



Mississippi Forestry Association

# Legislative Bulletin

The Voice of Forestry

Volume 2009 Number 4

February 24, 2009

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## MFA Member Question of the Week

**Q:** Will the stimulus package benefit family forest owners?

**A:** Yes. Thanks to work of the American Forest Foundation's grassroots action network and many others, forest landowners will benefit from \$250 million in funding for USDA Forest Service State and Private Forestry programs in the Economic Stimulus package. This funding can be used for a broad range of USDAFS and state forestry programs focused on activities such as hazardous fuels, forest health, ecosystem improvement, and biomass utilization.

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## MFA and MLA to Lobby Congress

The Coalition for Transportation Productivity (CTP), the Americans for Safe & Efficient Transportation (ASET), and the Agricultural Transportation Efficiency Coalition (AgTEC) are jointly hosting a Washington, DC fly-in to lobby key members of Congress in support of increased gross vehicle weight limits on properly equipped vehicles March 31-April 1. The timing is critical as efforts to begin drafting legislation to be included in the next Highway Reauthorization bill will soon begin.

CTP's proposal to allow six axle vehicles to carry 97,000 pounds on interstate highways will reduce transportation costs, improve productivity and reduce vehicle miles traveled without compromising safety. MFA and Mississippi Loggers Association representatives will be asking members of Mississippi's Congressional delegation to contact House Transportation Chairman Oberstar (D-MN) to express their support for the proposal so it will be included in the Chairman's Highway Reauthorization Bill draft. For more information please visit: [www.transportationproductivity.org](http://www.transportationproductivity.org).

**Why Increase Truck Weights?** As an economic stimulus, Congress should enact a national increase in gross vehicle weight to 97,000 pounds on federal interstate highways on vehicles equipped with an additional axle. Shippers across the nation are willing to pay a fee for this benefit on units equipped with the additional axle to be invested in bridge repair. Benefits of increased truck weights align with Congressional and Obama Administration goals and include: improved highway safety, decreased carbon emissions, reduced use of and dependence on fossil fuels, less road congestion, increased manufacturing and agriculture efficiency, improved global competitiveness, and increased capital investment in vehicle upgrades. The efficiencies produced from this policy improvement would help save countless manufacturing and agriculture sector jobs.

## 2008 MFA Forestry Bills Tracking List

### House Bills

HB 503 Beaver control programs; increase amount that counties may expend for.

HB 803 Eminent domain; restrict to direct public use.

HB 881 Sixteenth section lands; allow agricultural lands to be reclassified or released again in final year of term or re-lease.

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Additionally, the Stimulus includes funding and tax incentives for renewable energy produced from forest biomass, which AFF also supported. AFF, working through our grassroots network of Tree Farmers, other family forest owners, forestry associations, and other partners, has been leading efforts to secure this funding, with letter writing and call in campaigns, advocacy work on Capitol Hill, and coalition letters. To learn more about our activities or to sign up to receive future action alerts on our advocacy efforts, visit <http://familyforestation.org> and <http://treefarmssystem.org/actionalerts/>.

Links: MFA  
Government Affairs

<http://www.msforestry.net/governmentaffairs.php>

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HB 1024 Sales tax; reduce rate on sales of certain farm implements and logging/pulpwood equipment and repair parts.

HB 1132 Harvest permits; extend repealer on law authorizing and revise maximum weight limit and vehicles for which may be issued.

HB 1381 Scenic streams; designate a certain portion of the Escatawpa River.

## Senate Bills

SB 2128 Highway; provide weight exemption for commodities transported from ports on Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway.

SB 2230 Eminent domain; restrict to direct public use.

SB 2606 Sales tax; revise rate on sales of farm tractors and certain farm equipment and parts and labor.

SB 2654 Harvest permits; extend repealers on Department of Transportation's authority to issue to certain vehicles.

SB 2659 State-funded buildings; energy performance regulations shall apply to buildings constructed with CDBG funds.

SB 2947 Sixteenth section forest lands; authorize management services by private forester subject to approval by the Secretary of State and Forestry Commission.

SB 3190 Bonds; authorize issuance for certain state highway and infrastructure projects.

## Wood approved for Green Building

The [American National Standards Institute's \(ANSI\)](#) first-ever approval of a green building rating system, the [National Green Building Standard](#), is a major boost to the environmental and energy efficiency goals of green building and validates wood's role in reaching those goals, according to [American Forest & Paper Association](#) AF&PA President and CEO Donna Harman.

For 90 years ANSI has overseen the U.S. private sector's voluntary standardization system to coordinate the creation, promulgation and use of thousands of standards for every U.S. industry. ANSI also provides programs that assess conformance, notably to the globally-recognized ISO 9000 (quality) and ISO 14000 (environmental) management systems. ANSI approval of the National Green Building Standard, developed by the National Home Builders Research Center, means that the Standard has been developed according to rigorous policies for openness, balance, consensus, and due process.

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## Contact Us

[E-Mail MFA Government  
Affairs](mailto:info@msforestry.net)

601.354.4936

601.354.4937 FAX

620 N. State St.

Suite 201

Jackson, MS 39202

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"ANSI's approval is a major step forward. Builders, remodelers, and developers who were waiting for high-quality technical resources that have achieved the national consensus and certainty that comes with an ANSI-accredited standard, now have it, and I believe that we can expect to see green building practices become increasingly mainstream," said Harman.

"For the forest products industry this is significant because the National Green Building Standard's strong recognition of wood's environmental benefits validates what we have long said—wood is ideal for green building. Wood is renewable, traps and stores carbon, is less energy-intensive to produce and manufacture than non-bio-based materials like steel and concrete, and is energy efficient when used in building products," said Harmon.

