Michigan Forest Products Council Applauds Bi-Partisan Forest Management and Jobs Package

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The Michigan Forest Products Council today hailed the bi-partisan legislation -- House Bills 5552-5554 and Senate Bills 1022-1024 -- which are up for consideration in the Michigan Legislature. This legislation builds on the momentum provided by Governor Granholm's recent announcement pursuing Forest Certification on nearly four million acres of Michigan state forestland.

"We are grateful for the opportunity to work with Governor Granholm and the Michigan Legislature on issues that will improve our quality of life and spur economic development in the forest products sector," said Stephen J. Hicks, President & CEO of J.M. Longyear L.L.C., in Marquette, and Chairman of the Michigan Forest Products Council. "We urge the Legislature to pass this much needed and balanced legislation."

Under the balanced Forest Management and Jobs package, state officials would:

* Update certified management plans to set standards for protecting water quality, maintain wildlife habitat and ensure proper forest regeneration;

* Promote and encourage the use of state forests for outdoor recreation, tourism and sustainable forest products; and

* Invest $20 million in forest management activities to create more jobs and improve overall forest health.

"Requiring forest certification, biodiversity, conservation, recreation and sustainable forest management plans would guarantee protection of a state forest system, as well as provide support for private landowners. This plan balances its economic, recreational and environmental benefits, which were recommended by the Governor's Land Use Leadership Council," added Hicks.

"Moreover, it would also preserve existing jobs, create new jobs, and prevent unemployment through the retention, promotion, and development of forestry and to protect the health and vigor of forest resources."

According to Department of Natural Resource and U.S. Forest Service Statistics, the increase in wood and fiber availability, quality and production from public lands, while protecting the environment, could net the State of Michigan nearly $8 million per year. The State is currently harvesting less than 40 percent of forest growth. Thus, Michigan has a comparative advantage in terms of its fiber supply position, which could attract billions of dollars in new investment and job creation well into the future.

Hicks commented on the long and successful economic, social and environmental benefits the forest products industry brings to Michigan. "The 19.3 million acres of timberland lands enhance the quality of life in Michigan supporting wildlife habitat, recreation & tourism, and thousands of jobs for the people of our great state," he said.

This legislation is up for consideration in the House Agriculture and Resource Management Committee on March 9th. The Michigan Forest Products Council applauds the leadership of the bill sponsors: Rep. Tom Casperson (R-Escanaba), Rep. Rich Brown (D-Bessemer), Rep. David Palsrok (R-Manistee), Senator Gerald Van Woerkom (R-Muskegon), Senator Mike Prusi (D-Ishpeming), and Senator Michelle McManus (R-Lake Leelanau).

The Michigan Forest Products Council works to promote, protect, and sustain a globally competitive forest products industry in Michigan. The Michigan Forest Products Council is a statewide organization representing the forest products industry, which owns millions acres of timberland and employs over 150,000 men and women in Michigan.

SOURCE: Michigan Forest Products Council

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