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## EQC RESOLUTION ON TIMBER THEFT

WHEREAS, over 47 percent of Kentucky is covered in forests and woodlands with 88% of these forests and woodlands under private ownership; and

WHEREAS, Kentucky's forests and woodlands provide the raw materials for our forest industries that have an \$8.3 billion direct impact and \$12.8 billion in total impact to Kentucky's economy; and

WHEREAS, there is merchantable timber in all 120 counties and forest industries in 109 counties; and

WHEREAS, timber theft continues to be a serious threat to Kentucky's forests and woodlands resulting in financial loss and property loss to the landowners whose timber is stolen;

WHEREAS, timber thieves negatively impact the livelihood of 1,500 logging firms across the commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, timber theft is often viewed as a victimless crime and overburdened local law enforcement agencies and prosecutors with limited resources are reluctant to pursue these cases; and

WHEREAS, timber thieves are focused on their own financial gain and nothing else, leaving broad swaths of environmental damage in their wake; and

WHEREAS, timber thieves cause environmental damage by leaving slash piles that pose a wildfire danger; and

WHEREAS, timber thieves construct roads and skid trails without water control structures leading to major soil erosion, failing to use best management practices to

protect the waters of the Commonwealth as required by Kentucky Revised Statute 149.334; and

WHEREAS, improved laws and law enforcement techniques would mitigate the economic loss and environmental damage associated with timber theft;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED: that the Kentucky Environmental Quality Commission implores the Kentucky General Assembly to enact and strengthen laws to address timber theft by:

1. Granting statutory authority to the Kentucky Division of Forestry to investigate timber theft and enforce timber theft laws, provide funding and personnel for these new responsibilities
2. Increasing the civil and criminal penalties for timber theft
3. Establishing a legal method by which landowners do not bear the burden of proving the value of stolen timber
4. Establishing a rewards program as an incentive for reporting theft that leads to arrest and conviction of guilty parties, using funds from penalties and fines.

BE IT ALSO RESOLVED: that the Kentucky Environmental Quality Commission urges the Kentucky Attorney General to encourage and assist local prosecutors in addressing timber theft cases.

BE IT ALSO RESOLVED: that the Environmental Quality Commission urges the Governor of the Commonwealth of Kentucky to:

1. Improve the coordination among all agencies in their oversight of timber harvesting, resulting in the reduction of timber theft and timber trespass.
2. Develop a statewide system for timber theft data collection and maintenance.

Respectfully Submitted

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Stephen A. Coleman, Chairman  
Kentucky Environmental Quality Commission



