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July 23, 2013

Honorable Ray Luján
U.S. House of Representatives
2446 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Luján:

The purpose of this letter is to communicate the support of the Western Governors' Association (WGA) for H.R. 2431, legislation to reauthorize the National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS). WGA commends you for co-sponsoring this legislation.

As you may know, Western Governors promoted the creation of NIDIS in 2006, and WGA has since worked with NOAA and other partners to champion the system's deployment. Western Governors are well-acquainted with the significant impacts that drought has on the West. Drought contributes to forest and rangeland fires, degrades growing conditions for farmers, and poses threats to municipal and industrial water supplies.

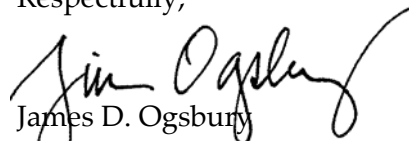
NIDIS provides the kind of authoritative, objective and timely drought information that farmers, water managers, decision-makers, and local governments require to prepare for and respond to drought. NIDIS has established a "drought portal" at drought.gov where information from state, federal, and academic partners is integrated into a single online source of information. Through the NIDIS mechanism, NOAA is building an emerging network of early warning systems for drought, working with local resource managers to identify and address unique regional drought information needs.

Western Governors value the approach used to build and improve NIDIS. Rather than creating a new NIDIS bureaucracy, the system draws from existing capacity in states, universities and multiple federal agencies, as called for in the original authorizing legislation. Given our shared fiscal challenges, we regard this as a model for federal-state collaboration in shared information services.

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For these reasons, Western Governors support reauthorization of NIDIS and urge passage of H.R. 2431. Furthermore, WGA looks forward to continuing to work with you on this legislation in order to ensure that the productive partnership that NIDIS has fostered between states and federal agencies can be further developed. In the meantime, with appreciation for your leadership, I am

Respectfully,



James D. Ogsbury
Executive Director

Identical letter sent to Representatives Ralph Hall and Lamar Smith