

May 11, 2022

Ted Decker
President and CEO
The Home Depot
2455 Paces Ferry Road SE
Atlanta, GA 30339

Dear Mr. Decker,

The world is facing a global climate emergency and unprecedented rates of biodiversity loss. The latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report sounded another urgent climate alarm, as well as underscored just how critical forest protection will be to meeting global climate targets.ⁱ It is in this context that our 59 organizations representing a wide array of conservation, environmental, consumer and student viewpoints, and more than 12 million members and activists, are writing today to express our deep concern that Home Depot is failing to implement the necessary sustainability and human rights safeguards in its wood product sourcing from the Canadian boreal and other primary forests. This means your company is profiting from the destruction of irreplaceable and ecologically vital forests, rather than working to align its sourcing with a climate-safe future.

Twenty-five years ago, a number of environmental organizations, including signatories to this letter, urged Home Depot to implement baseline protections for its forest sourcing, eventually resulting in your Wood Purchasing Policy. Unfortunately, while science, forest health, climate exigencies, and biodiversity outlooks have changed, Home Depot's policy has not. The result is a severely outdated, regressive approach that fails to meet baseline forest protection and human rights standards.

We are writing to urge you to address the significant gaps in your Wood Purchasing Policy by adopting commitments to protect climate-critical primary forests and globally recognized Indigenous rights in your supply chains.

Among the most egregious gaps in Home Depot's policy is the absence of any meaningful standards for its sourcing from forests in North America, from which Home Depot sources nearly 90 percent of its wood.ⁱⁱ While Home Depot commits to "eliminate wood purchases from endangered regions of the world,"ⁱⁱⁱ it has failed to define what constitutes "endangered" forests. In fact, on its website, Home Depot has intimated that it has no consistent scientific grounding for how it applies the term. Because the only other supply chain restrictions in Home Depot's policy apply to wood from the Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, Amazon, or Congo Basin areas, there are no clearly defined limitations on Home Depot's sourcing from North America, where it sources the overwhelming majority of its wood. This means that Home Depot's supply chain fails to protect against sourcing from some of the world's most vital and at-risk forests and has no guarantees to ensure the rights of the Indigenous Peoples who live in these areas.

Home Depot's lack of meaningful forest protections in North America has profound implications in forests including the Canadian boreal, which is the world's largest remaining primary forest (an ecosystem untouched by industrial activity) and a critical global carbon storehouse. Demand for wood products is a major driver of industrial clearcutting in primary forests in the boreal, with

devastating impacts for the global climate and at-risk species.^{iv} In recent years, Canada has had the third-highest rate of intact forest landscape loss in the world.^v Nearly all of Canada's provinces also lack protections for internationally recognized Indigenous rights, meaning that Indigenous communities are not guaranteed the right to dictate the future of their territories.

Home Depot's lack of a policy around primary forest protection and Indigenous rights and statement in its policy that it simply "expects its vendors and their suppliers of wood and wood products to maintain compliance with laws and regulations pertaining to their operations and the products they manufacture" implicates the company in these ongoing unsustainable and unjust practices and places the company firmly as a climate and human rights laggard.

In addition, Home Depot lacks any commitment to Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification, eschewing even the most baseline sustainability standards for its forest product supply chains. Home Depot also does not have comprehensive transparency mechanisms.

By nearly any metric, Home Depot lags behind your competitor, Lowe's. Unlike Home Depot, Lowe's tracks and reports much of its wood sourcing data through CDP Forests,^{vi} and has made additional commitments to set science-based, net-zero emissions targets for its supply chain emissions, including its forest-related emissions, and to achieve 100 percent third-party certification or controlled wood sourcing of its products by 2025.^{vii} While Lowe's third-party certification goals fall short of ensuring supply chain sustainability, it is worth noting that Home Depot's policies lag behind even these efforts. In addition, Lowe's recently committed to report by the end of this year on how it can eliminate deforestation and primary forest degradation from its supply chains and is considering FPIC requirements for its suppliers.^{viii}

Solutions exist to create products that are compatible with a climate-safe future, but Home Depot's current sourcing is mirroring the company in unsustainable practices and implicating itself in the loss of forests vital to addressing climate change. As the world's largest home improvement retailer, it is critical that you set substantive policies within your supply chain that eliminate your sourcing of primary forests; transparently track and disclose your wood sourcing data; and set clear requirements that suppliers obtain free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) from Indigenous Peoples whenever their traditional territories are potentially impacted by logging operations.

Home Depot has long prided itself on providing products for its customers to "create the home of their dreams." Now, more than ever, the future of our collective home is at risk. We urge you to create wood products that are truly sustainable. The global climate and our forests are depending on it.

Sincerely,

Dyani Chapman
State Director
Alaska Environment

Devon Earl
Conservation Specialist
Alberta Wilderness Association

Alexey Zimenko
Director General
Biodiversity Conservation Center

Sun Li
Office Manager
Blue Dalian

Susanne McCrea
Executive Director
Boreal Action

Tamara Stark
Campaigns Director
Canopy

Allen Johnson
Coordinator
Christians For The Mountains

Dave Werntz
Science and Conservation Director
Conservation Northwest

Rachel Plotkin
Boreal Project Manager
David Suzuki Foundation

Rita Frost
Campaigns Director
Dogwood Alliance

Mary Gutierrez
Director
Earth Ethics, Inc.

