

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

18 March, 2016

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Chairman
Appropriations Subcommittee on the Department of the Interior, Environment, and Related
Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Udall
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on the Department of the Interior, Environment, and Related
Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Murkowski and Ranking Member Udall:

As you consider the 2017 appropriation bill, we respectfully request that the Subcommittee on the Department of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies fund the State and Private Forestry (S&PF) function of the U.S. Forest Service at \$302,500,000. This funding level is an increase of \$68.5 million above the President's FY 2017 budget, and would provide needed support to promote woody biomass technology and development and wildfire risk reduction. In addition, we suggest that the Subcommittee add report language to ensure that these additional funds are directed to woody bioenergy research and development.

Increasing the use of woody biomass for energy production is another way to support forest restoration and wildfire reduction efforts, while also creating jobs and keeping dollars in the community. This is especially true for rural communities with limited energy choices, high unemployment, and abundant forest resources. Woody biomass from forest management on millions of acres of U.S. forest, which would normally be burned in open piles or landfilled, can instead generate a renewable low-carbon alternative to fossil fuels for heating and powering homes, schools, and businesses.

Despite the potential for wood energy to improve forest health and reduce wildfire risk by providing higher value markets for forestry residues, woody biomass consumption for energy only increased 4% between 2002 and 2013 and remains limited by technical and market barriers. The additional funding that we are respectfully requesting would provide:

- \$15 million for a grant program for heat and electricity projects using woody biomass, including direct energy projects, combined heat and power, small-scale gasification, innovation in the transportation of woody biomass, and projects addressing the challenges of retrofitting existing electricity generation facilities, such as coal-fired facilities, to use biomass;
- \$20 million to fund woody biomass heat and electricity installations in new or existing Federal facilities, to remain available until expended;
- \$5 million to create and deliver a program to provide free assistance for wood energy projects and education, training, and resources related to wood energy systems for buildings, to be referred to as the Wood Energy Works Program;
- \$1 million towards an interagency wood energy policy report that evaluates Federal bioenergy policies and make recommendations on how Congress can better support wood energy sectors in the U.S.;
- \$20 million to create a program that establishes interdisciplinary teams at the State level that are interested in expanding woody biomass heat and electricity applications, to be called the Statewide Wood Energy Teams; and
- \$7.5 million for the regional technical assistance program to install woody biomass systems for heating, cooling, or electricity.

This funding will advance the S&PF objective to provide technical and financial assistance for forest health management. We also suggest the inclusion of the following report language to encourage the USFS to support woody biomass energy technology and development:

Of the \$302,500,000 for State and Private Forestry, the committee appropriates \$68.5 millions for wood-derived bio-power and thermal bioenergy. Within such funds, the U.S. Forest Service is directed to use its existing authorities (P.L. 113-79, title VIII, Sect. 8201) to provide not less than \$15 million for woody biomass heat and electricity project grants, including direct energy projects, combined heat and power, small-scale gasification, innovation in the transportation of woody biomass, and projects addressing the challenges of retrofitting existing electricity generation facilities, such as coal-fired facilities, to use biomass, \$20 million for woody biomass-derived thermal energy system installations in Federal facilities, \$5 million to create and deliver a program to provide free assistance for wood energy projects and education, training, and resources related to

wood energy systems for buildings, to be referred to as the Wood Energy Works Program, \$1 million to enable an interagency wood policy study and report, \$20 million to create a program that establishes interdisciplinary teams at the State level that are interested in expanding woody biomass heat and electricity applications, to be called the Statewide Wood Energy Teams, and \$7.5 million to support a regional technical assistance program for woody biomass energy system installation.

Additional appropriations for these programs would fill gaps in the woody biomass energy projects and development funded by the U.S. Forest Service. Thank you for your consideration of these requests.

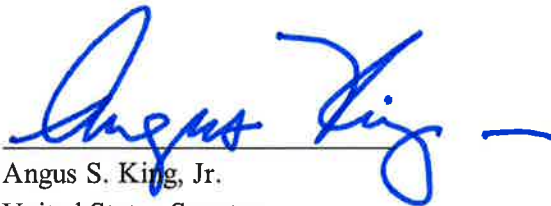
Sincerely,



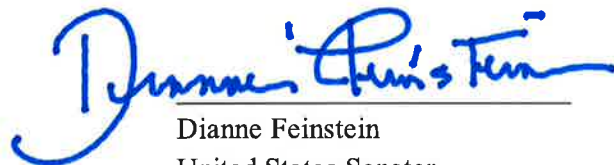
Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
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