Franklin, NC 28744

Martha Hill  
Chair  
Littleton Conservation Commission  
Littleton, MA 01460

Jim Mitchell  
Executive Director  
Mahoosuc Land Trust  
Bethel, ME 04217

Christopher St. John  
Executive Director  
Maine Center for Economic Policy  
Augusta, ME 04330

Ali Freedlund  
Forest Practices Program  
Mattole Restoration Council  
Arcata, CA 95521

Carly Walker  
Rural Landscape Scientist  
Missoula County Rural Initiatives  
Missoula MT 59802

Glenn Marx  
Executive Director  
Montana Association of Land Trusts  
Whitehall, MT 59759

John W. Lea  
Director of Land Preservation  
Montgomery County Lands Trust  
Lederach, PA 19450-0300

Jay McLaughlin  
Executive Director  
Mt. Adams Resource Stewards  
Glenwood, WA 98619

Musconetcong Mountain Conservancy  
Hunterdon County, New Jersey

Marge Josephson  
President  
Naromi Land Trust  
Sherman, CT 06784

Jay Farrell  
Executive Director  
National Association of State Foresters  
Washington, D.C. 20001

Julie Sibbing  
Senior Resource Specialist  
National Wildlife Federation  
Reston, VA 20190

Darrel Pendris  
Executive Director  
National Woodland Owners Association  
Vienna, VA 22180

Lynn Lyford  
Executive Director  
New England Forestry Foundation  
Littleton, MA 01460

Carol Andrews  
Executive Director  
New Hampshire Association of  
Conservation Commissions  
Concord, NH 03301

Richard A. Minard, Jr.  
President and CEO  
New Hampshire Audubon  
Concord NH 03301

Eric Stiles  
Vice President for Conservation and  
Stewardship  
New Jersey Audubon  
Bernardsville, NJ 07924

George P. Howard Jr.  
Director of Conservation  
New Jersey State Federation of Sportsmen's  
Clubs  
Trenton, NJ 08650

Nathan Newcomer  
Associate Director  
New Mexico Wilderness Alliance  
Albuquerque, NM 87125

Mary Jeanne Packer  
Executive Director  
New York Forest Owners Association  
Watkins Glen, NY 14891

Robert K. Davies  
New York State Forester  
New York State Department of  
Environmental Conservation  
Albany, NY 12233-4250

Edward Goodell  
Executive Director  
New York/New Jersey Trail Conference  
Mahwah, NJ 07430

Rob Davies  
Vice Chair  
Northeast State Foresters Association  
Concord, NH 03302

George Gay  
Executive Director  
Northern Forest Alliance  
Stowe, VT 05672

Mo Hartman  
Program Director  
Northwest Connections  
Swan Valley, MT 59826

Kathy Skafidas  
Executive Director  
Orange Environment  
Goshen, NY 10924

Ella F. Filippone  
Executive Director  
Passaic River Coalition  
Warren, NJ 07059

Jeff Green  
Organizer  
PlanPutnam.org  
Kent Cliffs, NY 10512

Sandra Brawders  
Executive Director  
Professional Logging Contractors of Maine  
Fort Kent, ME 04743

Janet Burnet  
Executive Director  
Ramapo River Watershed Intermunicipal  
Council  
Ramapo, NY 10901

Warren C. Gaskill  
Managing Partner  
Rapid Improvement Associates, LLC  
Black Earth, WI 53515

Elyse Salazar  
Forest Committee Chair  
Rocky Mountain Chapter--Sierra Club  
Silverton, CO 81433

Michelle Decker  
Executive Director  
Rural Action  
Trimble, OH 45783

Hilary White  
Director  
Sheep Mountain Alliance  
Telluride, CO 81435

Johnny Sundstrom  
Founder/Coordinator/President  
Siuslaw Institute  
Deadwood, OR 97430

Robin O'Hearn  
Executive Director  
Skylands CLEAN, Inc.  
Ringwood, NJ 07456

Jane A. Difley  
President/Forester  
Society for the Protection of New  
Hampshire Forests  
Concord, NH 03301

Randy Carpenter  
Land Use Planner  
Sonoran Institute  
Bozeman, MT 59715

Ben Gregg  
Executive Director  
South Carolina Wildlife Federation  
Columbia, SC 29204

Carl Silverstein  
Executive Director  
Southern Appalachians Highland  
Conservancy  
Asheville, NC 28801

Maia Enzer  
Policy Program Director  
Sustainable Northwest  
Portland, OR 97205

Anne Dahl  
Executive Director  
Swan Ecosystem Center  
Condon, MT 59826

Patsy Wooters  
Chair  
Torne Valley Preservation Association  
Hillburn, New York 10931

Lawrence M. Kelly  
Executive Director  
Tri-County CAP  
Berlin, NH 03570

Kathy DeCoster  
Director of Federal Affairs  
The Trust for Public Land  
Washington, DC 20003

Hugo Liepmann  
President  
Vermont Coverts: Woodlands for Wildlife,  
Inc.  
Middlebury, VT 05753

Steven Sinclair  
Director of Forests  
Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and  
Recreation  
Waterbury, VT 05671

Gil Livingston  
President  
Vermont Land Trust, Inc.  
Montpelier, VT 05602

Jamey Fidel  
Forest and Biodiversity Program Director  
Vermont Natural Resources Council  
Montpelier, VT 05602

Tom Hark  
President  
Vermont Youth Conservation Corps  
Richmond, VT 05477

Henry "Hank" Swan  
Chairman  
Wagner Forest Management, LLC  
Lyme, NH 03768

Nils D Christoffersen  
Executive Director  
Wallowa Resources  
Enterprise, OR 97828

Mark Taylor  
President  
Washington Council of Trout Unlimited  
Issaquah, WA 98201

Ceal Smith  
Director & Science Advisor  
Water Protection Coalition  
Alamosa, CO 81101

Martus Granirer  
President  
West Branch Conservation Association  
New City, NY 10956

Brian P. Gallagher  
Public Policy & Government Relations  
Coordinator  
Western Pennsylvania Conservancy  
Pittsburgh, PA 15222

Michael A. Francis  
Director, National Forests Program  
The Wilderness Society  
Washington, DC 20036

Sloan Shoemaker  
Executive Director  
Wilderness Workshop  
Carbondale, CO 81623

Ann Davis  
Manager  
Woods Without Gile, LLC  
Wilmot, NH 03287