Todd McNew  
Florida Representative, Conservation Acquisition  
The Conservation Fund  
1700 N Atlantic Avenue #253  
Cocoa Beach, FL 32931  

Dear Mr. McNew:

Please accept this letter of support from the National Forests in Florida for the inclusion of the proposed San Pedro Forest conservation easement, which is part of the larger Suwannee Working Woodlands project proposal, in the USDA US Forest Service FY18 Forest Legacy Program.

The Suwannee Working Woodlands proposal, if funded, would help to connect approximately 50,000 acres of existing conservation lands in North Florida providing significant ecosystem and water quality benefits to the Region. The San Pedro Forest easement would also potentially eliminate one of the largest gap areas on the Florida National Scenic Trail (FNST), a congressionally designated National Scenic Trail which, when complete, will span 1,300 miles across the State of Florida from Big Cypress National Preserve in the Everglades to Gulf Islands National Seashore in the Panhandle. The Suwannee Working Woodlands proposal will provide a viable, connected, scenic alternative for the FNST through the State’s largest privately-owned roadless area and a unique opportunity for recreationists to view a working landscape in rural North Florida.

Thank you for your support in increasing access to, and stewardship of, the Florida National Scenic Trail and the natural resources it encompasses. For more information on management and resources of the FNST, please visit our website at www.fs.usda.gov/fnst, or contact Shawn Thomas, FNST Program Manager, at shawncthomas@fs.fed.us with any further inquiries.

Sincerely,

KELLY RUSSELL  
Forest Supervisor, National Forests in Florida
November 16, 2016

Scott Stewart
National Forest Legacy System Coordinator
Michael Murphy
Region 8 Forest Legacy Program Coordinator
VIA Email: sstewart@fs.fed.us, mwmurphy@fs.fed.us

RE: Gulf Coastal Longleaf Initiative, Wakulla Caves Forest and Suwannee Working Woodlands Forest Legacy Projects, Florida

Gentlemen:

Audubon Florida, the state’s oldest and largest conservation organization offers strong support for the Gulf Coastal Longleaf Initiative, Suwannee Working Woodlands and Wakulla Caves Forest Legacy proposals.

The 3,290 acre Gulf Coastal Longleaf project is part of the very important, larger 205,000 acre effort to preserve under easement ecologically valuable segments of the remaining longleaf pine habitat in the United States. This habitat is one of the most imperiled in Florida, and absent programs such as Forest Legacy, we stand to lose even more of this habitat due to the pressures of development and agricultural conversion of forest lands.

Likewise, Audubon supports the purchase of an easement over the 16,535 acre San Pedro Forest, which is part of the larger 23,000 acre Suwannee Working Woodlands project that includes the Mallory Swamp - Match Tract, within the very important forested Suwannee region of Florida.

Lastly, the 1,276 acre acquisition of the Wakulla Caves Forest would provide a corridor between a National Forest, State Park and State Forest; protect globally significant karst features; promote longleaf restoration, recreational opportunities and habitat protection for many rare species within an area close to our capital city and favored by developers.

We hope that these land purchases will be recommended under the Forest Legacy Program for FY 2018.

Sincerely,

Charles Lee
Director of Advocacy
October 3, 2016

Mr. Scott Stewart, National Forest Legacy Program Coordinator  
Mr. Michael Murphy, Region 8 Forest Legacy Program Coordinator  
USDA Forest Service

Re: Letter of Support for Suwannee Working Woodlands, Forest Legacy Project

Dear Mr. Stewart and Mr. Murphy,

On behalf of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission’s (FWC) Landowner Assistance Program, I am writing to express support for the Suwannee Working Woodlands Forest Legacy proposals in Florida. This project totals 42,438 acres in three locations in the Suwannee River basin, including 19,178 acres in Gilchrist County, 16,536 acres in Madison County, and 6,724 acres in Lafayette County, Florida. The Gilchrist County property is within 1.25 miles of the Santa Fe River, a unique resource that includes river-to-sink and major springs, while the Lafayette County property abuts other state owned conservation lands within 1.5 miles of the Suwannee River. The Madison County parcel is mainly wet flatwoods, but contains a large section of Strategic Habitat Conservation Area, and provides an important contribution to an ecological greenway connecting the Suwannee River corridor to conservation lands further west.