"We're hopeful that this development, together with AF&PA's continued advocacy, will help spread the message of wood products' significant contribution to energy conservation and sustainability goals that are at the heart of what our nation is trying to accomplish," said Harmon. More information on how to build green with wood can be found [here](#). More information on the National Green Building Standard can be found [here](#).

## Private Forests are Key to Offsetting Carbon Emissions

A new coalition representing virtually all sectors of the forest community—the forest products industry, conservation and wildlife groups, foresters, private forest owners, academics, and carbon finance groups—today called upon Congress to include private working forests as a central part of federal climate change policy. The American Forest Foundation, along with The Trust for Public Land launched the diverse group a year ago.

Drue DeBerry, Senior Vice President for Conservation for the American Forest Foundation said "In the end, it was too important not to agree on core principles. There was unanimous agreement on the urgency of stepping up forests' capacity to remove carbon emissions from the atmosphere. It's cost effective, it's ready now, and it works—while at the same time conserving water, wildlife and flood control properties of forests." continued on p. 4



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U.S. forests and forest products already capture and store 10 percent of all U.S. carbon emissions produced each year, but the new coalition called the Forest-Climate Working Group (FCWG) says they can trap even more if landowner incentives and forest-carbon offsets are put in place. "This is something we can ramp up right now and that is exactly what policy makers want to see," said Jad Daley, Director, Northern New England Programs for The Trust for Public Land. "We don't need to wait for new technologies, and we have enough experience with carbon markets to make it work." He added that conserving forests "buys us time we desperately need to make the long-term shift to a low-carbon economy," but said that forests shouldn't be taken for granted.

The forest products industry and forest landowners in the U.S. are well-positioned to make a significant contribution toward addressing climate change. The group's recommendations could help forest owners by rewarding them for management practices that capture and store carbon and thereby offset industrial carbon emissions. "Private working forests are one of our nation's most effective tools for addressing climate change," said Dave Tenny, president and CEO of the National Alliance of Forest Owners. "The essential role of working forests should be at the forefront of consideration in crafting climate change solutions."

Among the 30 members of FCWG are many of the nation's largest and best-known conservation groups including the Environmental Defense Fund, National Wildlife Federation, Defenders of Wildlife, and The Wilderness Society, along with co-sponsors, The Trust for Public Land and the American Forest Foundation. State-based conservation entities, such as Western Pennsylvania Conservancy and Wildlife Mississippi, are also on board.

Robert Bonnie, Vice President/Land Conservation and Wildlife for the Environmental Defense Fund, cites a host of conservation benefits of this approach. "Private lands provide a majority of the habitat for most species on the U.S. endangered species list. Forests provide not just wildlife habitat, but fresh drinking water, flood control, clean air, and recreation for communities." He added that forest corridors for passage of wildlife will be increasingly critical as species adjust and migrate in response to climate change.

Industry supporters of FCWG range from some of the largest operators like Weyerhaeuser, MWV, and Plum Creek to trade groups like the American Forest & Paper Association, Bi-National Softwood Lumber Council, Hardwood Federation, and the National Hardwood Lumber Association. Industry and carbon finance groups like C21, LLC, say that forests and forest products provide an important solution in helping to address climate change, and that they want to see this solution recognized in climate legislation.

Also supporting the FCWG recommendations are representatives of foresters and forestry groups, including the Society of American Foresters, Forest Guild, Council of Western State Foresters, Maine Forest Service, California Forestry Association, and the National Association of State Foresters. Michael Goergen of Society of American Foresters said "Focusing forest landowners' strong stewardship ethic toward maximizing carbon storage is not difficult, but they will need economic and technical assistance. If the financial incentives are not there, we can envision a future without many of the small operators that exist today."

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Scientific research and academic entities supporting the FCWG include the Pinchot Institute for Conservation, National Association of University Forest Resource Programs (NAUFRP), and the Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences. "Research shows this is a very real opportunity that may not last long if we keep losing our forests," said Dr. Hal Salwasser, Dean of the College of Forestry, Director of the Oregon Forest Research Laboratory of Oregon State University, and President of the NAUFRP.

"It's not been easy, but remarkably we all ended up on the same page. Representatives of the entire forest community have united behind one consensus platform that recognizes we can't afford to lose any of our forests' capacity to store carbon and instead must increase it," said Eric Palola, Senior Director, Forests for Wildlife, National Wildlife Federation.

When asked about the FCWG prospects in Congress, co-chair Drue DeBerry said "Well, we'll see if the bipartisan cooperation of our coalition can carry forward in Congress. But we've already had a lot of interest in the Senate and we do expect this to be a central piece of forthcoming legislation. We've done the heavy lifting and now they have a chance to make this work." He added, "I really don't think we would have won agreement from such a diverse group if we had not all come to the table with a profound sense of urgency."

## **Renewable Electricity Standard**

Congress is gearing up to consider this year a federal Renewable Electricity Standard (RES) formerly called a Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS). Senator Bingaman (D-NM), Chairman of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, has proposed a bill that would mandate 20% of the nation's electricity be produced from renewable sources by 2021. Given the forest products industry's leadership in renewable energy, AF&PA supports the goals of RES but we oppose federal RES proposals that do not recognize existing renewable energy producers and provide equal treatment with new market entrants. Senator Bingaman is planning to have the bill considered by the Committee in March. In advance of that activity, we are working with member companies and key Senators to explain industry concerns with the RES proposal and manners in which its negative consequences can be mitigated.

*AF&PA Grassroots Update--February, 2009*