

Individual Testimony Opposing Senate File 2374 Regarding Sustainable Forest Incentive Act Payments

To Chair Rest and Members of the Senate Tax Committee:

My name is John Saxhaug. I own a registered Tree Farm in Kanabec County, am a member of the Minnesota Forestry Association, and have been involved in the management of Minnesota's forests and natural resources for over 40 years. Although my tree farm does not qualify for participation under the Sustainable Forest Incentive Act, I have seen the very positive results of the program on my fellow forest managers who have enrolled in the program since 2001, and on the State's forests and the environment in general. I am writing today to express my opposition to Senate File No. 2374 that would significantly reduce Sustainable Forest Incentive Act payments.

For a variety of reasons the proposed 30% reduction in SFIA payments under S.F. No. 2374 will have a negative effect on Minnesota Forests. First and foremost, it will discourage present and future landowners from participating in a program that is integral to the long-term sustainable management and proper stewardship of our forests. Lower participation will result in the loss of well managed woodlands that provide wood products to the forest industries that are a critical component of the State's economy.

Equally important, as climate change continues to grow as a threat to our way of life, is the impact on the climate by discouraging landowners from participating in SFIA. The loss of incentives for forest management practices maximizing carbon reduction would be an opportunity that can't be reclaimed. The carbon emissions absorbed by a healthy, well managed forest are well worth the cost of incentives provided by SFIA.

In addition to the benefits described above are an array of contributions provided to the public that include quality wildlife habitat, biodiverse ecosystems, and public access to large tracts of woodland.

I ask you to carefully consider the loss of environmental benefits that would result from such a significant reduction in funding a program that contributes so much value in maintaining Minnesota's forests and our quality of life.

Sincerely,

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