



June 1, 2016

Governor Edmund G. Brown, Jr
c/o State Capitol, Suite 1173
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Tropical forest protection in AB 32

Dear Governor Brown:

On behalf of the organizations listed below, we are writing to thank you for your leadership in climate change solutions and to express our support for including greenhouse gas (GHG) reductions from tropical forests into California's regulatory cap and trade program. This action will make an important contribution to the global climate and to California's climate program; it will reduce carbon pollution, produce many co-benefits, increase the competitiveness of California industries and perpetuate California's global leadership on the critical issue of our time. As you have said so often, the time for action is now, and re-asserting California's leadership in the protection of tropical forests is a critical, essential action that California can take to help stabilize the climate and maintain a livable planet.

Tropical forests are one of humanity's best opportunities to prevent dangerous warming of the planet¹, defined by scientists as a global temperature increase beyond 3.6 degrees Fahrenheit, or 2 degrees Celsius. By slowing the carbon pollution caused by the clearing and degradation of tropical forests² and by enhancing atmospheric carbon absorption by recovering and re-growing tropical forests³, one fourth or more of global carbon emissions could be neutralized. This is bigger than all of the emissions of the United States and equivalent to China's current emissions levels.

¹ <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2009/cop15/eng/11a01.pdf>

² Sixteen to nineteen percent of global emission

³ Currently eight to eleven percent of global emissions

Thanks to your leadership, California is better positioned than any other nation or state in the world to seize this remarkable opportunity, preventing human suffering across centuries that will be caused by extreme climate change. The international sector-based offset provision would send a desperately needed signal to tropical forest states and provinces around the world that keeping forests standing is recognized and rewarded. We also commend you for recognizing this imperative by including natural and working lands as the fifth pillar of your climate change strategy earlier this year and by signing the “Rio Branco Declaration” in 2015, signaling support to the tropical states and provinces of the Governors’ Climate and Forests Task Force that are striving to slow emissions from tropical forest destruction. By acting now to foster low-deforestation economic development in tropical states and provinces in California’s climate program, California will demonstrate how its climate program, and potentially others, can help slow deforestation, reduce global GHG emissions and help set a precedent for the global community to follow.

There are additional benefits to California from halting tropical deforestation. As noted in a 2013 study by Princeton scientists, tropical deforestation could reduce the snow pack in the Sierra Nevada by altering the jet stream and the path of storms.⁴ Tropical deforestation, like the El Niño event that we are experiencing now, changes the temperature of the land, shifting global climate patterns with unpredictable and often undesirable outcomes. The implications are clear; reducing tropical deforestation can reduce impacts of climate change in California and help mitigate drought. Outside of California, it can produce many other important benefits to people and nature. For example, in addition to climate stabilization, reducing tropical deforestation, and the sustainable development that carbon markets like California’s can incentivize, can create a new model of rural development for states and other jurisdictions and help alleviate poverty in indigenous and rural communities around the globe; it can also promote food security, both in California and globally, and can help preserve biodiversity and potential cures for disease.

The importance of reducing emissions and protecting forests was included in the UN climate change agreement last December; in parallel, more than 100 countries listed emission reductions from the land sector as part of their national action pledges. By including GHG reductions from tropical forests in its regulatory cap and trade program, California can set the bar for crediting high-quality, credible programs that reduce deforestation across an entire jurisdiction’s forest sector, a model that could be followed by other governments to fulfill their Nationally Determined Contributions. A California model would also help the twelve tropical forest states that are part of California’s Under 2 MOU Coalition meet their emission reduction pledges, important given that tropical deforestation is the largest total source of emissions reductions in the Under 2 MOU. In addition, California is poised to create a gold standard for international sectoral offsets for the very substantial GHG Market Based Measure under discussion in the International Civil Aviation Organization.

California has the opportunity to again demonstrate global leadership and make meaningful progress on climate change, this time by adding tropical forest protection into its climate

⁴ (Princeton 18, 2015). Medvigy, D. et al., *Simulated Changes in Northwest U.S. Climate in Response to Amazon Deforestation* (2013) *J. Climate*, Vol. 26, at pages 9125 and 9132, available at http://www.princeton.edu/scale/publications/Medvigy_etal_2013.pdf.

program. We urge you to support this important addition to the state's climate agenda for the benefits described above and many more. For more information, please see: www.forests4climate.org. We thank you for your continuing leadership and remain committed to helping you achieve your vision for global climate action.

Sincerely,

Louis Blumberg, the Nature Conservancy Christina McCain, Environmental Defense Fund

Gustavo A. Silva-Chávez, Forest Trends Nigel Sizer, President, Rainforest Alliance

Dan Nepstad, Earth Innovations Institute Laurie Weyburn, Pacific Forest Trust

cc:

Matthew Rodriquez, Secretary, California EPA

Mary Nichols, Chair, Air Resources Board