

July 23, 2025

Secretary Brooke Rollins  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20250

Chief Tom Schultz  
U.S. Forest Service  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Rollins and Chief Schultz,

We write to express strong support for continued and enhanced activities to combat the trade of illegal timber products. These programs are essential to halting imports of illegal wood products into the United States, ensuring fair competition for U.S. logs, lumber, and wood products, preserving the companies and jobs that support rural economies, and conserving global forests.

Unfortunately, funding for these vital programs is currently frozen and under review. Without swift action to restore support, essential technical staff will be lost, critical enforcement and industry services will be disrupted, and progress made to address global illegal logging will stall.

Illegal logging and associated trade have been ranked as the third-largest global transnational crime after counterfeiting and drug trafficking, generating between US\$52–157 billion per year.<sup>1</sup> Lumber and products coming into the U.S. using these resources are priced lower and compete unfairly with products produced in the U.S. using U.S. grown timber. Developing systems that allow for efficient and reliable analysis of wood origins is essential to fighting illegal logging and preserving U.S. jobs.

This laudable effort requires resources from the Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Services (USDA APHIS), U.S. Forest Service (USFS), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Customs and Border Protection (CBP), and the Department of State.

A critical component of this effort is U.S. Forest Service's International Programs and Trade funded at \$19 million in FY25. This office supports key timber tracking and identification technologies, capacity building, and improved harvesting techniques, while strengthening enforcement and trade transparency. Among the most essential tools within this effort is the Wood Identification and Screening Center (WISC), operated by USFS International Programs and Trade.

WISC plays a pivotal role in combatting illegal logging and ensuring compliance with timber trade laws, including the U.S. Lacey Act. It develops and deploys advanced forensic technologies that can rapidly and accurately identify the species and geographic origin of wood products. These tools allow enforcement agencies to verify the legal origin of imports, enhance tariff and trade compliance, and prevent the entry of illegal timber into U.S. markets.

In addition to processing samples at its laboratories, WISC dispatches technical specialists to U.S. ports, providing critical on-the-ground inspection support. Its services are essential to the

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<sup>1</sup> Waldhorn, H. (2024, December 9). *The True Co\$ of Timber*, CBP Stops Illegal Logging.  
<https://www.cbp.gov/frontline/cbp-stops-illegal-logging>

enforcement activities of the Department of Homeland Security and Customs and Border Protection, as no other U.S. government unit provides comparable analytical capabilities for wood products enforcement.

Importantly, WISC is now adapting its methods to support U.S. exporters navigating new international regulatory regimes. These services help U.S. producers maintain and improve global competitiveness and assure trading partners of their commitment to legal and sustainable sourcing.

Federal investment in these tools has already paid dividends and continued and expanded support is essential. Enhancing WISC's capacity will allow greater deployment of enforcement tools, broader industry engagement, and stronger international leadership from the United States in addressing illegal timber trade and promoting responsible forestry.

These programs are strategic tools to advance U.S. interests, protect legitimate businesses, and uphold the integrity of international trade. With funding currently frozen, progress has been halted. We urge your leadership to release funds to continue the work. We welcome the opportunity to work with USDA, USFS, and the Administration to support and collaborate on these efforts to strengthen U.S. manufacturing.

Sincerely,

American Hardwood Export Council

Decorative Hardwoods Association

Forest Landowners Association

Hardwood Federation

National Alliance of Forest Owners

#### **Hardwood Federation Member Associations**

Allegheny Hardwood Utilization Group, Inc.  
American Cooperage Industries of America  
American Hardwood Export Council  
Appalachian Hardwood Manufacturers  
Appalachian Lumbermen's Club  
Empire State Forest Products Assn.  
Great Lakes Timber Producers Assn.  
Hardwood Manufacturers Assn.  
Indiana Hardwood Lumbermen's Assn.  
Kentucky Forest Industries Assn.  
Lake States Lumber Assn.  
Maple Flooring Manufacturers Assn.  
Missouri Forest Products Assn.  
National Hardwood Lumber Assn.  
National Wood Flooring Assn.  
National Woodland Owners Assn.

North Carolina Forestry Assn., Inc.  
New England Lumbermen's Assn.  
Northeast Loggers Assn.  
Ohio Forest Products Assn.  
Pacific Coast Hardwood Distributors Assn.  
Penn-York Lumbermen's Club  
Pennsylvania Forest Products Assn.  
Railway Tie Assn.  
Southern Cypress Manufacturers Assn.  
Southwestern Hardwood Manufacturers Club  
Tennessee Forestry Assn.  
Virginia Forest Products Assn.  
West Virginia Forestry Assn.  
Western Hardwood Assn.  
Wood Component Manufacturers Assn.