July 15, 2014

Thomas Tidwell
Chief
U.S. Forest Service
1400 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, D.C.  20250-0003

Dear Chief Tidwell:

The purpose of this letter is to express the strong support of Western Governors for expeditious implementation of forest management projects on the acreage recently designated for priority landscape-scale insect and disease treatment, pursuant to new authorities in the Agricultural Act of 2014 (Farm Bill). Thank you for your leadership with respect to this vital effort.

The health of the region’s forests and rangelands continues to deteriorate, exacerbating the risks of uncharacteristically intense and large patterns of disease, insect infestation, and wildfire. Our forests have been beset by increasingly catastrophic fires, resulting in greater environmental damage, higher fire suppression costs, increased impacts on public health, and enhanced threats to local communities. These significant problems cut across federal, state and private forests and rangelands, and require collaborative solutions.

The new authorities in the Farm Bill --including the designation of priority treatment areas, nationwide Good Neighbor Authority and permanent Stewardship Contracting authority -- provide the U.S. Forest Service with helpful new tools to increase the pace, scale and effectiveness of management work to address the underlying challenges facing forest health and western communities. This is particularly encouraging to Western Governors, given that the vast majority of the 45.6 million acres designated for restoration under the Farm Bill are in the West. The Governors urge the Forest Service to immediately begin work with western state foresters, industry, conservation and other forest collaborative stakeholders to use these new authorities to increase the pace and scale of forest management and restoration on western National Forests and adjacent non-federal lands.

Furthermore, I respectfully request that you provide information to Western Governors regarding projects you plan to begin under the new authorities in 2014 in their states (including the identity, location, and potential acreage if and when known). It would be most useful and appreciated if such information were transmitted by July 30, 2014. This will better equip Governors to provide
such assistance as may benefit the Forest Service in funding, planning, and implementing these projects. Thank you for your attention and consideration.

With best wishes and warm regards, I am

Respectfully,

James D. Ogsbury
Executive Director