

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 17, 2015

The Honorable Tom Tidwell
Chief
United States Forest Service
1400 Independence Ave, SW
Washington, DC 20250

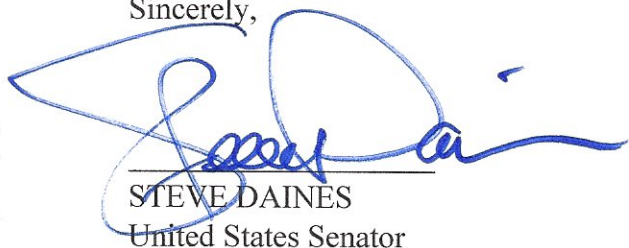
Dear Chief Tidwell:

We are writing to request that the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) provide appropriate relief and flexibility for lumber mills impacted by the Softwood Lumber Agreement (SLA). As you know, the SLA is set to expire on October 12, 2015 and producers across Montana have expressed concerns about the impact of foreign demand and exchange rates on the industry while the status of a future agreement is in question.

Montana's timber producers create thousands of jobs for Montanans and are essential to sustaining rural communities across the state. The uncertainty surrounding the SLA and the current economic conditions facing the U.S. timber industry warrant USFS action to grant additional flexibility regarding timber production on federal lands, at least until the SLA is renegotiated. Providing such flexibility in the implementation of USFS contracts is vital to the strength and sustainability of Montana's forest products workforce.

Thank you for your consideration, and we look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,



STEVE DAINES
United States Senator



RYAN ZINKE
Member of Congress