



STATE OF MINNESOTA

Office of Governor Mark Dayton

130 State Capitol ♦ 75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard ♦ Saint Paul, MN 55155

April 17, 2014

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Mr. Secretary:

Please accept this letter as a petition to designate landscape-scale areas in Minnesota's national forests as insect and disease treatment areas under the authority granted by Section 8204 of the 2014 Farm Bill.

There are two national forests in Minnesota, the Chippewa and Superior, each with unique forest resources. Annual forest health surveys by the USDA Forest Service and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources show that these forests are threatened by various forest diseases and insect attacks. I have enclosed details on portions of both the Chippewa and Superior National Forests. Minnesota is requesting that both forests be designated as insect and disease treatment areas.

I urge you to designate these areas for inclusion under the Healthy Forest Restoration Act authorities.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Dayton".

Mark Dayton
Governor

Enclosure

cc: Tony Tooke, Associate Deputy Chief for the National Forest System
Tom Landwehr, Commissioner, MN Department of Natural Resources
Forrest Boe, Minnesota State Forester

Request to Designate Landscape-Scale Areas in the Superior and Chippewa National Forests as Insect and Disease Treatment Areas, Under Section 8204 of the 2014 Farm Bill

April 2014

Chippewa National Forest

The Chippewa National Forest has 1,870 black ash stands on 24,260 acres of land administered by the USDA Forest Service. Many of these stands exist in important wetland areas within the forest. Emerald ash borer (EAB) poses a tremendous threat to all ash trees. The impact EAB will have on the ecology and functioning of black ash wetlands is of particular concern. These wetlands cover more than 1 million acres in Minnesota and represent the state's most common ash forest type. Black ash often grows on poorly drained sites where it is a dominate species, exerting a strong control over ecosystem structure and functioning. If ash is lost to EAB, there could be dramatic rises in water tables and shifts in vegetation composition toward shrub and grass-dominated wetlands with few trees.

Diversifying tree species is essential to maintaining the ecological function of these forested wetlands. Minnesota request that all lands within the boundary of the Chippewa National Forest be designated as at risk under the provisions of the 2014 Farm Bill. This will enable the Forest Service to carry out projects in ash stands across the forest to increase their resilience to the effects of EAB.

Superior National Forest

Below is a table showing forest insects and diseases that are currently affecting, or have the potential to negatively impact, the Superior National Forest:

Table 1. Forest Types and Damaging Forest Insects and Diseases in the Superior National Forest

Host Forest Types	Total Acres of Host Forest Types	Current and Potentially Damaging Insects & Diseases
Aspen, Birch	403, 000	Forest Tent Caterpillar, Gypsy Moth
Basswood, Oak	96,000	Forest Tent Caterpillar, Gypsy Moth
Balsam fir, White spruce, Black spruce	294,000	Spruce budworm, Spruce beetle, Eastern dwarf mistletoe
Tamarack	70,000	Eastern larch beetle
White pine, Red pine, Jack pine	286,000	White pine blister rust, mountain pine beetle
Black ash	19,000	Emerald ash borer
	Total: 1,168,000	

The list of native and introduced insect and disease agents that have the potential to cause mortality, dieback, and defoliation is real and increasing. This is well supported by the US Forest Service's and Minnesota Department of Natural Resources' annual forest health surveys in Minnesota. Approximately two-thirds of the Superior National Forest will be under a gypsy moth quarantine by May 2014. In addition, EAB was discovered in nearby Superior, Wisconsin in 2013.

Given the continued expansion of damaging forest insects and diseases and the intermingled nature of forest land ownership across that landscape, Minnesota requests that all eligible portions¹ of the Superior National Forest be designated as an insect and disease treatment area through the Farm Bill provisions. This will allow better and faster treatment and restoration to address the broad array of insects and diseases that are expected to cause tree mortality and forest decline for the next 15 years. The designation will also allow for better coordination of treatment and restoration across all lands within the forest, including those managed by partner agencies and private landowners.

¹ Per the Healthy Forest Restoration Act as amended, Minnesota understands that acreage within the Superior National Forest that is part of the National Wilderness Preservation System is not eligible for inclusion in the requested insect and disease treatment area.