

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