Allegheny Defense Project * Alliance for the Wild Rockies * American Lands Alliance
Biodiversity Conservation Alliance * Clean Air Task Force
Citizens Action Coalition of Indiana * Conservation Congress * Christians Caring for Creation
Defenders of Wildlife * Earthjustice * Environmental Protection Information Center
Environmental Working Group * Friends of the Earth * The Habitat Trust for Wildlife
Georgia Forest Watch * Heartwood * Global Justice Ecology Project
Greater Yellowstone Coalition * John Muir Project * Kentucky Heartwood
Klamath Forest Alliance * Kootenai Environmental Alliance * The Lands Council
League of Conservation Voters * Massachusetts Forest Watch * Native Forest Council
National Audubon Society * National Wildlife Federation * Natural Resources Defense Council
Olympic Forest Coalition * RESTORE the North Woods
Southern Appalachian Forest Coalition * Southern Environmental Law Center
Sierra Forest Legacy * Sierra Club * Spirit of the Sage Council * Swan View Coalition
The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy * WildEarth Guardians * The Wilderness Society
Wildlands CPR * WildWest Institute * Wild South

March 27, 2009

Dear Senator:

On behalf of our millions of members, activists, and supporters we urge you to oppose Senator Thune and Tester's recently introduced bill to amend the Clean Air Act, S. 636. By replacing the current definition of renewable biomass in the Renewable Fuels Standard, S. 636 would roll back critical environmental safeguards that protect important wildlife habitat, at risk forests and grasslands, and our federal forests. These provisions are an essential part of sound biofuels policy and help keep the Energy Bill's 36 billion gallon biofuels mandate from resulting in even more harm than good.

As climate change radically alters our landscape we must preserve our remaining natural ecosystems and ensure they are healthy and resilient. S. 636 would remove vital ecosystem protections in the RFS mandate, replacing the current definition of renewable biomass with a version that lacks any meaningful protections.

The proposed changes would incentivize the loss of critical wildlife habitat, natural forests and grasslands, and the degradation of our federal forests. On federal lands the language the bill uses to restrict old growth logging is vague and confusing and could cause the loss of big trees that provide key wildlife habitat and are the most resistant to forest fires. S. 636 also relies on land management plans that can easily be changed to permit logging in inventoried roadless areas, fragile soils, and steep slopes.

Moreover, the RFS land and forest safeguards work in concert with the RFS's greenhouse gas standards to keep new biofuels production from resulting in deforestation or other land conversion that would release millions of tons of global warming pollution. Deforestation already contributes 20 percent of global GHG emissions and our biofuels policies must assiduously avoid contributing to this problem.

The RFS land and climate safeguards provide for a plentiful supply of biofuel feedstocks without putting important wildlife habitat, natural forests, native grasslands, and public lands in our gas tanks. Stripping these safeguards through legislation like S. 636 would represent a dangerous step backwards for biofuels and climate policy alike.

Once again, we urge you to oppose S. 636 which rolls back the 2007 Energy Bill RFS environmental safeguards.

Sincerely,

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Allegheny Defense Project (PA)

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Executive Director
Alliance for the Wild Rockies (MT)

Randi Spivak
Executive Director
American Lands Alliance

Duane Short
Wild Species Program Director
Biodiversity Conservation Alliance (WY)

Jonathan Banks
Climate Policy Coordinator
Clean Air Task Force

Kerwin Olson
Program Director
Citizens Action Coalition of IN (IN)

Denise Boggs
Executive Director
Conservation Congress (MT)

Mary Beth Beetham
Director of Legislative Affairs
Defenders of Wildlife

Marty Hayden
V.P. Policy and Legislation
Earthjustice

Scott Greacen
Executive Director
Environmental Protection Information Center (CA)

Sandra Schubert
Director, Government Affairs
Environmental Working Group

Eric Pica
Director, Domestic Programs
Friends of the Earth

Doug Doepke
President
The Habitat Trust for Wildlife (NC, CA)

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John Muir Project (CA)

Jim Scheff
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Klamath Forest Alliance (CA, OR)

Barry Rosenberg
Executive Director
Kootenai Environmental Alliance (ID)

Mike Petersen
Executive Director
The Lands Council (WA)

Tiernan Sittenfeld
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League of Conservation Voters

Chris Matera
Founder
Massachusetts Forest Watch (MA)

Tim Hermach
Executive Director & Founder
Native Forest Council (OR)

Mike Daulton
Legislative Director
National Audubon Society

Julie M. Sibbing
Director - Global Warming, Agriculture & Wildlife
National Wildlife Federation

Wesley Warren
Director of Programs
Natural Resources Defense Council

Bonnie Phillips
Executive Director
Olympic Forest Coalition (WA)

George Wuerthner
Board Chair
RESTORE the North Woods (ME, MA)

Mark Shelley
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Craig Thomas
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Debbie Sease
Legislative Director
Sierra Club

Leeona Klippstein
Executive Director
Spirit of the Sage Council (CA, NC)

Keith Hammer
Chair
Swan View Coalition (MT)

Hugh Rogers
President
The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy (WV)

Bryan Bird
Public Lands Program Director
WildEarth Guardians (NM)

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Vice-President of Policy
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Wild South (S.E.)