



## WESTERN GOVERNORS' ASSOCIATION

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April 28, 2010

The Honorable Tom Vilsack  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Ave S.W.  
Washington, DC 20250

The Honorable Gary Locke  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Commerce  
14<sup>th</sup> Street & Constitution Ave N.W.  
Washington, DC 20230

The Honorable Ken Salazar  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Vilsack, Secretary Locke and Secretary Salazar:

At the annual meeting of the Western Governors' Association in June 2009, we co-sponsored, and our colleagues unanimously adopted, WGA Policy Resolution 09-2, *Supporting the Integration of Climate Change Adaptation Science in the West*. This resolution acknowledges the threat of global warming to the Western economy, public health and the environment, as well as our determination to develop adaptation strategies that will mitigate the impacts of climate change.

WGA recently established a Climate Adaptation Work Group. We have asked the work group to develop a report by June 2010 that will include priority recommendations to help states develop climate adaptation plans. We expect the report to be highlighted during WGA's 2010 Annual Meeting this June in Whitefish, Montana. In the report, the work group will address a range of pressing climate adaptation issues, including: the adequacy and utility of existing regional climate observing systems, analyses and models; the data and modeling needs for critical state functions, including water, forest health, wildlife ecosystems, and transportation and other infrastructure; the socioeconomic impacts of climate-related change; and the effective use of climate change observations, analyses, models and decision support tools in policy decision-making in the Western States.

WGA's resolution acknowledges the fundamental fact that "planning for climate change adaptation should be undertaken in a coordinated fashion at all levels of government, with state expertise being fully utilized." It is in that spirit that we write to you today. It is crucial that states and federal agencies become partners in planning for and adapting to climate change. Your departments have demonstrated expertise and leadership in climate science and resource management. We acknowledge the steps you are taking to prepare for climate adaptation and we also recognize the role of the Council on Environmental Quality in coordinating the activities of the federal agencies with an interest and responsibility for climate adaptation.

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While these federal efforts are important, it is the states that will be on the front lines of climate change response and on-the-ground adaptation efforts. We face unique challenges in the West, particularly with the interrelated issues of water supply, forest health and invasive species. We need federal assistance in gathering critical data, funding and developing region-specific predictive models and providing targeted and timely decision support tools for state and local resource managers. Further, a significant portion of the West is under federal stewardship, and federal resource management is critical to the health of our Western environment and economies.

There is clearly a compelling and urgent case for a close state-federal partnership in identifying, planning for and responding to the emerging needs of climate change adaptation in the West. Therefore, we request your agencies' cooperation with the Western Governors' Association Climate Adaptation Work Group and future initiatives. Specifically, we ask that you:


- 1) coordinate with Western states in implementing your climate adaptation initiatives;
- 2) provide representatives to serve on the WGA Climate Adaptation Work Group; and
- 3) help us to secure federal resources, including funding, to support climate adaptation modeling and planning in the Western states.


These steps will improve coordination and strengthen the overall response to climate change in the Western states.

We appreciate the opportunities you've provided the WGA to meet with your Departments' staff over the past month. Pam Inmann, WGA's Executive Director, will be the point of contact for future discussions of the work plan, strategy and collaborative partnerships for the WGA Climate Adaptation Work Group.

In your roles as Secretaries, you have demonstrated a deep appreciation of the healthy ecosystems, rich natural resources and iconic landscapes of the American West. We commend your initiative to respond to the threat to the West posed by impacts from climate change and we look forward to working with you in this important effort.

Sincerely,

  
Bill Richardson  
Governor of New Mexico

  
Arnold Schwarzenegger  
Governor of California

cc: David Hayes, Deputy Secretary, U.S. Department of the Interior  
Jane Lubchenco, Administrator, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
Harris Sherman, Under Secretary, U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Nancy Sutley, Chair, White House Council on Environmental Quality