**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.

The 2016 Minnesota Legislative session was the shortest in memory, running only from March to May. Still, legislators did manage to pass a Supplemental Appropriations Bill that included spending for private forest management and for reforestation. In addition, the US Congress—after more than a decade of lobbying—passed a partial solution to the Interstate Truck Weight issue, finally allowing logging trucks on the stretch of I-35 from Carlton through Duluth.

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

**I-35 Truck Weights**

Logging trucks with a 6th axle and Minnesota’s raw forest products permit are now allowed to carry 90,000 lbs. (99,000 lbs. in the winter) on the 24-mile stretch of I-35 from Highway 210 in Carlton to London Road in Duluth. The provision was included in the House version of the Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, and then a House-Senate conference committee approved the final version, and the President signed the bill. This conforms federal law with Minnesota statutes for that stretch of I-35. The new law covers trucks “transporting raw or unfinished forest products, including logs, pulpwood, biomass, or wood chips.” TPA continues to work to allow logging trucks on more of I-35.

**State Reforestation Funding**

$1 million was appropriated from the Forest Management Investment Account for reforestation on state lands. This funding was included in the bonding bill, but when TPA staff became fearful the bonding bill wouldn’t pass, an effort was made on the second-to-last day of the session to get this language into the Supplemental Appropriations bill. Without this language, the DNR could have been forced to reduce the sale of red pine, jack pine, spruce and any other species requiring planting or seeding. This provision in the Supplemental Appropriations Bill prevents that.

**Northern Long Eared Bat**

The US Fish and Wildlife Service finalized its decision to list the NLEB as “threatened.” The rule limits clearcuts within a quarter-mile of known occupied maternity roost trees during June and July, and within a quarter-mile of known hibernation sites all year. This is a significant reduction from an initial USFWS proposal that would have been far more restrictive regarding timber harvesting. TPA opposes litigation on the issue that claims the USFWS rule isn’t restrictive enough.

**Private Forest Management Funding**

$2.5 million was appropriated in to increase the DNR’s private forest management activities. In addition, $2 million per year was included in the DNR’s base budget for subsequent years. DNR will hire PFM foresters with plans of increasing the amount of timber on the market in the state.

**Good Neighbor Authority**

Language was included in the Supplemental Appropriations Bill that allows the DNR to utilize the Forest Management Investment Account for appropriating the costs and receiving the revenues from Good Neighbor Authority or other joint powers agreements. This new authority will allow the DNR to administer subject timber sales—including on US Forest Service Lands—without taking time away from state timber sales.