



## The Ecological Society of America

1990 M Street, NW  
Suite 700  
Washington, DC 20036

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September 4, 2008

The Honorable Anna Eshoo  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515-0514

Dear Representative Eshoo:

As President of the Ecological Society of America, the nation's premier Society of professional ecologists, I write to applaud your initiative to protect and enhance the nation's forest ecosystems through the federal activities outlined in Title IV of the *Act to Save America's Forests*. The legislation acknowledges the ecological complexity of forests, as well as the critical role they play, not only as natural resources, but as aesthetic and recreational havens, and, perhaps most importantly, as sites of tremendous biodiversity and carbon sequestration.

In particular, I would like to commend the emphasis on preserving old-growth forests, which are irreplaceable regions of species richness, as well as the call for reconnaissance surveys to identify ecosystems not presently represented in reserves. These initiatives will help sustain the following:

**Habitat Connectivity:** Habitat connectivity is central to the long-term preservation of ecosystem integrity. Fragmentation may produce changes in microclimate, species composition, and species behavior, which may in turn have far-reaching ecological repercussions. For example, changes in microclimate at the forest edge may affect seed dispersal, decomposition rates, the movement of flying insects, and the size of plant and animal populations. Similarly, the scientific community has linked the spread of many native and exotic pests and pathogens to the simplification and fragmentation of forests. To ensure long-term success, forest management strategies must maintain a diverse and natural set of ecoregions and treat them as part of a larger, integrated mosaic.

**Biodiversity:** Intense forestry practices affect biodiversity principally by changing the age and species composition of forests. Often, a few species flourish while others run the risk of being eliminated. This loss in species richness often impedes ecosystem functioning, and may lead to widespread degradation and even collapse if, for example, species at a certain level of the food web (grazers, browsers, predators, decomposers) decline beyond a certain point. The communities most vulnerable to this kind of degradation are, in fact, the unique and biologically rich ones associated with old-growth forests. Many ecological scientists believe that the most efficient way to maintain biological diversity is through a well-designed system of reserves that encompass an array of ecosystem types and conditions.

**Ecological Literacy:** The National Park System represents one of the nation's most accessible and effective means of increasing ecological literacy among its citizens through hands-on experience. Preserving forest ecosystems, particularly in America's original forests, will ensure that current and future generations reap the full benefits of this invaluable educational and recreational resource, while improving conservation efforts through increased awareness.

Title IV of the *Act to Save America's Forests* represents an important step toward maintaining the imperatives above, and is particularly important because it will guarantee the preservation of ecoregions that are presently underrepresented in the National Park System. Establishing and protecting new ecoregions will not only improve biodiversity by preserving species specific to those regions, but will increase habitat connectivity and provide new data and benchmarks with which to fine-tune management practices.

Many of ESA's 10,000 members are experts in a host of areas relevant to the scope and content of the *Act to Save America's Forests*. If we can be of service, or if you would like us to provide you with the contact information of members with expertise in this area, please contact our Director of Public Affairs, Nadine Lynn (202-833-8773, extension 205; [nadine@esa.org](mailto:nadine@esa.org)).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alison G. Power', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Alison G. Power  
President