While there are no rare species occurrences recorded on these properties, they provide significant landscape connections and help protect groundwater flowing in the numerous springs in the Suwannee and Santa Fe River watersheds. This project would help to ensure protection of water quality, as well as the many unique and imperiled species that characterize the aquatic caves, springs and spring runs in this region of Florida.

The Landowner Assistance Program supports the conservation and restoration efforts within the Suwannee Working Woodlands Forest Legacy Project. We kindly encourage your consideration of this proposal.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Joseph Prenger  
Landowner Assistance Program Administrator  
Office of Conservation Planning Services  
Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission  
620 South Meridian Street, MS 5B5  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1600  
Office phone: (850) 410-5268
SUWANNEE RIVER WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

May 11, 2016

Liz Adams
Director of External Relations
The Lyme Timber Company LP
23 South Main Street, 3rd Floor
Hanover, NH 03755

Re: Letter of Support for Application to Rural Family Lands Protection Program, Madison County

Dear Ms. Adams:

The Suwannee River Water Management District is pleased to provide a letter of support related to Lyme Gilman Forest Company LLC’s application for inclusion in the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services’ Rural Family Lands Protection Program (RFLP). This letter is to provide my recommendation in support of the application.

The proposed property is within the Suwannee River Water Management District’s Potential Project Area and Florida Forever Project Boundary. Additionally, the property holds water resource values in its potential to install ditch blocks and/or conduct hydrologic restoration of natural drainage features from the existing drainage canals in and on the property boundaries to retard drainage of the San Pedro Bay headwaters for the coastal rivers system. The installation of ditch blocks and natural drainage restoration would prolong the residence time of rain and surfacewater in the system and enhance recharge to the Floridan aquifer.

Furthermore, the project meets the Florida Forever measures and public purposes of enhancing the coordination and completion of land acquisition projects, using alternatives to fee-simple; increasing the protection of Florida’s biodiversity at the species, natural community and landscape levels; protecting, restoring and maintaining the quality and natural functions of land, water and wetland systems of the state; ensuring that sufficient quantities of water are available to meet the current and future needs of natural systems and the citizens of the state; increasing natural resource-based public recreation or educational opportunities; preserving significant archaeological or historic sites; and increasing the amount of forestland available for sustainable management of natural resources.

If you need any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Noah Valenstein
Executive Director

NDV/thm
SUWANNEE RIVER WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

May 11, 2016

Liz Adams
Director of External Relations
The Lyme Timber Company LP
23 South Main Street, 3rd Floor
Hanover, NH 03755

Re: Letter of Support for Application to Rural Family Lands Protection Program, Lafayette County

Dear Ms. Adams:

The Suwannee River Water Management District is pleased to provide a letter of support related to Lyme Lafayette Forest Company LLC's application for inclusion in the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services' Rural Family Lands Protection Program (RFLP). This letter is to provide my recommendation in support of the application.

The proposed property is within the Suwannee River Water Management District's Potential Acquisition Area and borders the District's 32,000-acre Mallory Swamp on its western border. The property holds water resource values in its potential to install ditch blocks and/or conduct hydrologic restoration of natural drainage features from the existing drainage canals in and on the property boundaries to retard drainage of the Mallory Swamp system. The installation of ditch blocks and natural drainage restoration would prolong the residence time of rain and surface water in the system and enhance recharge to the Floridan aquifer.

Furthermore, the project meets the Florida Forever measures and public purposes of enhancing the coordination and completion of land acquisition projects, using alternatives to fee-simple; increasing the protection of Florida's biodiversity at the species, natural community and landscape levels; protecting, restoring and maintaining the quality and natural functions of land, water and wetland systems of the state; ensuring that sufficient quantities of water are available to meet the current and future needs of natural systems and the citizens of the state; increasing natural resource-based public recreation or educational opportunities; preserving significant archaeological or historic sites; and increasing the amount of forestland available for sustainable management of natural resources.

