

July 26, 2021

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow  
Chairwoman  
U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture,  
Nutrition, and Forestry  
328A Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Boozman  
Ranking Member  
U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture,  
Nutrition, and Forestry  
328A Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Stabenow and Ranking Member Boozman:

We, the undersigned organizations, representing millions of sportsmen and women and other conservationists across the country, are writing to respectfully express our support for the nomination of Dr. Homer Wilkes to serve as the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment (NRE). The NRE Under Secretary position is critical in overseeing a wide variety of USDA natural resource conservation and forestry programs that work across public and private lands to serve the diverse needs of the United States.

Dr. Homer Wilkes is a collaborative leader with a track record of working towards large-scale solutions in partnership with communities, organizations, and a wide range of agencies like the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). During his 41-year tenure at USDA, he previously served as Chief Financial Officer, Mississippi State Conservationist, and Acting Associate Chief of NRCS. Since 2013, Dr. Wilkes has served as the director of the Gulf of Mexico Ecosystem Restoration Division where he has been integral to restoring the health of the Gulf Coast ecosystem following the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill. Throughout his career with NRCS, Dr. Wilkes has also played a key role in directing engineering, natural resource, and watershed projects and took a keen interest in forestry. Under his leadership, Mississippi's forests rose to number 1 in the nation when it comes to removing carbon from the atmosphere while at the same time rank number 1 or 2 in the nation in the most board feet of timber harvested from its national forests, demonstrating his ability to productively balance diverse needs within the systems that he oversees.

In 2009, Dr. Wilkes was nominated for the same position, but withdrew his name so his three sons could graduate from high school in Mississippi, a sign of the long-standing support he has maintained in this position. Dr. Wilkes also previously served as a supply officer in the United States Navy Reserve. He holds his Bachelors, Master of Business Administration, and Ph.D. in urban conservation planning and higher education from Jackson State University. Like us, he is also an avid angler and hunter and understands the important roles that these users play in the scientific management of wildlife.

We are confident in Dr. Wilkes leadership abilities, and we enthusiastically support his nomination for the position of USDA Undersecretary of Natural Resources and Environment.

Sincerely,

Archery Trade Association  
Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies  
Boone and Crockett Club  
Catch-A-Dream Foundation  
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation  
Council to Advance Hunting and the Shooting Sports  
Delta Waterfowl  
Ducks Unlimited  
Houston Safari Club  
Izaak Walton League of America  
Masters of Foxhounds Association  
Mule Deer Foundation  
National Deer Association  
National Shooting Sports Foundation  
National Wild Turkey Federation  
National Wildlife Federation  
North American Grouse Partnership  
Orion: The Hunter's Institute  
Pheasants Forever  
Pope and Young Club  
Quail Forever  
The Conservation Fund  
Texas Wildlife Association  
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership  
Wildlife Forever  
Wildlife Management Institute  
Wildlife Mississippi