

**WRITTEN TESTIMONY**  
**OF**  
**TROY HARRIS OF JAMESTOWN**  
**BEFORE THE UNITED STATES SENATE AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE**  
**MAY 20, 2021**

Chairwoman Stabenow, Ranking Member Boozman, and distinguished Members of the Senate Agriculture Committee, on behalf of Jamestown, thank you for the opportunity to testify on private working forests and the important role they can play as a natural climate solution.

Jamestown is a global, design-focused real estate investment and management company with a 37-year track record and clear mission to transform spaces into innovation hubs and community centers. Jamestown employs more than 400 people worldwide with headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia, and Cologne, Germany. Since its founding in 1983, Jamestown has executed transactions in excess of \$35 billion. As of March 31, 2021, Jamestown has assets under management of \$12.6 billion and a portfolio spanning key markets throughout the U.S., Latin America, and Europe. Current and previous projects include Chelsea Market in New York City, Industry City in Brooklyn, Ponce City Market in Atlanta, Ghirardelli Square in San Francisco, and the Innovation and Design Building in Boston.

Since 2009, Jamestown has owned and managed timberlands, starting in the southeastern United States and now extending through Indiana, Pennsylvania, and New York. Jamestown utilizes modern and sustainable forestry practices, and recognizes that healthy forests provide clean air, clean water, recreation, and economic opportunities for a variety of stakeholders. In 2019, Jamestown planted over 1.2 million trees on its timberland properties.

In 2020, Jamestown made a pledge to reach net zero emissions by 2050 and cut our carbon emissions by 50% by 2030. Tree growth is an important part of reducing our carbon emissions, and products that are sourced from sustainably managed forests are seeing increased interest and demand. An example of the carbon-sequestering properties of trees is the adoption of mass timber as a renewable building solution across every region of the country. Organizations are increasingly including renewable wood materials in the suite of material options for consideration, offering the construction and development sector a progressive and creative method to transform structures into carbon vaults. Furthermore, mass timber allows building occupants and visitors to be surrounded by natural, elemental materials that inspire and keep them connected to the natural environment.

Modern forestry has no equal in its capacity to deliver climate mitigation benefits at scale. Sustainably managed private working forests are both a critical nature-based solution to climate change and the source of 2.5 million well-paying American jobs, mainly in rural communities. By providing a continuing cycle of growing, harvesting, and replanting, sustainable forest management optimizes a forest's ability to sequester and store carbon and improves forest health and resilience. The positive impact that forests are already having is massive. U.S. forests and forest products offset 15% of U.S. industrial carbon emissions every year.

Forest product markets deliver economic value to private working forests and shield them from economic pressure to convert land away from forests. In the U.S., the forest sector is mature and maintains some of the highest sustainability standards in the world. U.S. private forest

owners plant more than one billion trees per year, planting which is driven by high demand. Private working forests and sustainably sourced wood products are two of the largest contributors to our current mitigation strategy and are well positioned to provide even more significant climate solutions in the future.

Private working forest owners are leading the way in pursuing natural climate solutions. Recently, I joined the CEOs of 42 other leading U.S. forest owning companies who sit on the Board of the National Alliance of Forest Owners (NAFO) and the CEOs of leading national environmental and conservation organizations to adopt a unique set of [Principles on Private Working Forests as a Natural Climate Solution](#), which express our common vision for increasing the climate mitigation of sustainably managed private working forests and sustainably produced forest products.

Over the past few years, NAFO has also worked closely with a broad community of stakeholder organizations to advance the climate mitigation benefits of private working forests. One main avenue for collaboration has been the Forest-Climate Working Group, which provides a unified voice across the U.S. forest sector for advancing climate policy. NAFO also participates in the Food and Agriculture Climate Alliance to advance broader working land-based climate mitigation solutions.

### **Forest Carbon Sequestration and Storage**

Forests provide carbon benefits at scale through active sequestration and long-term storage. Smart climate policy will seek to maintain existing storage while optimizing additional sequestration and storage potential.

Over one-third of the United States is covered by forests, and 67 percent of U.S. forests are working forests, meaning forests sustainably managed to supply a steady, renewable supply of wood for lumber, energy, paper, and packaging, providing more than 5,000 items that consumers use every day. Seventy percent of those working forests are privately owned. Harvests of any type (timber stand improvement, thinning, final harvest, etc.) occur on only two percent of the total land area of private working forests, and the same land area is regrown through planting or natural regeneration each year.