If you need any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Noah Valenstein
Executive Director

NDV/thm

Water for Nature, Water for People
9225 CR 49 • LIVE OAK, FLORIDA 32060 • TELEPHONE 386/362-1001 • 800/220-1066 • FAX 386/362-1056
mysuwanneeriver.com
Mr. John E. Browne  
Land Programs Administrator,  
Florida Forest Service  
The Conner Building  
3125 Conner Blvd., Room 236  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1650

Dear Mr. Browne,

It is our understanding that Lyme Gilman Forest Company, LLC and Lyme Lafayette Forest Company, LLC are interested in selling conservation easements on its 16,536-acre Gilman Forest and its 6,274-acre Lafayette Forest tracts located in Madison and Lafayette counties, respectively. We also understand that Lyme and The Conservation Fund have applied to the Florida Forest Service’s Rural and Family Lands Protection Program for these easements, and may apply to other similar programs in the future.

We are sending this letter as a private mill owner/forestry contractor, located in Madison, FL. (1-2 sentences about your company/background) Our company produces, on average, more than 20,000,000 (units) of plywood per year, currently employing 80 people. As a large potential purchaser of raw lumber from these tracts, we enthusiastically support the sale of this easement to ensure the future likelihood of a local, steady lumber supply.

Large-scale ownership of generally contiguous blocks of timberland is at risk in Florida. Florida’s forestland is being converted to other uses at a rate of approximately 240 acres per day, on average (per the Florida Forest Service). More difficult to measure, larger ownership patterns have dwindled as land is fragmented by additional smaller land sales. Larger ownerships provide the most economically efficient base for timber production; the smaller the acreage and the greater the number of landowners, the higher the costs to produce timber. Continued subdivision and parcelization of large timber land tracts makes it increasingly difficult and less economic to conduct large-scale commercial forestry operations. We fully understand the damage to our collective business that results from increasing numbers of conversions to other uses and property subdivisions, which would be prohibited or limited under the easements.

The sale of these easements would help maintain a timber production-focused land base with sufficient harvest volumes to supply logging contractors and mills with a reliable and steady source of timber; and further enable Lyme and future owners to steadily employ forest managers, loggers, and support mill workers. All total, these workers number more than 80,000 people in (mostly northern) Florida, contributing more than $16 billion annually to the State’s economy.

In summary, we believe that the sale of this easement will help to ensure that our natural and economic resources are conserved and wisely utilized for future generations - helping to ensure the future prosperity of our region.

cc:  
Todd McNew, Conservation Acquisitions, The Conservation Fund

Herbert Thomas — North Fla. Timber Dealers Inc.  
President
Mr. John E. Browne  
Land Programs Administrator,  
Florida Forest Service  
The Conner Building  
3125 Conner Blvd., Room 236  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1650

Dear Mr. Browne,

It is our understanding that Lyme Gilman Forest Company, LLC and Lyme Lafayette Forest Company, LLC are interested in selling conservation easements on its 16,536-acre Gilman Forest and its 6,274-acre Lafayette Forest tracts located in Madison and Lafayette counties, respectively. We also understand that Lyme and The Conservation Fund have applied to the Florida Forest Service's Rural and Family Lands Protection Program for these easements, and may apply to other similar programs in the future.

We are sending this letter as a forestry contractor, located in Perry, FL. M. A. Rigoni Inc. is a full service timber harvesting company. We have been working in our local forests since 1960. Our company produces, on average, more than 585,000 tons of unprocessed forest products per year, currently employing directly 48 people along with indirectly 40-50 more with our sub-contractors. As a large potential purchaser of raw lumber from these tracts, we enthusiastically support the sale of this easement to ensure the future likelihood of a local, steady lumber supply.

