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Nature Conservancy: Applauds council on forestry vote to retain the forestry mill tax

Posted on Tuesday, May 30, 2017

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Contact:

Cate Harrington, charrington@tnc.org or 608-316- 6416

MADISON, WI (May 30, 2017)— Foresters, timber producers, elected officials, nonprofits and other members of the Wisconsin Council on Forestry recently voted to ask the Governor to retain the stable funding that the Forestry Mill Tax provides to Wisconsin's forests. The current budget proposal to eliminate this dedicated funding source and replace it with General Purpose Revenue (GPR) will put one of the most successful forestry programs in the United States at risk.

For this reason, The Nature Conservancy is asking members of the Joint Committee on Finance to vote for Alternative 8 on Paper #465. This will delete the provision and the Forestry Mill Tax will remain assessed as under current law.

The Forestry Mill Tax is just under 17 cents per $1,000 of property value, which means a payment of $25.46 on a $150,000 home. This modest sum paid by each property owner, when added together and invested wisely to maintain healthy, productive forests, reaps numerous benefits that all Wisconsin citizens enjoy.

The mill tax supports the health and productivity of Wisconsin's 17 million acres of forest, which are the foundation of a $24.7 billion industry that employs more than 64,000 people in Wisconsin. But it pays for much more than that, including county forest programs and urban forestry grants; the prevention, detection and suppression of forest fires; forest management activities on private lands and a host

of other public and private forestry programs critical to small communities.

While The Nature Conservancy appreciates the Administration's commitment to continue to fund forestry with GPR, we are concerned that the loss of the Forestry Mill Tax will lead to the erosion of funding for forestry and forest conservation if it is determined that those funds are needed elsewhere for any reason. Our forests are too important to our economy, health and quality of life here in Wisconsin to take that risk.

The Nature Conservancy is proud to serve on the Wisconsin Council on Forestry representing nonprofit conservation organizations. We have worked with Wisconsin's forest industry and other partners for decades to conserve productive working forest lands and the clean water they provide.

We applaud the Wisconsin Council on Forestry's recent vote and call on the Legislature to protect this vital source of funding for the forests that all Wisconsin citizens benefit from.