**Actions the Minnesota Timber Producers Association**

**(TPA) has taken on your behalf:**

Thanks to TPA’s lobbying efforts, both during Minnesota’s Legislative Session and through discussions with policy makers at the state, federal, and county levels, a number of issues important to TPA members were acted upon in the last 12 months.

Here is a rundown of actions pertaining to the forest products industry—at the legislative and agency levels—and their outcomes this year:

**Implementation of Spring Load Restrictions**

TPA staff had numerous conversations with MnDOT staff to understand the timing of the removal of Winter Load Increases, and also to urge the agency to wait as long as possible before implementing Spring Load Restrictions. Unseasonably warm February temperatures led to the fear that the winter logging season would be cut short and thousands of cords of harvested timber couldn’t be hauled from the woods to the mill. Metrics used by MnDOT indicated the lower weights should be implemented sooner than desired. However, TPA staff pointed out the long-range weather forecast showed a return to colder temperatures. Due to a concerted effort by TPA members who pledged to avoid hauling on the warmest days, and also the consuming mills for discouraging deliveries, MnDOT delayed the removal of Winter Load Increases, particularly in the most northern part of the state, enabling loggers and truckers to continue hauling wood. TPA’s communication with MnDOT was critical to a favorable decision on this issue.

**Forest Management Appropriations & Bonding**

2017 was an excellent year for forest management funding. Among the appropriations: The 2017 legislative session produced record funding for reforestation, including $4 million ($2 million per year) from the Forest Management Investment Account (FMIA). Forest road maintenance has also been a key priority as part of our strategies to gain access to more wood – particularly summer wood. Total funding quadrupled from the current biennial budget including an expansion to include county forest road maintenance. $15 million was provided in the Bonding bill for DNR asset preservation, including DNR forest road bridge replacement. Private Forest Management also received $1 million in both years of the biennium, and included in the base budget for the following two fiscal years.

**Forest Land Taxation/SFIA Reform**

Reform of the Sustainable Forest Incentive Act was passed and signed into law. The reform creates a new tiered payment system based on a new formula. Landowners may enroll in SFIA for periods of 8, 20 or 50 years with the payments being greater for longer enrollment periods. Lands subject to conservation easements are eligible for enrollment at a lower payment level. The eased lands that had been excluded from SFIA for several years are eligible for retroactive payments going back to 2014. A number of duties are transferred from the Department of Revenue to the Department of Natural Resources including increased oversight of the requirements for enrollment. $215,000 for FY 18 and $312,000 per year thereafter is appropriated to the DNR for this work.

**Sustainable Harvest Analysis**

Governor Dayton instructed the DNR to increase that amount of timber it sells to 900,000 cords for FY 2017, and also to study the feasibility of selling one million cords annually. TPA is actively participating in this effort with a variety of stakeholders. The DNR will finish its work early in 2018.

**International Falls Noise Issue**

An effort to implement a noise ordinance affecting the truck route into the PCA/Boise mill was unsuccessful, thanks to involvement of TPA staff and several members who had numerous conversations with Koochiching County staff, the County Board, and the Int’l Falls City Council.