

# Ensuring the Future of New England's Forest-Based Economy

## *Community ~ Economy ~ Conservation*

### Urgent Funding Requests from the New England Forest Policy Group – FY 2015

As you work to complete the business of the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress, we respectfully urge the New England Congressional Delegation to work together to ensure the security of programs that support our forests. As the most forested region in the country, New England's economy is heavily dependent on our forests, and our communities also depend on these forests for their health and well-being. Businesses in the timber, forest-products, recreation, outdoor equipment, and tourism industries depend directly on long-term access to and use of the region's forests as do the 60 million people across New England that are within a day's drive and enjoy our forests for a multitude of reasons.

Earlier this year 87 forestry businesses, recreation interests, and conservation organizations across New England joined forces to submit testimony to the House and Senate Appropriations Committees in support of the programs that sustain our forested landscapes and their benefits for our region, its communities, and its future. And on behalf of that informal collective known as the New England Forest Policy Group we reiterate this vital priority and request that the New England Delegation make every possible effort to support the programs highlighted in that testimony and summarized in this letter.

Unlike other parts of the nation, New England's forests are 80% privately owned, mostly in relatively small parcels, and landowners are facing profound challenges from rising land prices, escalating development pressures, and other threats that have the potential to significantly diminish this irreplaceable landscape. The programs listed below are increasingly vital to our economy and our communities, and yet continue to be weakened just when we collectively need them the most.

Funding LWCF at no less than \$350 million dollars in the final FY 2015 Interior and Environment appropriations bill is critical. At levels less than this, important New England conservation priorities like Whip-Poor-Will Woods in Connecticut; Whitecap Mountain in Maine; National Scenic Trail projects in New Hampshire, Vermont, and Massachusetts; and protection of the Silvio O. Conte National Wildlife Refuge in Connecticut, Massachusetts, Vermont, and New Hampshire are at risk. We continue to maintain that LWCF should be reauthorized and a mechanism must be found that will dedicate to LWCF its full Authorized level of \$900 million per year without delay. We strongly encourage you to find a path to accomplish reauthorization and full funding in the closing days of the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress. If that path can not be found, it should be among the highest priorities for the 114<sup>th</sup> Congress, as it has strong bipartisan support and is fundamental to our region's economy and identity. Every State in New England benefits greatly from the LWCF and Forest Legacy Programs.

As Congress finalizes appropriations for the Federal Government at the close of the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress, it is critically important that New England's unique needs are supported through adequate funding for all land conservation, land-owner support, and community and business development programs that support the region's forests. The programs described and listed below are essential to ensuring that New England's forests continue to be strong economic engines for all of us.

Thank you for your support of New England's forested heritage and economic future. The stakes continue to be high. We look forward to working closely with you to ensure that our forested landscape and associated economy continue to receive bipartisan support and funding.

## Programs of Critical Importance to New England FY10 – FY15 NEFPG Proposed

Interior Programs	FY10 Enacted	FY11 Enacted	FY12 Enacted	FY13 Enacted (Sequester)	FY14 Enacted	FY15 House	FY15 Senate	FY15 NEFPG Request
LWCF	453	301	322.9	306.3	306.04	152	340	350
* Forest Legacy	79	52.9	53.4	50.6	50.965	24.198	53	53
* Federal	277.9	176.9	199.5	189.2	167.42	48.802	186.886	186.88
* State Grants	40	40	45	42.7	48.1	46	48.117	48.117
Community Forests		1	2	1.91	2.00	2	2	5
NAWCA		37.4	35.6	33.8	34.145	34.145	34.145	34.145
SWG	90	61.9	61.4	58.2	58.695	58.698	58.695	58.695
RTCA	8.872	8.872	9.943	9.575	9.9	9.9	9.9	9.9
UCF		32.04	31.33	29.94	28.04	28.04	28.04	28.04
CFHM		48.82	40	38.23	45.655	45.655	45.655	45.655
FSP		32.55	28.81	27.54	22.398	29	23.036	29
Woody Biomass Utiliz.						5	15	15
<b>Agriculture Programs</b>	<b>FY10 Enacted</b>	<b>FY11 Enacted</b>	<b>FY12 Enacted</b>	<b>FY13 Enacted</b>	<b>FY14 Enacted</b>	<b>FY15 House</b>	<b>FY15 Senate</b>	<b>FY15 Request</b>
EQIP	1180	1238	1400	1318.8	1350	1391	1350	1391 <sup>1</sup>
WHIP	85	85	50	68.8				
WRP (ACEP)	308	300	290	275.5	378	365	425	425 <sup>2</sup>
FRPP	150	175	150	189.8				
CSP	No acreage Limitation	649	768.5	1036.8	1079	1340	1449	1449
RBEG (RBDG)	38.7	38.7	24.3	22.4	26	20	25.568	26.568 <sup>3</sup>
RBOG	2.63	2.47	2.37	2.193				
BIGLP	1322	1045	822	821	958	880	958	958
<b>Commerce Programs</b>	<b>FY10 Enacted</b>	<b>FY11 Enacted</b>	<b>FY12 Enacted</b>	<b>FY13 Enacted</b>	<b>FY14 Enacted</b>	<b>FY15 House</b>	<b>FY15 Senate</b>	<b>FY15 Request</b>
CELCP		11	3	2.8	0			0
NBRC	1.5	1.5	1.49	1.41	5	3		5

