RETAIL INDUSTRY LEADERS ASSOCIATION
Educate. Innovate. Advocate.

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July 27, 2009

Ms. Alicia Grimes
Forestry Advisor
Bureau for Economic Growth, Agriculture and Trade
U.S. Agency for International Development
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Ronald Reagan Building
Washington, DC 20523
via email agrimes@usaid.gov

Dear Ms. Grimes:

On behalf of the Retail Industry Leaders Association (RILA), I write to express our support for the project "Forest Legality Alliance." This project was submitted by the World Resources Institute, in collaboration with the Environmental Investigation Agency, in response to USAID's Global Development Alliance call for projects.

By way of background, RILA promotes consumer choice and economic freedom through public policy and industry operational excellence. Our members include the largest and fastest growing companies in the retail industry--retailers, product manufacturers, and service suppliers--which together account for more than $1.5 trillion in annual sales. RILA members provide millions of jobs and operate more than 100,000 stores, manufacturing facilities and distribution centers domestically and abroad.

Raising awareness throughout entire supply chains about the Lacey Act and its implications is critical. RILA and our members intend to provide input to the project and other interested parties to create tools to educate retailers and suppliers and assist companies throughout supply chains in their efforts to keep illegally harvested wood out of the market. For example, RILA believes it would be valuable to establish a single website clearinghouse of information on Lacey Act compliance, including a database of U.S. and foreign logging laws, and with tools on how companies can reduce the cost of compliance with the Lacey Act amendments.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at your convenience at stephanie.lester@rila.org or 703-600-2046.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Lester
Vice President, International Trade