Large-scale ownership of generally contiguous blocks of timberland is at risk in Florida. Florida's forestland is being converted to other uses at a rate of approximately 240 acres per day, on average (per the Florida Forest Service). More difficult to measure, larger ownership patterns have dwindled as land is fragmented by additional smaller land sales. Larger ownerships provide the most economically efficient base for timber production; the smaller the acreage and the greater the number of landowners, the higher the costs to produce timber. Continued subdivision and parcelization of large timber land tracts makes it increasingly difficult and less economic to conduct large-scale commercial forestry operations. We fully understand the damage to our collective business that results from increasing numbers of conversions to other uses and property subdivisions, which would be prohibited or limited under the easements.

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In summary, we believe that the sale of this easement will help to ensure that our natural and economic resources are conserved and wisely utilized for future generations - helping to ensure the future prosperity of our region.

cc: Todd McNew, Conservation Acquisitions, The Conservation Fund

M. A. Rigoni  
2365 North US 19, Perry FL 32347  
Business Development, Richard Schwartz
Mr. John E. Browne  
Land Programs Administrator,  
Florida Forest Service  
The Conner Building  
3125 Conner Blvd., Room 236  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1650

Dear Mr. Browne,

It is our understanding that Lyme Gilman Forest Company, LLC and Lyme Lafayette Forest Company, LLC are interested in selling conservation easements on its 16,536-acre Gilman Forest and its 6,274-acre Lafayette Forest tracts located in Madison and Lafayette counties, respectively. We also understand that Lyme and The Conservation Fund have applied to the Florida Forest Service’s Rural and Family Lands Protection Program for these easements, and may apply to other similar programs in the future.

We are sending this letter as a private mill owner/forestry contractor, located in Dixie Co., FL. (1-2 sentences about your company/background) Our company produces, on average, more than 14,500 tons (units) of pine per year, currently employing 17 people. As a large potential purchaser of raw lumber from these tracts, we enthusiastically support the sale of this easement to ensure the future likelihood of a local, steady lumber supply.

Large-scale ownership of generally contiguous blocks of timberland is at risk in Florida. Florida’s forestland is being converted to other uses at a rate of approximately 240 acres per day, on average (per the Florida Forest Service). More difficult to measure, larger ownership patterns have dwindled as land is fragmented by additional smaller land sales. Larger ownerships provide the most economically efficient base for timber production; the smaller the acreage and the greater the number of landowners, the higher the costs to produce timber. Continued subdivision and parcelization of large timber land tracts makes it increasingly difficult and less economic to conduct large-scale commercial forestry operations. We fully understand the damage to our collective business that results from increasing numbers of conversions to other uses and property subdivisions, which would be prohibited or limited under the easements.

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In summary, we believe that the sale of this easement will help to ensure that our natural and economic resources are conserved and wisely utilized for future generations - helping to ensure the future prosperity of our region.

CC: Todd McNew, Conservation Acquisitions, The Conservation Fund

[Signature]

PRESIDENT Knothole Timber LLC.
October 13, 2016

Mr. Scott Stewart, National Forest Legacy Program Coordinator  
Mr. Michael Murphy, Region 8 Forest Legacy Program Coordinator  
USDA Forest Service  
Via: sstewart@fs.fed.us and mwmurphy@fs.fed.us

RE: Letter of Support for FY18 Forest Legacy Projects in Florida

Dear Mr. Steward and Mr. Murphy,

On behalf of the Defenders of Wildlife, please accept this letter supporting the awarding of Forest Legacy project funding in FY18 to the following Florida projects:

- Gulf Coastal Longleaf Initiative
- Wakulla Caves Forest
- Suwannee Working Woodlands

These tracts are important components of the Florida Ecological Greenways Network. Acquisition of these tracts will help conserve the network of wildlife habitats in the western and eastern Florida panhandle and help achieve our vision for a continuous, landscape-level habitat network extending from the Suwannee River to the Perdido River (please see the map on the following page. Priority 1 and 2 critical linkages in the Network would be conserved through acquisition of the Gulf Coastal, Wakulla Forest and the Suwannee Working Woodlands’ Lyme Gilman and Lyme Lafayette tracts. These projects are essential to connecting Florida’s core habitat areas in Northwest and Northern Florida ensuring wide-ranging animals such as the endemic Florida black bear survive in the future. The Gilchrist tract would conserve a lower priority connection in the statewide greenway network.

