

3 March 2010

The Honorable Charlie Crist
PL 05 The Capitol, 400 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001

Dear Governor Crist:

The Coalition of Natural Resource Societies, currently composed of the American Fisheries Society, The Society for Range Management, the Society of American Foresters, and The Wildlife Society, represents over 35,000 natural resource professionals, working in the United States and around the world to promote responsible management of our natural resources.

The Coalition is writing to you today to stress the value of natural resource professionals. Dedicated foresters, biologists, range managers, and others, are working in your state to ensure healthy forests and rangelands and abundant fish and wildlife populations, as well as other natural assets important to human and environmental health. In addition, our use of forests, water and rangelands would not be possible without professionals whose job is to inform wise resource use. They also help mitigate natural disasters and reduce the effects of environmental degradation. While we understand that current economic conditions require states to cut operating costs and increase revenues, these activities should not be at the expense of your state's natural resources.

Natural resources are essential components of our daily lives. From food and water to medicine and the homes we live in, humans depend on natural resources. Soil and water resources enable us to grow crops, while forests filter water and wetlands provide nurseries essential for the juvenile stages of many fish species. There have been numerous attempts to quantify the economic value of services provided by natural resources. One study (Nature, May 1997) found that ecosystems provide \$33 trillion of services every year. Well-trained natural resource professionals are critical to the oversight and responsible management of ecosystem health, as well as to ensure the availability of resources for an ever-growing human population.

Well-managed natural resources also provide income to your state. According to the 2006 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation, 87.5 million U.S. residents fished, hunted, or watched wildlife in 2006. They spent over \$122 billion pursuing these recreational activities, contributing to millions of jobs in industries and businesses that support wildlife-related recreation. Funds generated by licenses and taxes on hunting and fishing equipment pay for many of the conservation efforts in this country and conserved lands provide increased fishing, hunting, and wildlife-associated recreation opportunities. In 2006, these activities generated \$8,115,284,000 in revenue for Florida.

Forests provide carbon storage, clean water systems, wildlife habitat, wood and paper products and aesthetic beauty enjoyed by many. Rangelands help stabilize soil and are an important place to graze livestock, as well as provide critical wildlife habitat. In addition, forests and rangeland create jobs and generate income for industry and states. The U.S. forest products industry generates more than \$200 billion a year in sales and employs more than 1 million people. In Florida, this industry employs 32,139 people and generates \$140,000,000 in annual tax payments to the state.

The Coalition of Natural Resource Societies thanks you for your support of the resource professionals working in your state. In these difficult economic times, please do not overlook the many benefits your state received from a well-trained cadre of natural resource professionals.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Donald C. Jackson", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Don Jackson
President
American Fisheries Society

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeff Moseley", with a large, stylized "J" and "M".

Jeff Moseley
President
Society for Range Management

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Goergen", with a stylized "M" and "G".

Michael Goergen
Executive Vice President/CEO
Society of American Foresters

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bruce Leopold", with a stylized "B" and "L".

Bruce Leopold
President
The Wildlife Society

cc: Michael W. Sole, Secretary, Department of Environmental Protection
Charles H. Bronson, Commissioner, Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services