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June 7, 2004

The Honorable Charles Taylor  
Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on Interior  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Fax: (202) 225-9069

Dear Mr. Chairman,

The Minnesota Society of American Foresters is disappointed to learn that the Interior Subcommittee's mark includes language to cancel funding for the Forest Land Enhancement Program (FLEP). This program helps family forest landowners provide public benefits from their forests, including wildlife habitat improvement; timber production; soil, water, and air quality improvement, and wetland and riparian restoration. It also serves to maintain and enhance the forestland base while preserving the aesthetic quality and recreational opportunities that family forests offer.

Nearly 50% of Minnesota forestlands are in private ownership. These forest lands are important to the economic and social well being of our great state. FLEP provides an incentive for these landowners to invest in long-term practices that maintain the health and productivity of the forest lands. The funding FLEP provides directly to landowners encourages investment in practices that benefit not only the forest but the wildlife resources, water quality, and aesthetic values as well. Without this funding it will become increasingly difficult to encourage landowners to make long-term commitments to their forest land.

**We ask that you strike the language that cancels funding for the program from the full Appropriations Committee mark so that family forest owners can continue to receive assistance under the FLEP program.**

The public benefits provided by this program are important for all Americans. We thank you for restoring funding to this program to assist the Nation's family forest owners.

Sincerely,

Bruce Cox  
Policy Chair

