

**TESTIMONY
BY
LAMAR DEWBERRY
LINEVILLE, ALABAMA**

**BEFORE THE
U.S. HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE**

**TROY, ALABAMA
MAY 15, 2010**

Good afternoon gentlemen. My name is Lamar Dewberry from Lineville, Alabama. My wife and I are private forest landowners in Clay County, Alabama and I manage our forestland. I want to thank Committee Chairman Peterson and Congressman Mike Rogers for making it possible for me to testify before this important committee. My work as an agriculture education teacher made it possible for my wife and I to own Dewberry Lands today. When we married we owned no property but have been blessed to be able to purchase forestland and now we own and manage 800 acres. I hope I can pass this property on to my son and daughter someday and with that being said, we need to do everything possible to protect family farms today. We see an aging generation of farmers and private forest owners of which many of these farms will fall to development. I think we need to keep as much of this property as we can in the hands of private individuals and keep these farms working, no matter what kind of farm it is.

The management objectives for our property are timber and wildlife. These two objectives go hand-in-hand and it is said that these are the twin crops of modern forest management. Alabama is about 70 percent forestland and Clay County where I live is over 82 percent forestland. Of this forestland the majority is owned by private individual landowners just like me.

This past year only one EQIP contract was approved for forest management practices. I don't know why but possibly part of the problem may be the work committee that sets the resources concerns is weighted heavily in another commodity area. I do know for Clay County forestry and wildlife are ranked second as a resource concern and has been since 2007. To me it was better when forestry was funded as a special project,

“Forest Health Initiative”, to get funds to protect forestland which makes up the majority of Alabama.

A continuation of cost share funding for forest management practices needs to happen. Too much forestland is harvested and is never reforested. This land becomes unproductive, the aesthetics are slow to return, it quickly becomes unattractive for wildlife habitat, recreational purposes are lost and often soil will erode in these areas. As we see a turnover in ownership it becomes so important we have technical expertise on the ground to assist new and beginning farmers. An example is in EQIP and WHIP the establishment of longleaf pine ecosystems. Much of this ecosystem has been lost in the last 200 years and we are now trying to reestablish this forest type. Most of the private forest owners in the Piedmont Region of Alabama are not familiar with the longleaf pine ecosystem and the use of prescribed fire as a management tool. Education is important and this comes from the technicians on the ground working directly with landowners.

The 2008 Farm Bill requires each State Forester to develop and submit to the Secretary of Agriculture a “state-wide assessment of forest conditions”. The key elements of the study were to identify threats to our natural resources, develop strategies to address the threats and apply resources to implement the strategies. Alabama has completed our assessment and we know what the threats are. The problem is we don’t have resources to apply to the problems.

Here in Alabama our state forestry agency, the Alabama Forestry Commission, has seen a steady decline in all funding sources especially in USDA-US Forest Service Cooperative State and Private program funding. For example, the overall President’s 2011 proposed Forest Service budget for Cooperative State and Private is almost 13%

less than the 2010 enacted budget. The Alabama Forestry commission is looking at a \$2 million reduction in Cooperative State and Private funding beginning in 2011. That loss coupled with a substantial reduction in timber severance taxes due to the slowdown in the housing market has left the Commission with a \$5 million shortfall. The Commission is currently looking at laying off 106 employees or 1/3 of its workforce this year. This is where the technical assistance comes from in implementing these cost-share practices provided in the 2008 Farm Bill.

In Clay County out of the last 6+ years we have only had a county forester in the county for 2.5 years. Our NRCS office closed in Clay County and combined with Randolph County and the office is in Randolph County.

Program delivery by resource professionals at the state and county level must be a key component of any Farm Bill. The 2012 Farm Bill should include a line item for cooperative State and Private Forestry funding as a mechanism for delivering and implementing forestry practices that provide a sustainable resource for our rural communities.

As a local producer of wood there is a need for more markets to sell wood. In our county unemployment is over 15%, many of these are loggers, truck drivers and workers in the wood industry. We have really taken a hit from the problems in the housing markets. Those still in the business in Clay County are hauling pine pulpwood up to 90 miles one way to sell it. There is only one market for pine saw logs left in our area and this wood is hauled 70 miles one way. Fuel cost makes it impossible for the landowner to get much for their product. In 2008, I had a pine stand thinned to improve the stand and I had to give the wood away to get it cut. The stand was 12 years old and I grew it, paid

taxes on it and got nothing for the product but the cut improved the quality of the stand. The wood was chipped on site and hauled to a plant for fuel making Oriented Strand Board (OSB). Since then the plant has closed and two markets taking wood has been lost; fuel wood and wood for OSB. I know there are many factors that go into this problem and I don't have an answer for the dilemma.