### **Programs of key importance to New England's Forests**

#### ***Interior Appropriations***

- Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) – Conserves land for National Forests, Seashores, Parks, Refuges, etc. through the Federal Program. Also enables states to conserve and improve recreation assets based upon their own prioritization through the State Grants Program. The Forest Legacy Program helps private landowners retain ownership of forestlands through easements. Together, LWCF ensures the forests, open spaces, and recreational assets of New England are enhanced and protected in perpetuity.
- Cooperative Forestry Programs – (UCF, CFHM, FSP) Cooperative Forestry Programs fund landowner services provided by State Foresters and Cooperative Extension Foresters including: technical services to forest landowners, educational services in urban areas and communities, developing forest stewardship plans, providing training for natural resource professionals, increasing public awareness of forest resources in rural and urban areas, and more.
- Other Interior Programs – (NAWCA, SWG, CFOSCP) North American Wetlands Conservation Act fund conservation of important wetland parcels. State and Tribal Wildlife Grants fund State Wildlife agencies

<sup>1</sup> EQIP now includes WHIP

<sup>2</sup> WRP & FRPP now included in new Agricultural Conservation Easement Program

<sup>3</sup> RBEG & RBOG now included in new Rural Business and Cooperative Grants

to support their efforts conserving non-game species and fund states' Wildlife Action Plans to help prioritize conservation activities. The Community Forest Program supports community purchase of forestlands for local ownership and use. The Community Wood Energy Program, created for New England in the last federal Farm Bill, is now included in the Woody Biomass Utilization Grants. It will support a growing movement to replace New England's dependence on heating oil with wood from sustainably managed, local forests that can create 140,000 jobs, reinvest \$4.5 billion in the regional economy, and displace 1.14 billion gallons of imported fossil fuel each year.

- In recent years, fighting wildfires has significantly impacted Forest Service funding. We support efforts to resolve this situation, such as the Wildfire Disaster Funding Act (WDF), that can reduce the significant adverse impact of fire fighting costs on other unrelated and important programs and we urge the delegation to do all it can to address this issue.

#### ***Agriculture Appropriations***

- Land-owner support programs through NRCS (WHIP, FRPP, DSP, WRP, EQIP) – NRCS' natural resources conservation programs help people reduce soil erosion, enhance water supplies, improve water quality, increase wildlife habitat, and reduce damages caused by floods and other natural disasters. This helps landowners throughout New England improve their working lands for the future while protecting our shared natural resources. *Many Farm Bill Programs have been consolidated in recent years; updated Programs are accounted for in the Appropriations Charts above.*
- Rural Development Programs (RBEG, RBOG, RBDG, BIGLP) – The USDA Rural Development programs support rural communities and enhance quality of life for rural residents by improving economic opportunities, community infrastructure, environmental health, and the sustainability of agricultural production. To support rural regional economic prosperity, USDA Rural Development provides job training and business development opportunities for rural residents, including cooperative business development, community economic development, and strategic community planning.

#### ***Commerce Appropriations***

- Regional Development – (NBRC) The Northern Border Regional Commission was created in the 2008 Farm Bill for the Northern Border states of ME, NH, VT, and NY. It supports community development, infrastructure, recreation, and conservation projects in these states.

As you work to finalize FY 15 Appropriations, we strongly urge you to do all you can to work toward full funding for the LWCF Program and strong funding for Cooperative Forestry, Rural Development, and Landowner Support programs that are critical to our forest-based and rural economies in New England.

After years of funding reductions, our most vital federal programs have been greatly weakened. We respectfully urge you to do all you can to ensure ample funding for the programs that provide the most benefit to New England's important forestry, tourism, and outdoor recreation sectors and make New England such a special place to live. The long term future and strength of our forests and forest-based economy depend on it.

We're counting on you to help ensure that our New England states have the tools needed to remain the best states in the nation for people to live, recreate, and do business. Your assistance at this critical time will be instrumental to our success in this shared goal.

We greatly appreciate your efforts and are ready to support your hard work in any ways we can.

Most sincerely,

New England Forest Policy Group Steering Committee:  
Appalachian Mountain Club  
Highstead Foundation  
Trust For Public Land  
The Nature Conservancy