Privately owned working forests provide approximately 90 percent of our wood and fiber. At the same time, they account for 73 percent of our gross forest carbon sequestration – enough to offset emissions from all passenger vehicles in the U.S. each year. Private working forests also store an additional 82 gigatons of carbon – more than all other forests combined.

The forest sector is already carbon negative, offsetting not only its own emissions, but a significant portion of the country's annual emissions as well. The data clearly show that forests can be both productive and beneficial to the climate.

Since 1958, the total forest acreage in our country has remained relatively constant, and the total volume of wood growing in our forests has increased by nearly 60 percent. Most of that growth came from privately owned working forests. Even as demand grew, and as the population more than doubled, working forests expanded. Today, we grow 43 percent more wood on private working forests than we harvest each year, despite consistent high demand for wood. This increased growth translates into carbon sequestration and storage. The bottom line is that strong markets are good for forests and climate mitigation.

Private working forests hold massive carbon storage benefits. Keeping working forests working through healthy and diverse markets for forest products shields private working forests from economic pressure that can lead to land use change — a triple loss including the forest’s accumulated storage, its active sequestration, and the future carbon value in terms of both storage and sequestration. Modern forestry’s ongoing cycle of growing, harvesting, and replanting keeps forests and their carbon benefits intact.

At Jamestown, we take our environmental responsibility as a manager and developer seriously. We have signed onto the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and adopted short-, medium-, and long-term ESG targets in support of all 17 goals. This includes a target of net zero operational carbon by 2050. We have received top scores on our annual assessments from Principles for Responsible Investment (PRI), and our institutional open-end fund was ranked #3 in its peer group by the Global Real Estate Sustainability Benchmark (GRESB) for 2019. In April, Jamestown announced plans to reach net zero carbon operations at Levi’s Plaza by 2025. The effort positions the nearly one-million-square-foot office campus to be the first existing, large-scale commercial property in San Francisco to reach this milestone.

For the private sector, market-based decarbonization through private working forests and forest products is an important tool for reducing greenhouse gases in the atmosphere while improving livelihoods, especially in rural communities. The tax code can incentivize increased forest carbon sequestration and storage, while USDA can support voluntary carbon registries and updated protocols that maintain rigor while removing barriers to entry.

Increasing the role of private working forests as a carbon mitigation solution also requires current and reliable forest inventory data and analysis. USDA’s Forest Inventory & Analysis Program (FIA) is the world’s premier forest data collection program. Increased investments in FIA focusing on carbon measurement capability and the use of advanced technology is fundamental to an overall forest carbon mitigation strategy.

### **Sustainable Wood Construction**

Wood continues working for the climate in the built environment. Half the dry weight of wood is stored atmospheric carbon. This means that buildings can become carbon vaults, storing the carbon in the wood used to construct them. Every year, wood products add about 100 million metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub>e to the already existing wood products storage pool. Added up, wood products store about 9.7 gigatons of carbon in houses and other wood buildings in the U.S. That is more than double the carbon stored in all national parks.

The manufacture of traditional building materials accounts for approximately 11% of global GHG emissions, according to the UN. That total is larger than all of the emissions from the European Union, and only smaller than those of China and the United States. Architects and developers are focusing on reducing this so-called “embodied carbon” in building materials. Yet, most federal programs to reduce carbon emissions in the built environment emphasize only energy efficiency and exclude embodied carbon.

Mass timber buildings offer economic, social, and environmental solutions that make them a smart investment. They can be the best solution for avoiding emissions and storing carbon in the built environment, while at the same time supporting sustainable working forests and the myriad environmental benefits outlined above. As a natural, biodegradable, sustainable, green, and carbon-storing building material, wood is unmatched. Mass timber construction is so durable that after military blast testing and fire resistance testing, there are plans to use cross-laminated timber (CLT) in American embassies abroad specifically because of mass timber’s

remarkable safety performance. Using panelized, prefabricated mass timber construction can decrease construction time by 20 percent and drastically reduce the need for emissions-heavy trucking. Beyond the practical reasons for supporting mass timber construction, there is the simple fact that people want to live and work in mass timber buildings for their beauty, comfort, and fundamental connection to the natural environment.

Jamestown recently announced plans to construct a 100,000 square-foot office building targeting LEED Gold from CLT as part of the expansion plan for its Ponce City Market, in Atlanta, Georgia. CLT is an environmentally friendly, sustainable, and carbon-neutral alternative to traditional construction methods. Utilizing sustainable materials like CLT is one component of Jamestown's commitment to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050 within its portfolios.