These projects will enable restoration of upland long-leaf pine forests enhancing the habitat of the gopher tortoise whose burrows provide habitat for at least 60 vertebrate and 302 invertebrate species including the indigo snake. Additionally, the longleaf pine – wiregrass restoration of these forests will also enhance habitat for Southeastern and Sherman’s fox squirrels, flatwoods salamander, Bachman’s sparrow, striped newt, little blue heron, snowy egret, wood stork and gulf sturgeon.

Thank you for considering the comments of the Defenders of Wildlife. We encourage the USDA Forest Service to highly rank and select these projects for funding. Please contact me at the address below if you would like additional information.

Sincerely,

Kent L. Wimmer, AICP  
Northwest Florida Representative  
1294 Avondale Way, Tallahassee, FL 32317-8451  
kwimmer@defenders.org
November 15, 2016

Todd McNew
Florida Representative, Conservation Acquisition
The Conservation Fund
1700 Atlantic Avenue #253
Cocoa Beach, FL 32931

Dear Mr. McNew:

The Florida Trail Association (FTA) develops, maintains, protects and promotes the unique Florida National Scenic Trail. Our organization supports the USDA Forest Service in Florida in their management of the FNST. We work together to provide opportunities for the public to hike, engage in outdoor recreation, participate in environmental education and contribute to meaningful volunteer work.

The Florida National Scenic Trail (FNST) is a congressionally designated National Scenic Trail in the National Trails System. It is approximately 1,300 miles long and is intended to offer a continuous, permanent, non-motorized recreation opportunity for hiking and other compatible activities along the length of the Florida peninsula. It showcases the incredible biodiversity, history, and rich culture of Florida. The FNST offers many experiences that hikers cannot have on any other trail in the world.

However, the Florida Trail is far from complete. Gaps exist where users must hike along roads, and much of the trail is not permanently protected from urban encroachment, loss of access, and illegal use. These sections of the Florida Trail are in an “interim routing stage” until a more scenic and suitable option can be found. The section of the Florida Trail between Twin Rivers State Park and the Aucilla River Conservation Area represents one such high priority gap that would be helped by the proposed Suwannee Working Woodlands Conservation Easement.

**Suwannee Working Woodlands Conservation Easement**

The proposed Suwannee Working Woodlands Conservation Easement would provide a significant improvement in the connectivity of the Florida Trail in this area. It represents a substantial investment in the continuity of the FNST corridor and an important step in the long term mission to complete the FNST.
Therefore, the FTA fully supports the Suwannee Working Woodlands Conservation Easement. If acquired, the FTA will collaborate with the USDA Forest Service, in engaging public volunteers in hands-on stewardship events that will build and continue to maintain this significant section of trail. For more information on the mission of the Florida Trail Association, please visit floridatrail.org or contact Alex Stigliano, FNST Program Director, at alesx@floridatrail.org with any further questions.

Sincerely,

Carlos Schomaker
President, FTA Board of Directors
Florida Trail Association
5415 SW 13 Street
Gainesville, FL 32608
November 18, 2016

Mr. John E. Browne
Land Programs Administrator, FL Forest Service
The Conner Building
3125 Conner Blvd., Room 236
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1650

Dear Mr. Browne,

We are proud to be a proponent of the Suwannee Working Woodlands Forest Legacy FY18 proposal. This three-phase project will conserve more than 23,000 acres of working forest land in Madison and Lafayette counties, Florida.

The Suwannee River watershed is a focus area for our efforts. Culturally-renowned, the Suwannee River is one of the largest free-flowing rivers in the Southeast. Starting in Georgia’s Okefenokee Swamp, it winds 246 miles to the Gulf of Mexico near the town of Suwannee, Florida. The sale of these conservation easements will help to ensure that the natural resources of the Suwannee River basin and the greater Gulf of Mexico ecosystem will be conserved for the enjoyment and economic benefit of current and future generations.

