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Question1:

Question2:

Question3:

Question4: Farm policy can best achieve conservation and environmental goals by incorporating forest stewardship and management into agricultural outcomes. In the northeast and southern U.S., non-industrial/private family forests play large roles in protecting water quality, air quality, and wildlife habitat while conserving recreational areas and aesthetics. Funding to help develop and implement forest management plans on these private forests will help keep large forested blocks under single ownership, prevent further forest fragmentation, and limit land conversion from forests to other non-forest, non-agricultural uses. If new farm policies begin to incorporate the benefits of forest ownership and stewardship into their overall goals, forestland owners would have more incentive to sustainably manage their trees and society as a whole would benefit from the services provided by healthy forests.

Question5: Federal Rural and Farm programs can provide effective assistance in rural areas in the following ways:

1) Continue to fund essential programs such as Rural Development through Forestry, an Economic Action Program underwritten by the USDA Forest Service. This program provides vital dollars used to help wood-based businesses remain competitive in an increasingly cut-throat global economy. By providing awards to non-profits and state governments, the USDA Forest Service has made tremendous improvements in regional forest economies by investing in re-tooling projects for companies competing with the Chinese, new biofuel/alternative energy technologies, and marketing schemes to promote products using wood grown sustainably in the United States.

2) Provide states with tax/cash incentives to encourage family forestland owners to keep their forestland growing and producing economic and health benefits. Forestland owners must receive tax breaks in order to conserve their tracts of land. Higher property taxes inevitably lead to land division, increased development, impervious surfaces, and water quality degradation.

3) Invest more heavily in the Forest Land Enhancement Program (FLEP) to provide forestland owners with dollars to improve their standing timber and implement their plan prescriptions.

4) Focus on water. Well-managed forests and farms protect water better than any other means. The Federal government has been a leader in helping states to realize the importance of farms and forests in the protection and conservation of clean water. The time to invest heavily in those conservation measures is now.

Question6: Funding for research in forests has continually been left out of past Farm Bills. Dollars to fund studies on the relationship between timber harvesting and long-term water quality are needed as are dollars for studies on: invasive species' impact on trees and water quality, how urban sprawl impacts water quality by converting forests to developed land at the urban-rural interface, taxation burdens on private forestland owners and how those burdens translate into forest conversion.

In addition, many traditional agriculture products come from forests: maple syrup, mushrooms, various nuts, firewood, etc. Providing funding for a well-developed marketing schematic for forest products should be a consideration in the next Farm Bill.