

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of New York State
NYS Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo,

I am a member of theChapter of the New York Forest Owners Association (NYFOA). NYFOA has joined many other environmental and forest stakeholder organizations in a coalition to promote the Empire Forests for the Future Initiative (EFFI) that you announced in your 2017 “State of the State” address.

Thank you for recognizing the critical importance of our state’s forested landscape to the environment, the economy and our quality-of-life. Because forested properties are not generally eligible for agricultural exemptions, property taxes are particularly burdensome for private family forest owners. Revisions to the Forest Property Tax Law proposed under EFFI would extend eligibility for tax relief to hundreds of thousands of private woodlot owners and reduce the steady conversion of forestlands to other purposes having negative, rather than positive impacts on the environment.

Another key feature of the EFFI is a new forest stewardship program that will assist forest owners in dealing with the impacts on forest health caused by invasive species. This is an uphill battle for us, and we really need help with it.

Your EFFI is a broad, comprehensive plan, addressing the concerns of a large, diverse coalition of stakeholders. I urge you to include required funding for EFFI in your budget request for 2018.