In the 2008 Farm Bill I was glad to see forestry added to the Conservation Stewardship Program. This will encourage forest landowners to continue doing a good job in protecting the soil, water, and wildlife on their property and it encourages them to do more. Each year we have 5th graders from the local schools come out to our property and have "Classroom in the Forest". They are exposed to how a southern forest is managed to protect the water, soil, air and wildlife. They learn about something besides a rainforest. It is a fun day for all involved!

Nothing is more pleasing than walking through a beautiful, well managed forest. The water is clearer, the air is fresher, the soil is more stable and wildlife is more abundant. Thank you, Chairman Peterson and Agriculture Committee Members for coming to Alabama and allowing me to share these thoughts with you and for your concerns for conservation, the wise use of our natural resources.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Lamar Dewberry

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Lineville, Alabama 36266
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Education

College: Bachelor of Science in Agriculture Education, Auburn University 1980
Master of Science in Agriculture Education, Auburn University 1991

High School: Lineville High School 1976

Professional Experience

1980-2003 Agriculture Educator, Clay County, Alabama
2003- Present Manager of family forestland

Community Activities

Local

Member of Clay County Forestry & Natural Resource Comm. 1999-Present
Local Farmers Federation Wildlife Committee Chairman 2000- Present
Hosted Clay County Forest Education Tour 2005
Hosted “Classroom in the Forest” for 5th Graders 2005-Present
Vice President, Clay County Forestry & Natural Resource Comm. 2005-Present
National Wild Turkey Federation Sponsor 2007-2008
President of Clay County Farmers Federation 2007-Present

State

Member of the Alabama Treasure Forest Committee 1994-Present
Farmers Federation Wildlife Committee 2000-2008
State Tree Farm Committee 2007-Present
Hosted the State Tree Farm Educational Tour 2007
Member of Forest Landowners Association 2007-Present
Member of Alabama Forestry Association 2007-2008
Serve Natural Resource Outreach Committee 2007-Present
Farmers Federation Wildlife Committee 2009-Present

Award/Recognition

Wild Turkey Woodland Award 2003
Alabama Tree Farm of the Year 2006
Helen Mosley Treasure Forest Award 2007
Southern Regional Finalist Tree Farm of the Year 2007
Alabama Farm of Distinction 2008
Sunbelt Expo Southeastern Farmer of the Year- Alabama 2008
Governor’s Forest Conservationist of the Year Award

**Committee on Agriculture
U.S. House of Representatives
Required Witness Disclosure Form**

House Rules* require nongovernmental witnesses to disclose the amount and source of Federal grants received since October 1, 2007.

Name: Lamar Dewberry

Address: 207 Hurricane Road, Lineville, Alabama 36266

Telephone: 256-396-2485

Organization you represent (if any): _____

1. **Please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants and subcontracts) you have received since October 1, 2007, as well as the source and the amount of each grant or contract. House Rules do NOT require disclosure of federal payments to individuals, such as Social Security or Medicare benefits, farm program payments, or assistance to agricultural producers:**

Source: _____ **Amount:** _____

Source: _____ **Amount:** _____

2. **If you are appearing on behalf of an organization, please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants and subcontracts) the organization has received since October 1, 2007, as well as the source and the amount of each grant or contract:**

Source: _____ **Amount:** _____

Source: _____ **Amount:** _____

Please check here if this form is NOT applicable to you: _____ **X** _____

Signature: Lamar Dewberry

** Rule XI, clause 2(g)(4) of the U.S. House of Representatives provides: Each committee shall, to the greatest extent practicable, require witnesses who appear before it to submit in advance written statements of proposed testimony and to limit their initial presentations to the committee to brief summaries thereof. In the case of a witness appearing in a nongovernmental capacity, a written statement of proposed testimony shall include a curriculum vitae and a disclosure of the amount and source (by agency and program) of each Federal grant (or subgrant thereof) or contract (or subcontract thereof) received during the current fiscal year or either of the two previous fiscal years by the witness or by any entity represented by the witness.*

PLEASE ATTACH DISCLOSURE FORM TO EACH COPY OF TESTIMONY.