

ROGER F. WICKER

MISSISSIPPI

ARMED SERVICES

BUDGET

COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION

ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS

RULES AND ADMINISTRATION

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

SUITE 555

DIRKSEN SENATE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

(202) 224-6253

www.wicker.senate.gov

March 29, 2016

Gina McCarthy, Administrator
Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Administrator McCarthy:

We are writing to express our concerns with the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Interim Recommendations for Specifications, Environmental Performance Standards, and Ecolabels for Federal Procurement. Specifically, these recommendations could exclude many responsibly-sourced, American-grown forest products in the lumber category.

We disagree that federal agencies should only purchase products certified to the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) standard. Across the United States, more than 82 million acres of forestland are certified to either the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) or the American Tree Farm System (ATFS). This represents more than 70 percent of all certified forests in the United States. These forests provide a renewable timber resource, clean water, wildlife habitats, and numerous other public benefits. They also support thousands of jobs.

During a hearing by the House of Representatives Committee on Agriculture, you indicated that FSC was chosen over SFI and ATFS because it is third-party certified. However, SFI and ATFS are also verified by independent and rigorous third-party audits, ensuring full compliance to both standards. Excluding SFI and ATFS from EPA's recommended standards allows the federal government to pick "winners and losers" among a handful of environmental standards.

EPA's interim recommendations are inconsistent with other guidelines listed on its website as well as with numerous other federal agencies. For example, the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) BioPreferred Program, which sets mandatory purchasing requirements for federal agencies, fully recognizes wood products and accepts all three forest certification programs.

We ask that EPA continue to work with USDA's Forest Service and other federal agencies to fully analyze which standards to recognize for wood and lumber, and make the recommendations available for public comment before finalizing.

During this process, we encourage EPA to recognize wood products that are certified to SFI and ATFS for lumber and wood purchasing in its federal procurement recommendations.

cc: Thomas L. Tidwell, Chief, U.S. Forestry Service

Sincerely,



U.S. Senator Roger F. Wicker



U.S. Senator Amy Klobuchar



U.S. Senator Thad Cochran



U.S. Senator Bill Cassidy, M.D.



U.S. Senator Angus S. King, Jr.



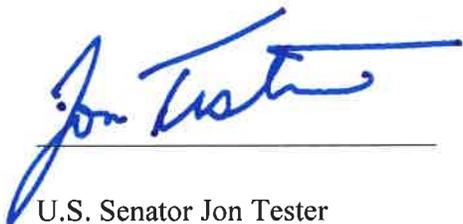
U.S. Senator Joe Manchin III



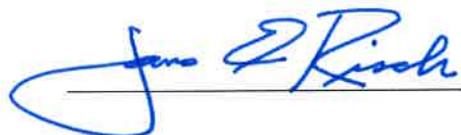
U.S. Senator John Boozman



U.S. Senator Mike Crapo



U.S. Senator Jon Tester



U.S. Senator James E. Risch