Large-scale ownership of generally contiguous blocks of timberland is at risk in Florida. Florida’s forestland is being converted to other uses at an alarming rate. More difficult to measure, larger ownership patterns have dwindled as land is fragmented by additional smaller land sales. Larger ownerships provide the most economically efficient base for timber production; the smaller the acreage and the greater the number of landowners, the higher the costs to produce timber. Continued subdivision and parcelization of large timber land tracts makes it increasingly difficult and less economic to conduct large-scale commercial forestry operations.

In summary, we believe that this project fits with our core mission of simultaneously conserving natural resources and maintaining a strong economy for the region.

Sincerely,

Todd McNew
Conservation Acquisitions
Florida Office
September 23, 2016

Mr. John E. Browne
Land Programs Administrator, FL Forest Service
The Conner Building
3125 Conner Blvd., Room 236
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1650

Dear Mr. Browne,

It is our understanding that Lyme Gilman Forest Company, LLC and Lyme Lafayette Forest Company, LLC are interested in selling conservation easements on its 16,536-acre Gilman Forest and its 6,274-acre Lafayette Forest tracts located in Madison and Lafayette counties, respectively. We also understand that Lyme and The Conservation Fund have applied to the Florida Forest Service’s Rural and Family Lands Protection Program for these easements, and may apply to other similar programs in the future.

We are sending this letter as a private forestry contractor, located in Dixie County, FL. Our company harvests, on average, more than 75,000 tons of timber per year, currently employing 35 people. As a large potential purchaser of raw lumber from these tracts, we enthusiastically support the sale of this easement to ensure the future likelihood of a local, steady lumber supply.

Large-scale ownership of generally contiguous blocks of timberland is at risk in Florida. Florida’s forestland is being converted to other uses at a rate of approximately 240 acres per day, on average (per the Florida Forest Service). More difficult to measure, larger ownership patterns have dwindled as land is fragmented by additional smaller land sales. Larger ownerships provide the most economically efficient base for timber production; the smaller the acreage and the greater the number of landowners, the higher the costs to produce timber. Continued subdivision and parcelization of large timber land tracts makes it increasingly difficult and less economic to conduct large-scale commercial forestry operations. We fully understand the damage to our collective business that results from increasing numbers of conversions to other uses and property subdivisions, which would be prohibited or limited under the easements.

The sale of these easements would help maintain a timber production-focused land base with sufficient harvest volumes to supply logging contractors and mills with a reliable and steady source of timber; and further enable Lyme and future owners to steadily employ forest managers, loggers, and support mill workers. All total, these workers number more than 80,000 people in (mostly northern) Florida, contributing more than $16 billion annually to the State’s economy.

In summary, we believe that the sale of this easement will help to ensure that our natural and economic resources are conserved and wisely utilized for future generations - helping to ensure the future prosperity of our region.

Sincerely,

VanAernam Timber

[Signature]

Sec.
Mr. John E. Browne  
Land Programs Administrator,  
Florida Forest Service  
The Conner Building  
3125 Conner Blvd., Room 236  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1650

Dear Mr. Browne,

It is our understanding that Lyme Gilman Forest Company, LLC and Lyme Lafayette Forest Company, LLC are interested in selling conservation easements on its 16,536-acre Gilman Forest and its 6,274-acre Lafayette Forest tracts located in Madison and Lafayette counties, respectively. We also understand that Lyme and The Conservation Fund have applied to the Florida Forest Service’s Rural and Family Lands Protection Program for these easements, and may apply to other similar programs in the future.

We are sending this letter as a private mill owner/forestry contractor, located in Live Oak, FL. We are a newly established European sawmill. The mill began production in 2015 and is still hoping to increase consumption over the years. When running at full capacity, our mill produces, on average, more than 350 million board feet of lumber per year, currently employing around 350 people. As a large potential purchaser of raw lumber from these tracts, we enthusiastically support the sale of this easement to ensure the future likelihood of a local, steady lumber supply.

