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Greetings;

The American Forest Foundation, the parent organization of the Tree Farm System, is always an active player in Washington D.C. legislative issues that have an impact on family forest owners. They have a staff that tracks any legislation introduced in Congress that will affect forest landowners and advocates on their behalf. Tom Martin, foundation president, and others, often appear before congressional committees to explain and educate the legislators on the issues important to family forest owners.

As members of the Tree Farm System you have this voice in Washington D.C. Undoubtedly New Mexico Tree Farmers reflect the national mood of very low confidence in our politicians serving in Washington, but no doubt Tree Farmers recognize the importance of having a voice in Congress. Like it or not, many of the issues being decided in Washington D.C. can have a direct impact on family forest landowners.

As part of this effort the AFF recently sponsored a “fly-in” where Tree Farmers from all over the country went to Washington to directly express their concerns on some pending legislation to members of Congress. David Old, a New Mexico Tree Farmer participated in this event. We thank David for going and representing New Mexico. On the back page is his account of the event.

Hello Tree Farmers!

Born and raised on the Viveash Ranch, north of Pecos NM, I became a Tree Farmer in '98 after moving to the mountain to re-start a sawmill business based on a careful harvest of an amazing timber stand. Surprise! The Viveash Fire of 2000 came along, incinerating 40,000 acres including the eastern half of our ranch. Seventeen Million Board Feet of timber up in smoke in three days.

We cut and sawed burned wood for two years, looked around and said 'Oh My!, what shall we do?'. We now operate Old Wood LLC in Las Vegas flooring from New Mexico trees. www.douglasfirfloors.com tells that story well.

Moving ahead to 2010, as President of the NM Forest Industry Association and a Tree Farmer, I was invited to the American Forest Foundation's fly-in in DC this spring.

The AFF's goals are wholly in line with my concerns as a Tree Farmers:

*The estate tax is a primary concern. We all need to call our Reps regarding the coming increases in taxes and lowered exemption levels. Farms and ranches are sold wholesale every year to pay the taxes by heirs with no way out. We need to unite to fight this one.

*Green Building Certifications: basically FSC has excluded us and our cause. AFF wants to see Tree Farm materials Certified as Green. Let's work on this one too!

*Education: Project Learning Tree is a great place to put our way of life before the young public.

*Forest Biomass: we produce clean energy that can help put America back to work.

The NMFIA and the NM Tree Farm have recently 'shaken hands' and agreed to cooperate on these matters so I look forward to meeting you as we work to maintain what is truly an American lifestyle. www.nmfia.org for more.

