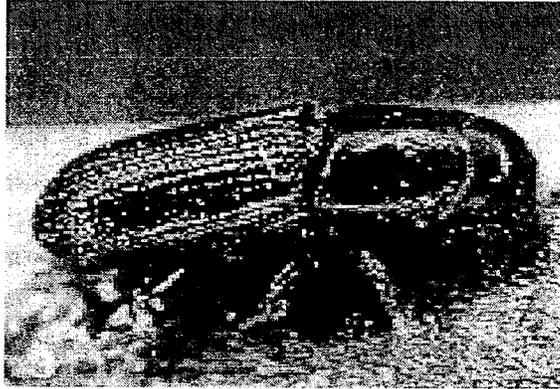


May 15, 2003

Help Protect our Southern Forests

The Healthy Forest Restoration Act

Dear Colleague:



U.S. forests are being threatened throughout the South and East. The Southern Pine Beetle and the Red and White Oak Borers are devastating trees throughout the South and Midwest, and other equally menacing insects threaten trees throughout the region. Existing tools for diagnosing these pests are grossly inadequate. Private land ownership dominates the Eastern and Southern U.S., and few incentives exist to encourage private conservation. HFRA will save our trees.

As an example, the Southern Pine Beetle (SPB), is the most destructive insect pest of pine in the southern United States. A recent historical review estimated that SPB caused \$900 million of damage to pine forests from 1960 through 1990. This aggressive tree killer is a native insect that lives predominantly in the inner bark of pine trees. The galleries created by both the adult beetles and their offspring can effectively girdle a tree, causing its death. During epidemics, SPB infestations often begin in weakened or injured trees, but the high beetle populations can invade and overcome healthy vigorous trees by attacking in large numbers over a short period of time. SPB attacks are not limited to conventional forest sites; they also may kill high-value trees in yards, parks, and other ornamental settings.

Red and White Oak trees in the South are currently facing very serious conditions. Arkansas,

Georgia, Florida, Kentucky, Louisiana, Missouri, North Carolina, South Carolina, Oklahoma and Tennessee all suffer from these insects. In Arkansas, Missouri, and Oklahoma over a quarter of standing saw timber are Red Oak trees and it is expected that we will lose up to 33% due to borer infestations and related causes. This translates to over a billion dollar in losses. The tiny larvae bore directly into the phloem layer (just under the bark) of red oak trees. In the past year or two, Red Oak Borers have built up tremendous populations. The White Oak Borer mainly inhabits living white oak. This species will attack both sapling and mature white oak.

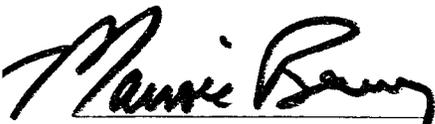
A new remote sensing program, putting in place a border-to-border diagnosis of pest and disease threats to forestry will be included in H.R. 1904, giving public landowners and federal land managers the first early warning system of its kind. Before the U.S. is forced to endure another disaster similar to the gypsy moth or chestnut blight, steps can be taken to identify and address these issues at the ground level. The analysis of forestland will also included carbon uptake rates, an emerging issue and opportunity for private landowners.

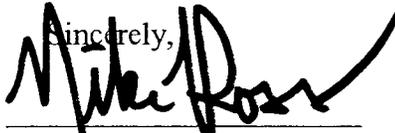
The Healthy Forests Reserve Program, included in the bill, is a first-ever private forestland conservation initiative which would protect one million acres of declining forest ecosystem types which are critical to the recovery of threatened species.

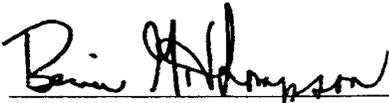
HFRA will improve the capacity of the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of the Interior to plan and conduct **hazardous fuels reduction projects** on National Forest System lands and Bureau of Land Management lands aimed at protecting communities, watersheds, and certain other at-risk lands from catastrophic wildfire, to enhance efforts to protect watersheds and address threats to forest and rangeland health, including catastrophic wildfire, across the landscape, and for other purposes.

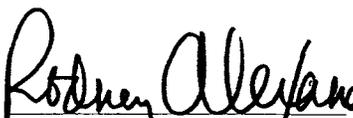
In addition to its original intent to address catastrophic wildfires, the HFRA will also allow us to act fast due to the threat unhealthy forest conditions present to our Southern Forests, ecosystems, air quality and water quality. We must act fast to help protect our national and private forests throughout the Southern and Eastern U.S.

There are over 100 co-sponsors of this important piece of legislation and if you would like to become a co-sponsor please contact Josh Penry at 5-0691 or josh.penry@mail.house.gov.


MARION BERRY
Member of Congress

Sincerely,

MIKE ROSS
Member of Congress


BENNIE THOMPSON
Member of Congress


RODNEY ALEXANDER
Member of Congress


JAMES E. CLYBURN
Member of Congress