

November 18, 2016

Commissioner Basil Seggos
NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation
625 Broadway
Albany, NY 12233-1011

Subject: Proposed Revision to 480a Forest Tax Law

Dear Commissioner Seggos:

On November 9th, I participated in a conference call with Rob Davies and Sloane Crawford regarding the concerns expressed in my October 1st letter. Based on the following understandings, NYFOA endorses the proposed 480a revisions.

I was pleased to hear that several concerns we had raised during a previous review of the proposed revisions have been addressed. Increasing the interval between management plan updates from 5 to 10 years, and permitting more flexibility in the timing of work within the 10 year period will reduce costs for landowners and reduce workload for the DEC.

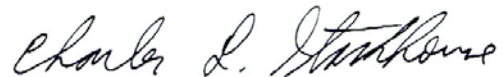
While we feel that properties enrolled in the proposed 480b “Sustainable Forest Management Program”, should be at least 80% forested, we can accept a 50% minimum as a compromise position. We would still like to see forest regeneration addressed in a more specific manner under the “Qualifying Forest Management Practices” for this program, including the construction of deer exclosure fencing when required as a component of an overall regeneration plan. While making a forest stewardship plan a prerequisite for an initial timber harvest under this program would certainly be preferable, we understand how it may serve as an impediment to timely enrollment and the benefits to be gained through DEC and Consulting Forester involvement in such harvests.

DEC understands that the proposed 480b “Forest Certification Program” is impractical and unaffordable for non-industrial, private forest owners. We agree to retaining this option in the proposal with the understanding that the DEC will develop and offer reasonable and manageable requirements for group certification that can serve as a basis for offerings from the private sector. We encourage a high priority for this work as we would anticipate great interest in this option from private forest owners.

Regarding our proposal for a “Certified Forester Program”, while we feel this has potential for creating a high and uniform level of professional service, as well as an opportunity to reduce DEC workload, we understand that the time and costs associated with implementing such a program are considerable, and it should be considered separately from the critically-needed 480a/b proposals.

We appreciate the opportunities your staff has provided for us to provide input on these proposals.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Charles L. Stackhouse".

Charles L. Stackhouse, President
New York Forest Owners Association

CC: Andrew M. Cuomo, Governor of NYS