Large-scale ownership of generally contiguous blocks of timberland is at risk in Florida. Florida's forestland is being converted to other uses at a rate of approximately 240 acres per day, on average (per the Florida Forest Service). More difficult to measure, larger ownership patterns have dwindled as land is fragmented by additional smaller land sales. Larger ownerships provide the most economically efficient base for timber production; the smaller the acreage and the greater the number of landowners, the higher the costs to produce timber. Continued subdivision and parcelization of large timberland tracts make it increasingly difficult and less economic to conduct large-scale commercial forestry operations. We fully understand the damage to our collective business that results from increasing numbers of conversions to other uses and property subdivisions, which would be prohibited or limited under the easements.

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In summary, we believe that the sale of this easement will help to ensure that our natural and economic resources are conserved and wisely utilized for future generations- helping to ensure that our natural and economic resources are conserved and wisely utilized for future generations- helping to ensure the future prosperity of our region.

cc: Todd McNew, Conservation Acquisitions, The Conservation Fund

Shawn Marie Harrington  
Procurement Forester  
Klauser Lumber, One, Live Oak, FL
November 3, 2016

Chief Thomas L. Tidwell, Director
U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service
Sidney R. Yates Building
201 14th Street, Southwest, 4th Floor
Washington, District of Columbia 20250

RE: The Conservation Fund - US Forest Service - Forest Legacy Program

Dear Chief Tidwell:

I am pleased to provide this letter in support of the Conservation Fund’s efforts to obtain a federal grant. The goal of their proposed project, the Suwannee Working Woodlands Conservation Easement project, is to protect a more than 23,000 acre tract of land in Florida’s “woodbasket” region. I respectfully request your consideration of this organization’s application for federal funding.

Florida’s forests are located predominately in the northern part of the State, and they are being converted to other non-forest uses at an alarming rate. If funded, this conservation easement will help connect approximately 50,000 acres of existing conserved land and protect the State's largest privately-owned roadless area. Also, due to the site’s location in an aquifer recharge area, the completion of this easement will protect the region’s springs, ensuring water quality and quantity. Additionally, the Suwannee Working Woodlands are located within 65 miles of seven mills helping to employ numerous logging contractors – conservation via the easement purchase will ensure that these lands continue to help support more than 2,500 regional jobs.

Again, I encourage your consideration of this worthy cause. If I can be of further assistance in this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me at the address below.

Sincerely,

Bill Nelson

BN/jm

CC: Ms. Mary Louise Hester, Regional Director, U. S. Senator Bill Nelson
Mr. John E. Browne
Land Programs Administrator, FL Forest Service
The Conner Building
3125 Conner Blvd., Room 236
Tallahassee, FL 32399 -1650

Dear Mr. Browne,

The Longleaf Alliance is proud to be a proponent of the Suwannee Working Woodlands Forest Legacy FY18 proposal. This three-phase project will conserve more than 23,000 acres of working forest land in Madison and Lafayette counties, Florida, including several hundred acres already restored to longleaf pine. Large-scale ownership of generally contiguous blocks of timberland is under increasing threat in Florida. When land is fragmented into smaller pieces, it becomes more difficult and less profitable to manage. A strong timber economy provides more options and benefits for private landowners.

The Suwannee River flows through the heart of North Florida’s timberlands, in an area where markets for wood remain strong. Culturally-renowned, the Suwannee River is one of the largest free-flowing rivers in the Southeast. Starting in Georgia’s Okefenokee Swamp, it winds 246 miles to the Gulf of Mexico near the town of Suwannee, Florida. The sale of these conservation easements will help to ensure that the natural resources of the Suwannee River basin and the greater Gulf of Mexico ecosystem will be conserved for the enjoyment and economic benefit of current and future generations, and will continue as working woodlands.

Florida’s working forests generate $14.5 billion in economic activity annually, provide jobs for more than 74,500 Floridians and provide material for more than 5,000 types of consumer goods. And, Florida’s working forests help protect valuable and important resources from the threat of conversion to other uses, and provide numerous environmental and ecosystem benefits such as improved air quality and wildlife habitat. Healthy, sustainable forests are vital for the protection and conservation of Florida’s water resources and provide other valued benefits to us all including spaces for recreation and beauty.

We support this project, and all that you do to improve Florida’s natural resources and our economy.

Sincerely,

Ad Platt
Vice President for Operations