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October 25, 2012

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
S-221, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Boehner
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
S-230, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
House Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
H-204, US Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senators Reid and McConnell and Representatives Boehner and Pelosi:

This past summer we wrote to you requesting supplemental funding for firefighters battling fires, as well as for post fire recovery to restore important wildlife habitat. While additional resources were provided, funding for habitat restoration was not included in the final supplemental appropriations bill, even as wildfires continued to move aggressively across the West this season. While many aspects of the Western economy have been impacted by wildfire, we are writing today with concerns about the impacts of wildfires this year on rangeland habitat used by the greater sage-grouse (sage-grouse) and other wildlife, the economic and community values that are tied to the use of this habitat, and collaborative state and federal efforts underway to prevent a full listing of sage-grouse under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). In order for our efforts to be successful, we need Congress to provide supplemental funding to federal programs that prioritize necessary sage-grouse habitat rehabilitation and restoration work this calendar year.

More than 2.5 million acres of sage-grouse habitat burned during the fire season this year, dramatically impacting habitat specifically in Oregon, California and Nevada. Quick action affords us a significant opportunity to minimize impacts to the species and prevent further significant impacts before the breeding season next spring. Even prior to this year's extensive fires, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service had identified wildfire and invasive plant species as two primary threats to sage-grouse. Effective rehabilitation and restoration following wildfires can greatly improve the resiliency and sustainability of rangeland habitat and sage-grouse by reducing the presence of invasive species that

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Page 2

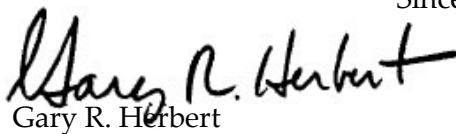
promote more wildfires. With supplemental funding from Congress, state and federal governments can improve habitat that has been burned this year and can proactively address future fire and invasive species management priorities.

We recently wrote to the Secretaries of Agriculture and Interior seeking their help in prioritizing funding for fire prevention, suppression and restoration work after this fire season. For them to be successful, supplemental federal funding for essential sage-grouse habitat restoration work this year is necessary, particularly for the Bureau of Land Management. Land and wildlife managers have a very small window of time to conduct the necessary restoration work that would reestablish the habitat lost from the fires this year. The need for quick action cannot be overstated.

The BLM alone has lost more than 2.2 million acres of sage-grouse habitat this year. In addition to funds already spent, they estimate the additional cost for needed rehabilitation and restoration to be approximately \$48 million. Additional funds would be used to purchase seed for late season fires, apply seed already purchased to fire-damaged areas, protect seedlings, and for other post fire treatments and adaptive management. If the narrow fall planting window is missed, additional work to prevent the expansion of invasive weeds and the future threat of wildfires in sage-grouse habitat becomes an increasingly costly and reoccurring negative impact to the conservation of the species.

We know that Congress has many pressing financial concerns, but your attention to this matter is critical. Millions of public and private dollars have already been invested in sage-grouse conservation efforts to prevent the devastating economic impact a full listing of the sage-grouse would have throughout the West. Therefore, we ask that when Congress returns for the lame duck session, you move quickly to provide supplemental funding to programs, particularly within the Bureau of Land Management, that prioritize necessary sage-grouse habitat rehabilitation and restoration work this year.

Sincerely,



Gary R. Herbert
Governor, State of Utah
Chairman, WGA



John Hickenlooper
Governor, State of Colorado
Vice Chairman, WGA

cc: The Honorable Daniel Inouye, Chairman, Senate Appropriations Committee
The Honorable Thad Cochran, Ranking Member, Senate Appropriations Committee
The Honorable Harold Rogers, Chairman, House Appropriations Committee
The Honorable Norm Dicks, Ranking Member, House Appropriations Committee