

Timothy P. Burpoe, CF® Comments to the Climate Action Council
May 10, 2022
The Natural History Museum, aka “The Wild Center”
Tupper Lake, NY

Thank you for coming to Tupper Lake, NY and giving us an opportunity to give you our thoughts regarding the Climate Action Council's recommendations for a brighter future for our children and, in my case, future grandchildren if I'm blessed with them someday in the future.

Today, I would like to talk to you as a person who has worked in the forest products industry for my entire career, and I am a forester and am currently the woodlands manager, for a well-known and regarded TIMO, managing over 240,000 acres of investment grade timberland in the Adirondacks of Upstate NY. Most of these lands are encumbered by a conservation easement, held by the SNY, administered by NYSDEC. These are commonly referred to as “Working Forest” easements to recognize the importance of these lands in contributing forest products to the economy of NYS. The key term is “Working Forest”. The SNY purchased the recreation and development rights to ensure that these forests continue to provide forest products to future generations of New Yorkers.

I would like to address, in my remaining time, the importance of private landowners and the impact that the existence of a low-grade market has on keeping lands in the hands of these, mostly, conscientious landowners, and keeping it from being fragmented and/or converted to other uses that will inevitably generate more Greenhouse Gases.

The Importance of Low-Grade Markets in New York State:

The Climate Action Council has done an admirable job of identifying “Mitigation Strategies” as summarized for Forest Management.

It appears that the council understands the importance of responsible ownership of NYS forests. But I think that the council doesn't understand that the SNY is NOT the best choice to own NYS' forests as suggested by the 30 by 30 legislation that is proposed and is being acted upon in the NYS legislature. As a matter of fact, the best managers of NYS forests are private sector landowners. Now don't go jumping to a conclusion that I'm suggesting that NYS' constitutionally protected 4 million acres of state land, called Forest Preserve, is to be given back to New Yorkers. However, I am suggesting that the private ownership and management of NYS' forests is much better than the 750,000 acres that is under “active” forest management, commonly referred to as “NYS Reforestation land”, and administered by NYSDEC. I will state that, for the record, the owners of NYS forests 14.4 million acres of private land, who own this land for as diverse reasons as there are owners.

I think that you know that NYS should incentivize landowners to continue to hold these lands. Part of the solution would be to lighten the burden of ownership by reducing real property taxes (i.e., RPTL Section 480-a, and proposed 480-b and c) and other inheritance/estate taxes that causes landowners to fragment these lands to pay these expenses. Other methods landowners

could use to pay the high costs of land ownership, and thereby retain ownership, is by sustainably harvesting timber.

It is also a well-known fact that managed forests sequester and store more carbon than unmanaged forests. The draft Scoping Plan discusses the importance of keeping forests as forests, which means that landowners need end-markets for their wood products harvested on their land. This includes the residue from logging operations. Low-grade markets are a key to this goal of continued forestland ownership. Harvesting residuals, aka “biomass”, provides an excellent stock for low-carbon energy resources and support sustainable forest management practices and forest regeneration.

I’ll say again, the importance of low-grade markets for forest products is paramount for continued ownership of private land and sustainable forestry practices that will enhance the sequestering and storing of carbon well into the future.

Part of creating these low-grade markets is establishing a business environment that encourages investment in these kinds of “green” facilities and an income and business tax environment that does not penalize business working in NYS. Please remember that we want business to grow and thrive in New York and not be pushed out of the State. Doing the right thing environmentally does not stop at the state line. If we push businesses out of New York we will not have any control over their process of providing our needed products in an environmentally responsible and sustainable way and we want and need that control for now and the future.

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