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06511

28 June 2002

The Honorable Christopher Dodd
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Dodd,

I write to you in my capacity as a concerned scientist, with expertise in the area of forest biodiversity science and conservation, to ask that you support the *Act to Save America's Forests* sponsored by Senator Robert Torricelli. The United States has a globally-enviable national treasure in its federally-owned forests. The forests are not only a valuable natural resource in themselves but a vast diversity of wildlife species depend on these forests for their livelihood. I believe current federal forest management policy needs to be revised to address both forest resource management and conservation of biodiversity in accordance with the latest scientific knowledge. The *Act to Save America's Forests* is a proposal that embodies this latest scientific research and thus provides a solid yet versatile plan of action for managing our federal forests.

America's forests are in a precarious position: they face being destroyed by clearcut logging in stands of centuries-old trees and in our last remaining wild and roadless areas. The Act will end logging in those forests that we value as national treasures: all the remaining Northwest Ancient Forests; all our remaining roadless forests; and "special" forest areas throughout our federal forest system, such as the Pilger Mountain Area in South Dakota, the Eleven Point-Big Springs Area in Missouri, the Trap Hills in Michigan, and the Longleaf Ridge forest in Texas. In addition, the Act will ban destructive clearcutting in our National Forests.

What makes this Act landmark legislation, however, is that it does not simply take a purely protectionist stance. The Act permits commercial harvesting of timber resources outside of the core areas designated for conservation using the latest methods of careful

logging. It also makes provisions to encourage the regrowth of high quality wood with high commercial value, thereby ensuring a sustainable commercial resource for future generations. This will all be done by promoting methods that ensure that timber harvesting and management is conducted in ecologically compatible ways based on the latest scientific insights about long-term sustainability of forest ecosystem health and biodiversity. As such, the Act embodies innovative new ways of resolving the long-standing irreconcilable differences between constituents that seek only to protect and constituents that seek complete freedom to exploit.

The *Act to Save America's Forests* is based on scientifically sound and validated principles of conservation biology. The principles help to ensure that ecosystem services of forests that are vital to humankind are protected for many future generations. These ecosystem services include water purification, soil erosion control, recycling of nutrient elements such as carbon and nitrogen that fertilize natural plants, and absorption of atmospheric gasses such as carbon dioxide that would otherwise enhance global warming. In addition, the scientific community has the understanding and capacity to move forward with the excellent stewardship initiatives embodied in the *Act* in a timely and productive manner.

The *Act to Save America's Forests* is bold and visionary. It will allow the leaders of American society such as yourself to have a profound influence over the ecological as well as economic health of not only this generation but future generations to come. What a wonderful legacy to leave the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of today's society. This Act represents a win-win situation for all concerned. I urge you to sponsor this important legislation.

Respectfully yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Oswald Schmitz". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "O".

Oswald J. Schmitz, Ph.D.
Professor of Ecology