Ellen Montgomery
Public Lands Campaign Director
Environment America

Dan Jacobson
State Director
Environment California

Hannah Collazo
State Director
Environment Colorado

Chris Phelps
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Environment Connecticut

J Redwood
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Environment East Gippsland Inc.

Jeanette Gayer
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Environment Georgia

Paloma Paez-Coombe
State Director
Environment Illinois

Kate Breimann
State Director
Environment Maryland

Ben Hellerstein
State Director
Environment Massachusetts

Doug O'Malley
State Director
Environment New Jersey

Drew Ball
State Director
Environment North Carolina

Celeste Meiffren-Swango
State Director
Environment Oregon

Luke Metzger
State Director
Environment Texas

Elly Boehmer
State Director
Environment Virginia

Pam Clough
State Director
Environment Washington

Alexander von Bismarck
Executive Director
Environmental Investigation Agency

Anna Scartz
President
Environmental Law Association, University of Georgia School of Law

Kimberly Baker, Public Land Advocate
Rhiannon Lewis-Stephenson, Communications & Development Coordinator
Environmental Protection Information Center (EPIC)

Stephen Capra
Executive Director
Footloose Montana

Evelyn Schönheit
Environmental Scientist
Forum Ökologie & Papier

Randy Hayes
Executive Director
Foundation Earth

Larry Campbell
Conservation Director
Friends of the Bitterroot

Jeff Conant
Senior International Forests Program Manager
Friends of the Earth

J.D. McCrary
Executive Director
Georgia ForestWatch

Diana Ruiz
Head of US Forests Program
Greenpeace USA

Jeffrey Stant
Executive Director
Indiana Forest Alliance

MarieClaire Egbert
Communications & Campaign Director
John Muir Project of Earth Island Institute

Kimberly Baker
Executive Director
Klamath Forest Alliance

Kirstin Beatty
Director
Last Tree Laws

Jennifer Skene
Natural Climate Solutions Policy Manager
Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC)

Birgitta McAlevey
President
No Sharon Gas Pipeline

Caroline Schultz
Executive Director
Ontario Nature

Mary Booth
Director
Partnership for Policy Integrity

David Masur
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Robert Heinrich
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Protect Our Woods

Maggie Martin
Sr. Forest Campaigner
Rainforest Action Network

Eleanor Hines
North Sound Baykeeper
RE Sources

Michael Kellett
Executive Director
RESTORE: The North Woods

Megan Amsler
Executive Director
Self-Reliance Corp

Ara Marderosian
Executive Director
Sequoia ForestKeeper®

Stephanie Blumenthal
President
Sheffield Saves

Kirin Kennedy
Director of People and Nature Policy
Sierra Club

Lisa Sweet
Owner
Sweet Sustainable Solutions

Don Ogden
Producer/Co-host
The Enviro Show

Susan Leopold
Executive Director
United Plant Savers

Cyril Kormos
Executive Director
Wild Heritage

Katie Krelove
Ontario Campaigner
Wilderness Committee

Sue Maxwell
Chair
Zero Waste BC

Cc: Ron Jarvis, Chief Sustainability Officer

ⁱ Jennifer Skene, “IPCC Report Highlights Urgency of Global Forest Protection,” NRDC, <https://www.nrdc.org/experts/jennifer-skene/new-ipcc-report-highlights-need-global-forest-protection>.

ⁱⁱ The Home Depot, “Wood Purchasing Policy,” September 2021, <https://ecoactions.homedepot.com/wp-content/uploads/Wood-Purchasing-Policy-September-2021.pdf>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid.

^{iv} NRDC, “Cutting It Close: How Unsustainable Logging in Canada’s Boreal Forest Threatens Indigenous

Rights, Wildlife, and the Global Climate,” July 25, 2018,

<https://www.nrdc.org/resources/cutting-it-close-how-unsustainable-logging-canadas-boreal-forest-threatens-indigenous>.

^v Susan Minnemeyer, Peter Potapov and Lars Laestadius, “World’s Last Intact Forests Are Becoming Increasingly Fragmented,” Global Forest Watch, <https://www.globalforestwatch.org/blog/data-and-research/worlds-last-intact-forests-are-becoming-increasingly-fragmented/>.

^{vi} CDP, “Lowe’s Companies, Inc.”

https://www.cdp.net/en/responses/11017?back_to=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdp.net%2Fen%2Fresponses%3Fpage%3D15%26per_page%3Dall%26sort_by%3Dresponse_status%26sort_dir%3Dasc&per_page=10&sort_by=program_name&sort_dir=asc.

^{vii} Green Century Funds, “Lowe’s commits to comprehensive reporting of its forest footprint; will also explore elimination of sourcing from primary forests,” <https://www.greencentury.com/lowes-commits-to-comprehensive-reporting-of-its-forest-footprint-will-also-explore-elimination-of-sourcing-from-primary-forests/>.

^{viii} Ibid.