



**Contacts:**

Cascade Land Conservancy: Gene Duvernoy, 206-905-6901, [gened@cascaadseland.org](mailto:gened@cascaadseland.org)

US Forest Capital: Tom Tuchmann, 503-220-8103, [Tuchmann@usforestcaital.com](mailto:Tuchmann@usforestcaital.com)

Washington Forest Protection Association: Cindy Mitchell, 360-352-1500,

[CMitchell@wfpa.org](mailto:CMitchell@wfpa.org)

Washington Forest Law Center: Peter Goldman, (206) 223-4088 x3,

[pgoldman@wflc.org](mailto:pgoldman@wflc.org)

**Unique Coalition urges support of Community Forestry Bonds**

Seattle, July 22, 2009 - A unique coalition of conservation organizations, timber companies and business leaders gathered today to celebrate the introduction in Congress of legislation to enable non-profit conservation organizations to use municipal bonds to purchase working forests for both long-term conservation and economically sustainable timber management.

The bill could conserve an estimated 2.2 million acres of working forests throughout the country and preserve an estimated 13,500 direct and indirect jobs using private capital markets.

The Community Forestry Conservation Act of 2009 was introduced by a bi-partisan group of legislators, including Senate co-sponsors Patty Murray (D-WA), Mike Crapo (R-ID), and Maria Cantwell (D-WA), and House of Representatives co-sponsors Mike Thompson (D-CA), Jim McDermott (D-WA), and Dave Reichert (R-WA).

The coalition was forged out of a partnership among the conservation community, timberland owners, the financial industry and state government including the Washington Department of Natural Resources. The group, led by Cascade Land Conservancy, US Forest Capital, Washington Forest Law Center and Washington Forest Protection Association, will work with the bi-partisan sponsors to enact the far-reaching legislation this year.

Fast action is needed.

While deforestation has been balanced by reforestation of agriculture lands in recent decades, the U.S. Forest Service estimates that 23 million acres of forestland will be lost by 2050. There are multiple reasons for this trend, including the lucrative residential and commercial real estate market, tax policy, global competition, loss of mill infrastructure, and changing inter-generational demographics.

Under the proposed legislation, Congress would authorize that qualified non-profit organizations could use funds derived from municipal revenue bond sales to purchase working forests and keep them working. This new tool will provide a mechanism for acquisition of lands that are at a high risk of conversion and parcelization, and for other lands that may be difficult for long-term commercial management. The bonds would be paid off with proceeds from environmentally sensitive timber harvests.

The bonds will address a growing problem in Washington State and across the country.

“Our communities have an urgent need for a financing mechanism that would provide stable, long-term capital to purchase working forests and prevent their conversion,” said Gene Duvernoy, President of the Seattle-based Cascade Land Conservancy.

“Community Forestry Bonds conserve working forests and the jobs that go with them, protect the environment and respect landowners’ rights. Those are the key elements of The Cascade Agenda.”

“The Cascade Agenda’s goals are to conserve 1.3 million acres of working forests, farmlands and natural areas and to create vibrant, livable communities. Community Forestry Bonds are a critical tool for achieving these goals,” Duvernoy added.

“A massive forest ownership transition has taken place with nearly 84% of America’s industrial forests changing hands in the past 12 years,” said Tom Tuchmann, President of Portland, Oregon-based US Forest Capital. “In this economic environment there are real opportunities for large-scale conservation purchases. With funding for such purchases being the limiting factor, tools such as Community Forestry Bonds will be of benefit to all.”

“Forest conservation bonds are a revolutionary tool that enables the forest conservation and timber industry communities to join together to purchase working forests, prevent their development, and increase the level of environmental protection. It’s a win-win for jobs and conservation at no significant cost to taxpayers,” remarked Peter Goldman of the Washington Forest Law Center.

The conservation community has built a partnership with the financial and forest products industries to create a solution to the financial obstacle hindering long-term working forest conservation.

“This bill works by providing an economic incentive, or funding mechanism, to maintain working forests. It will protect rural community jobs by keeping renewable working forestry on the landscape. This works for landowners, it works for the environment, it works for local governments and it works for communities across the state of Washington and the country,” said Mark Doumit, Executive Director of the Washington Forest Protection Association (WFPA). WFPA represents private timber owners in Washington State.

**About the Cascade Land Conservancy:** The Cascade Land Conservancy is a regional land trust, land stewardship provider and policy center operating in Washington State with headquarters in Seattle and principal offices in King, Kittitas, Mason, Pierce and Snohomish Counties. Founded in 1989, the Conservancy has protected nearly 150,000 acres of working forests, farmlands and natural areas as well as estuary lands on the Olympic Peninsula and along the Washington Coast. It provides stewardship services, caring for more than 10,000 acres of land. Since 2005 it has been the host organization of The Cascade Agenda, which links conserving great lands with creating great communities. For more information please visit [www.cascadeland.org](http://www.cascadeland.org) and [www.cascadeagenda.com](http://www.cascadeagenda.com)

**About US Forest Capital:** US Forest Capital is a privately held advisory firm that helps clients create value, maintain viable communities and conserve our environment. US Forest Capital combines knowledge of capital markets, natural resource management and public policy to meet the demands and opportunities of a complex asset class that is subject to intense public and regulatory scrutiny. The firm identifies and manages transactions, arranges conservation financing, creates and improves governance structures and resolves natural resource, public policy and communications challenges. [www.usforestcapital.com](http://www.usforestcapital.com)

**About the Washington Forest Law Center:** The Washington Forest Law Center is a non-profit, public interest law firm dedicated to using legal and policy advocacy to protect state and private forests and their habitat for fish and wildlife throughout the Pacific Northwest. The Center's founder and director, Peter Goldman, also participates in various initiatives that enable conservation of forests through innovative financing and forest certification strategies. For more information please visit [www.wflc.org](http://www.wflc.org).

**About the Washington Forest Protection Association:** The Washington Forest Protection Association is a trade association representing private forest landowners in Washington State. Its members are large and small companies, individuals and families who grow, harvest and re-grow trees on more than 4 million acres. The association operates predominately in public policy and regulations, public information, K-12 environmental education, taxation and with the Legislature. For more information please visit [www.wfpa.org](http://www.wfpa.org).

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