

**Future Farm Bill Forum Comments**  
**September 15, 2005**  
**Husker Harvest Days, Grand Island Nebraska**  
**Dr. Scott Josiah, State Forester & Director, Nebraska Forest Service, Univ. of NE**

Good afternoon Mr. Secretary. My name is Dr. Scott Josiah, State Forester and Director of the Nebraska Forest Service, which is part of the University of Nebraska. My comments pertain to Farm Bill policy (Q 4 & 5) affecting privately owned family forests and conservation tree plantings.

Family forests and conservation tree plantings are enormously important. Forty two percent of our nation's forest lands are family-owned. Across the Central states, these forests are well-integrated into the agricultural landscape, either naturally or intentionally. They produce critically important ecosystem services and economic benefits, both on- and off-site, that benefit nearly all Americans. They filter nearly two thirds of the nation's drinking water, sequester huge amounts of carbon, and provide wildlife habitat. As windbreaks and buffers, they arrest soil erosion, clean the air, and increase crop yields. They provide nearly one half of the nation's roundwood, and are engines for rural economic development.

Specifically the upcoming Farm Bill needs to:

1. Provide financial and technical assistance that encourages private landowners to sustainably manage their forestlands. The Forest Land Enhancement Program (FLEP), uniquely addresses this need, but is chronically and severely underfunded.
2. Develop policies that foster market-driven conservation by linking conservation with rural economic development programs. Working trees in forests and in conservation plantings produce enormously valuable ecosystem services (clean water and air, carbon storage) while also producing commercially valuable products (wood and non-wood products, biofuels, etc.) that produce income and drive rural economic development.
3. Support programs that conserve working rural lands such as CRP and EQIP, and preserve and enhance the forestry- and tree-related components of these programs.
4. Support initiatives that develop wood-based bioenergy.
5. Support enhanced community fire protection on family-owned forest lands to reduce fuel loads, improve growth and health, and reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire.
6. Support landowner educational programs that will help owners of family forests engage in sustainable forestry practices, and to measure program success.

Mr. Secretary, thank you for this opportunity to provide you with forestry-related information on the upcoming Farm Bill, and look forward to your support of USDA forestry programs.

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