

## Letter in Opposition to SF2374

**To: Senate Committee on Taxes**

**From: Stan Grossman, CEO Itasca Woodland Services, Inc.**

**Re: SF2374 - Proposed bill to reduce payments of Sustainable Forest Incentives Act (SFIA)**

Dear Esteemed Committee Members,

I am writing today to submit testimony *against* the proposals within SF2374 that would significantly reduce the payments to landowners enrolled in the Sustainable Forest Incentive Act (SFIA). As the owner of a private forestry consulting firm in Grand Rapids, Minnesota, that has been serving hundreds of private woodland landowners in Minnesota since 1996, I am deeply concerned about the negative effects that this bill would have on the quality of forest management practices on private lands in our great State.

As you likely know, obtaining a personalized Woodland Stewardship Plan written by a qualified professional is a prerequisite for enrolling in the SFIA. Furthermore, a new Stewardship Plan is required every ten years to maintain eligibility for payments. This requirement incentivizes woodland owners to periodically interact with a forestry professional and obtain advice on managing their woods in a sustainable, responsible manner. In the reduction or absence of such an incentive, the transfer of such knowledge will be negatively impacted.

Our firm has written well over 1000 Stewardship Plans since 1996, the majority of which I have personally written myself. Our clientele represents a diverse spectrum of backgrounds, interests, and land management philosophies but they all have one thing in common; for a relatively short period of time they have an opportunity, a social responsibility, and an innate desire to thoughtfully steward the resources on their land.

As a landowner's primary and perhaps *only* source of forest management advice, I have witnessed firsthand on countless occasions how the interaction between a landowner and a forestry professional has positively influenced the management decisions a landowner makes. For instance, when a landowner learns for the first time that they have buckthorn on their land (a non-native highly invasive species) and how it can gradually and significantly degrade the quality and diversity of their forest, they often will take immediate action to control it. When they need timber to be harvested, we can assist them with this difficult and complex process so that the quality of the soil, water, wildlife habitat, regeneration, and aesthetic value of their woods is protected or even improved. The State's investment in SFIA vastly increases the likelihood that a wealth of knowledge and practical assistance will find its way to the individual private landowner.

**In closing, the 43% of forests in Minnesota that are under private ownership provide a host of public benefits and are worth investing in!** Furthermore, as currently written, SF2374 brashly reneges on the Covenant that the State of Minnesota has entered into with private landowners. It is a breach of trust that I believe will not soon be forgotten and will erode the likelihood of landowners trusting the State to keep their end of the bargain of any long-term commitment of this type in the future. I urge you to preserve the SFIA as it currently is, in order to uphold the State's commitments and safeguard the integrity of the legislative process.

Respectfully submitted,

Stan Grossman