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Question1: We are Gregory & Sharon Overturf. We own 42 acres of forest land in the Black Hills of South Dakota. We're proud to have owned this land since 1970 and it has been passed down for two generations. Our family currently manages the forest land to produce timber, forage for livestock and viable populations of wild game. We are complying with the South Dakota Best Management Practices to protect soils and water quality, and manage the vegetation to decrease the woodlands susceptibility to wildfire, insects and disease.

About two thirds of forests in the U.S. (or about 400 million acres) are family owned, and two thirds of those lands are in parcels under 1,000 acres owned by families like ours. But we're facing serious obstacles and we need help from the Administration and Congress for the next Farm Bill.

Besides being part of our family legacy, our forests provide so many benefits. We supply: wood to the local sawmill, clean air and water, habitat for fish and wildlife, and recreation opportunities for our friends and neighbors. These benefits are a byproduct of the hard work and passion that we put into our land.

All of these benefits depend on our ability to keep our forestlands and a decision to pass the land on to the next generation. Things like loss of markets and other financial and regulatory burdens make it hard to be able to afford to keep the land. Some of our neighbors have even sold their forests for development. Others are having trouble finding an heir willing to take on the challenge of owning forest land. Obstacles we deal with every day include: pests and pathogens, invasive species, and the risk of severe fire.

Most of us take more pride and pleasure than profit from our lands. However, when we do harvest our land, we supply wood to mills in our area which is turned into wood products we all use. However, times are changing. Many companies have downsized or moved overseas. We now have to compete with international exports which often come from countries without environmental regulations. Supporting sustainable managed family owned forests like ours means keeping our forests as forests.

In my experience/ on my land, I'm especially concerned that funding will not be provided through the Forest Land Enhancement Program so that we can effectively manage our lands. The USDA Forest Service (primary adjacent landowner) is restricted under the NEPA (analysis paralysis) process to the extent that diseases and insects from public lands have been infecting my timber stand. Without proper management of adjacent public lands and with lack of funding, it will result in my not being able to meet my management objectives.

We need Congress's help in providing us with more funding and technical assistance; provisions to give us the resources we need to resist selling our land. Currently, less than 1% of Farm Bill programs are directed to us as private forest landowners. The 2007 Farm Bill reauthorization provides a chance to improve this number.

In the 2007 Farm Bill we need to see more priority given to forestry programs. We've been left out of past Farm Bills and we need support to be able to keep our land in the family and continue the good work that we've been doing on our land.

Question2:

Question3:

Question4:

Question5:

Question6: