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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3311

February 12, 2013

Chief Tom Tidwell
US Forest Service
1400 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20250-0003

Dear Chief Tidwell:

We are writing to express our concern about the U.S. Forest Service's (USFS) recently announced plans for the new ranger station in Mars Hill, N.C., and its apparent inconsistency with USDA Secretary Vilsack's March 30, 2011, commitments around promoting wood as a green building material.

While we applaud Forest Service efforts, and those of all government agencies, to build and maintain government facilities in the most energy efficient, environmentally conscious manner, the undersigned object to the sole use of the LEED system. LEED, or Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, is a private green building rating system that discourages the use of domestically produced wood products which are important to the state of North Carolina. While the USFS green building policy announced in March 2011, allows use of both LEED and Green Globes, using solely the LEED system for this project sends a signal that North Carolina wood products, and the use of wood from all credible forest certifications systems, will not be an important consideration in the construction of this building, in conflict with your recent commitments.

The USFS has, and should continue to be, the leader in understanding the environmental and economic impacts and benefits of using wood, as Secretary Vilsack called for in 2011. The USFS should have used this as an opportunity to promote its own science around wood as a green building material/ to help others understand the opportunities for using wood.

In the USDA's release from March 30, 2011, Secretary Tom Vilsack stated, "Wood has a vital role to play in meeting the growing demand for green building materials. Forest Service studies show that wood compares favorably to competing materials."

For a state like North Carolina, where the forest products industry is the 4th largest manufacturing industry in the state and where 61% of our land base is forested, we would hope the USFS would work with our state to promote this North Carolina industry while helping our North Carolina forest owners, large and small, keep their forests healthy.

We ask that you strongly consider rectifying this situation and find opportunities to use alternative green building rating systems other than the LEED standard that encourage wood use, especially North Carolina's locally-grown wood. We also ask that, through this project, you demonstrate your commitment to encouraging and promoting wood products in green building and the science behind it, as the Secretary called for in 2011.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



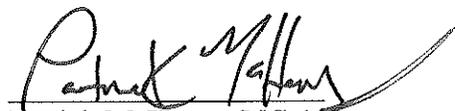
Mark Meadows (NC-11)
Member of Congress



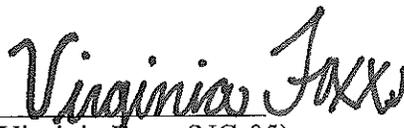
Richard Burr
United States Senator



Mike McIntyre (NC-07)
Member of Congress



Patrick McHenry (NC-10)
Member of Congress



Virginia Foxx (NC-05)
Member of Congress



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