

Chair Rest and Members of the Senate Tax Committee,

I write to you today to oppose the provision in SF 2374 that reduces payments for the Sustainable Forest Incentive Act ("SFIA"). The SFIA helps prevent development of the 40 percent of Minnesota's forestlands that are privately owned. I have a 50-year SFIA easement on my 44 acres in Carlton County. SFIA is basically a conservation easement that pays for development rights. This is a very inexpensive conservation easement for Minnesota taxpayers.

If you do cut the program by 30 percent, as proposed, or another significant amount, enrolled landowners should be given the option to cancel their SFIA contract and develop their land. Property taxes are going up all the time, the cost to maintain healthy wildlife habitat is increasing, access maintenance is increasing. Not all forest owners are rich. I worked for a non-profit and just bought this land cheap 13 years ago. I've been retired seven years and am on a fixed income.

Yours in conservation, Mark Herwig,

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4903-5557-6619, v. 2