



## WESTERN GOVERNORS' ASSOCIATION

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May 19, 2008

The Honorable Robert Byrd  
Chairman  
Senate Appropriations Committee  
S-131 Capitol Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Thad Cochran  
Ranking Member  
Senate Appropriations Committee  
S-131 Capitol Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable David Obey  
Chairman  
House Appropriations Committee  
H-218 Capitol Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jerry Lewis  
Ranking Member  
House Appropriations Committee  
1016 Longworth House Office Bldg  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Byrd and Cochran and Congressmen Obey and Lewis,

The purpose of this letter is to express Western Governors' concerns regarding the Administration's budget proposal for the fiscal year 2009 USDA Forest Service State and Private Forestry programs. This federal assistance is crucial to our state forestry agencies and provides direct benefits to the nation at-large. This funding also assures that our forest resources continue to provide the invaluable ecological, social, and economic benefits to our communities. We respectfully urge you to work to restore the funding for these cost-effective forestry programs.

State and federal governments work together to provide forestry assistance on all lands. This is a shared responsibility, particularly in the western states where forestry issues cross many private and governmental boundaries. Private forestlands make up over two-thirds of the nation's forests.

The Administration's FY09 budget proposal virtually eliminates several important forestry assistance programs that allow states to work together with private landowners on important forest health issues. The Administration proposes an 83 percent reduction in the Forest Stewardship Program; an 82 percent reduction in Urban and Community Forestry; a 26 percent reduction in State Fire Assistance; a 63 percent reduction in Cooperative Forest Health Management; and a 12 percent reduction in the Volunteer Fire Assistance programs. The cumulative impact is a 58 percent reduction in federal funding for the State and Private Forestry programs.

These cuts will decimate important landowner forestry assistance programs and limit our ability to respond to emergency events. As our forests are currently under siege by the effects of climate change, devastating insect outbreaks and increased wildfire activity, it is not the time to reduce our investments in our forests. Instead, it is a time to


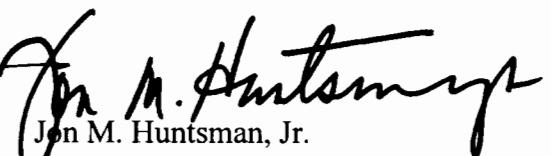
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strengthen our nation's commitment. The State and Private Forestry programs help provide the professional forestry assistance that will, in the long-term, reduce the intensity and cost of wildfire suppression. This situation fits the old adage that "*an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.*"

One of the reasons given for reduced federal funding is the ever-increasing cost of wildfire suppression. Cutting the State and Private Forestry programs, as well as other Forest Service programs, is the wrong way to address this issue. New ways to pay for catastrophic events must be found. Efforts to address this issue are being explored in Congress and we would urge you to become engaged in these efforts.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and for your assistance in restoring adequate funding for these programs which are critical to the forestry resources in all western states. Please let us know if we can be of assistance.

Sincerely,

 Dave Freudenthal Governor of Wyoming Chairman, WGA	 Jon M. Huntsman, Jr. Governor of Utah Vice-Chair, WGA
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cc: Senator Feinstein, Chair - Senate Interior, Environment and Related Agencies  
Senator Allard, Ranking Member - Senate Interior, Environment and Related Agencies  
Congressman Dicks, Chair - House Interior, Environment and Related Agencies  
Congressman Tiahrt, Ranking Member - House Interior, Environment and Related Agencies