



MINNESOTA FOREST INDUSTRIES

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**MFI Testimony before the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Finance Committee  
March 22, 2022  
S.F. 4139 - Forest Inventory Appropriation**

Chairman Ingebrigtsen and Committee members,

My name is Rick Horton, and I am the Executive Vice President of Minnesota Forest Industries – a trade organization representing the primary wood-consuming mills in Minnesota.

Forest inventory is at the very heart of the art and science of forestry. It is imperative that managers have an accurate accounting of current forest conditions in order to sustainably manage the resource. With that knowledge they know what is currently on the land. But more importantly, with accurate data on growth rates they can project what the future forest can produce. This is critical information for the industry, as mills make decisions on investments in the state based in part on raw material availability.

LIDAR is an excellent tool to increase the accuracy of forest inventory at a lower per acre cost than traditional forest inventories. Additionally, it gathers the data in the same manner across all ownerships, which is important for cross boundary cooperative forest management. And for the first time, we will have accurate data for the 49% of the timberland base that is privately owned. As we have seen in analysis for the proposed Huber facility in Cohasset, private forests will play a large role in future fiber supplies.

The State of Minnesota has committed substantial funds and manpower to acquiring the LIDAR data from the air. But that information must be ground-truthed by boots on-the-ground inventory plots. Because forests are constantly changing, this must be done within two years, or the data must be gathered again. We urge the legislature to appropriate sufficient funds to complete the project so that past investments are not squandered, and so that we get the information we need to better manage Minnesota's ultimate renewable resource – its forests.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.