While Jamestown has been an early adopter of mass timber, we are not alone. Michigan State University (MSU) has been a pioneer in research and the adoption of mass timber. MSU's STEM building was the first mass timber construction project in Michigan. The 2018 Farm Bill included the important Timber Innovation Act and its funding for the Forest Service's Wood Innovation Grant program. MSU has used the Wood Innovation Grant program to strengthen its role as a national leader in research to help us better harness the climate benefits of mass timber construction and sustainable forest management.

Major corporations also recognize the value of mass timber. Multinational companies like Adidas, Alphabet, Amazon, McDonald's, Microsoft, and Walmart have all plans to use mass timber. Notable among these examples is the planned new 350-acre mass timber headquarters Walmart is building in Arkansas. Walmart's commitment to mass timber spurred a \$90 million investment in a new mass timber production facility in rural Arkansas. Walmart is choosing wood construction for the same reasons Jamestown has. It's a smart investment in rural forest communities that produces significant carbon mitigation benefits.

Despite our abundance of sustainable working forests, and demand for better, more climate-friendly construction, the U.S. is behind on mass timber production and utilization. Congress can continue to advance the work begun with the highly successful Timber Innovation Act to help make mass timber more commonplace in the U.S.

Changing how the federal government considers the built environment can significantly reduce embodied carbon at scale and align with the ongoing efforts of the private sector. With oversight of the Forest Product Laboratory (FPL), Wood Innovation Grant Program, and the BioBased and BioPreferred procurement programs, this Committee has several avenues to encourage building with wood to reduce embodied carbon. For instance, additional investments in FPL to advance whole building lifecycle analysis (LCA) to drive decisions on building materials can help project developers cost-effectively and creatively reduce carbon. Such emphasis could provide opportunities in all infrastructure projects, including transportation, federal buildings, affordable housing, and more.

Sustainable management of U.S. forests is important to ensuring increased use of wood in construction truly achieves climate and other environmental outcomes. Multiple, credible third-party certification systems are available in the United States to ensure sustainable practices in support of climate benefits. This includes programs to certify forests to a forest management standard, chain of custody certification programs, and responsible sourcing programs provided by the Sustainable Forestry Initiative, the American Tree Farm System, and Forest Stewardship Council. In accordance with the clarification made in the 2018 Farm Bill, all qualified certification programs should be given equal treatment in any federal procurement or other climate change policy involving private working forests.

## **Wildlife Conservation and Other Environmental Co-Benefits**

Climate benefits are just one of many environmental benefits provided by working forests. Water supplies for communities around the country flow through forested watersheds, where forests act as a natural filtration system for [nearly 30 percent of the water we drink](#). Private working forests also play an important role in keeping common species common and conserving at-risk and declining species. These forests are vital to wildlife conservation, as sixty percent of our nation's at-risk species rely on private forestland for habitat. Collaborative conservation efforts such as the NAFO's [Wildlife Conservation Initiative \(WCI\)](#) have created cooperative partnerships with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, state wildlife agencies, forest certification programs, eNGOs and others to benefit species while keeping private working forests as forests.

## **Climate-Smart Policy Recommendations**

This Committee has three clear pathways to further climate-smart policies supporting private working forests and forest products:

1. Help expand markets for forest carbon, increasing accessibility and credibility. If there is a strong market signal for our forests to sequester and store more carbon, we will do just that.
2. Encourage more sustainably sourced wood construction in the built environment. It reduces the carbon footprint of the built environment and supports forest retention and overall carbon mitigation.
3. Improve forest carbon data. Markets for carbon and markets for climate-smart construction need data to prove that climate benefits are real. We have some of that data, but not all of it. The U.S. government can collect and give credence to the data so that markets, forest owners, and consumers all have faith in it.

## **Conclusion**

The recommendations provided today are designed to provide climate mitigation solutions that advance good paying jobs and economic prosperity in rural forested communities across the country. As the Committee considers these recommendations, we urge Committee members to emphasize the impacts of increasing the use of forests and forest products on the nearly three million Americans who live and work in our rural forest communities. Advancing the role of forests and wood products as climate change solutions can both build and strengthen the forest products supply chain and the people it employs as strong, engaged participants in natural climate solutions.

Thank you again for conducting this hearing to identify opportunities for the forestry sector to address climate change. The right climate solutions can enable private forest owners to invest further in sustainable management that enhances forest carbon sequestration, water quality, wildlife habitat, and good paying rural jobs. Jamestown stands ready as a resource to this Committee as it addresses the important challenge of climate change and the solutions private working forests can offer.