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Dear European Commission on Bioenergy,

We are writing to you today as local political leaders of the Southern United States, who have come together on the **International Day for Natural Disaster Reduction** to enhance our communities' resilience to extreme weather. Collectively, we recognize the important role that forests play in reducing vulnerability to natural disasters, and we understand that one of the best ways to protect the communities we represent is by supporting the conservation of our standing forests and improving management practices in our working forests.

According to NOAA, the frequency of billion-dollar storm-related disasters has increased five percent each year since 1980. Southerners have experienced disasters like Hurricane Katrina that will remain in the collective consciousness for generations and we understand that one of the best ways to avoid the devastating impacts of storm surge, flooding, or hurricane disaster is to strengthen our natural defenses. **Maximizing the benefits of our native forests will save lives and money.** For instance, in the US, coastal wetlands can act as levees and provide \$23.2 billion per year in protection from storms. Even more, standing for the protection of forests has beneficial impacts in our region's economy. Sightseers, outdoor enthusiasts, and tourists spend significant money each year to travel to protected areas, which helps create jobs and stimulates local economies.

As it stands, the European Union's bioenergy policy and its associated subsidies are driving an unsustainable expansion of wood pellet manufacturing facilities in our region. These policies, though originally well-intentioned, incentivize industrial logging and degradation of our native southeastern forests, including coastal wetland forests. In the last 60 years, the Southern US has lost over 33 million acres of native forests. There is mounting scientific evidence that using biomass as an industrial-scale fuel is neither carbon neutral nor beneficial to communities involved in its extraction or processing. Energy from woody biomass is a contested practice because it is both inefficient and economically unsustainable without the use of government subsidies.

Our Southern forests are one of our best defenses against the impacts of natural disasters and we cannot afford to lose any more. At a time when we must be working harder to protect what native forests we have left, European bioenergy policies stand in our way.

As local elected officials:

1. We call on the European Commission to develop a bioenergy policy that caps the overall use of biomass in line with available supply insofar as logging in native forests does not increase
2. We call on the European Commission to develop a bioenergy sustainability policy that does not incentivize the use of whole trees as a sustainable feedstock for bioenergy

As local political leaders, we are directly experiencing the impacts from well-intentioned European Union policies that have gone wrong. Natural disasters threaten our health and safety, our economic prosperity, our security, and our way of life. **We must respond by protecting that which protects us: namely,**

standing forests. To ensure our economic prosperity, to protect our health and children, and to ensure our security and safety, we need to act now to protect forests adequately. We ask the European Commission on Bioenergy to incorporate our concerns into its policy.

Sincerely,



County
Commissioner John
Adornato III
Oakland Park,
Florida



Town Council
Member Judy
Buchanan
Burnsville, North
Carolina



District Supervisor
Greg Cebula
Spotsylvania
County, Virginia



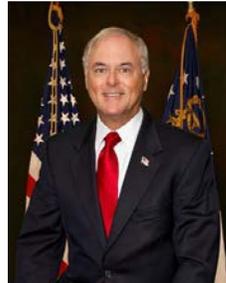
City Council
Member Jeannine
Collins
Boone, North
Carolina



City Council
Member Cecil
Bothwell
Asheville, North
Carolina



County Council
Rick Caporale
Beaufort County,
South Carolina



County
Commissioner Tony
Center
Chatham County,
Georgia

(No Headshot
Available)
Finance Officer
Leslie Crowder
Yancey County,
North Carolina



Mayor Daniel
Dietch
Surfside, Florida



Mayor Rennie
Brantz
Boone, North
Carolina



County
Commissioner Zane
Cardwell
Rockingham
County, North
Carolina



City Council
Member Loretta
Clawson
Boone, North
Carolina



City Council Member
Patrick Fitzsimmons
Weaverville, North
Carolina



City Council Member Brian Haynes
Asheville, North Carolina



County Commissioner Melissa Link
Athens-Clark County, Georgia



City Council Member Charlotte Mizelle
Boone, North Carolina



Mayor Philip Stoddard
South Miami, Florida



County Commissioner James Holmes
Chatham County, Georgia



Mayor Esther Manheimer
Asheville, North Carolina



Supervisor Richard Randolph
Albemarle County, Virginia



City Councilor Kristin Szakos
Charlottesville, Virginia



City Council Member Mary Jeffcoat
Myrtle Beach, South Carolina



City Council Member Julie Mayfield
Asheville, North Carolina



City Council Member Gordon Smith
Asheville, North Carolina



City Council Member Jennifer Teague
Boone, North Carolina



County Commissioner Holly Jones
Buncombe County, North Carolina