

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 14, 2013

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Chairwoman
Senate Committee on Agriculture,
Nutrition and Forestry
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Agriculture,
Nutrition and Forestry
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Stabenow and Ranking Member Cochran:

I write to express support for provisions subject to the Farm Bill conference negotiations that are critical to Wisconsin's forest products industry and to the state's private forest owners.


Foresters and loggers who manage working forests have long maintained their forest roads and infrastructure according to best practices that account for ecosystem impacts and preserve access to the forest. Now these timber professionals face uncertainty resulting from court holdings that require the EPA to consider run-off from forest roads as a point source pollutant. I urge you to provide regulatory certainty for forest owners by retaining Section 12323 of the House-passed bill, which would provide clarity to forest owners and the EPA and allow the agency to continue to treat forest roads as they historically have been treated under the Clean Water Act.

Timber professionals and conservation groups in Wisconsin have combined forces to preserve the ecological value and long-term productivity of working forests. In order to do so, they rely on stewardship contracting authority, which needs a long-term extension following its expiration at the end of September. Stewardship contracts are designed to deliver management solutions over many years, and therefore I support the Senate bill's treatment of this extension, which would provide longer-term certainty for these contracts.

Finally, I urge you to preserve strong funding for conservation programs that are critical to private woodland management. In Wisconsin, modest investments in conservation practices from the Conservation Reserve Program, the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, and the Conservation Stewardship Program have leveraged private resources to deliver benefits to watershed quality and wildlife habitat, all while improving the quality of the forest health.

Thank you for your attention to these policy components which are critical to managing our forest ecosystems and ensuring the stability of the forest products industry.

Sincerely,



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator