



## WESTERN GOVERNORS' ASSOCIATION

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August 23, 2013

Honorable Thomas J. Vilsack  
Secretary  
United States Department of Agriculture  
Jamie L. Whitten Building  
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.  
Washington, DC 20010

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

Thank you for your recent response to the Western Governors' letter of April 16, 2013.

Governors share the responsibility for providing efficient and cohesive management of lands in the West. As emphasized in their April letter, the Governors have been concerned for some time that federal forest lands throughout the region are facing serious environmental stress affecting the health and vitality of Western ecosystems. These forests are overgrown; they exhibit all the symptoms of an unhealthy ecosystem; and they demand urgent attention.

Your June letter highlighted several programs that are designed to reduce hazardous fuels across large landscapes. These efforts include the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program and Integrated Resource Restoration projects. While the Governors appreciate that general information, they have asked me to reiterate their request for specific data and commitments as follows:

- A state-by-state accounting of the areas in which forest health and fuels reduction funds have been spent on the more than 193 million acres of national forests over the past five years;
- State-by-state specifics on how many additional acres the Forest Service plans to treat through its Restoration Strategy over the next five years, including the expected yields of timber (including woody biomass, board feet and related yields);
- A plan of action -- including timelines -- to put the private sector to work on federal forest and range management activities throughout the West to reduce hazardous fuel loads and improve public safety;

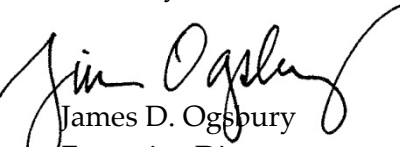
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- A commitment to work with Western Governors and the Council of Western State Foresters to convene a forest industry task group to identify ways that the timber industry can assist with improving federal forest management. WGA is willing to lead this effort immediately.

Western governors agree with, and are encouraged by, a recent pronouncement of USFS Chief Tom Tidwell calling for a stronger role for the private sector: *"We know we cannot [restore forests' health] without a strong integrated forest products industry that can use all parts and sizes of trees to help us accomplish our restoration work."*

On behalf of the Governors, WGA respectfully requests a timely, detailed and thorough response to the inquiries above. Western wildfires continue to burn homes and our states' natural resources at record numbers. It is imperative we reduce hazardous fuels in the interface around communities and in the matrix of public land throughout the West, and we must act now.

Sincerely,



James D. Oggsbury  
Executive Director

cc: Tom Tidwell, U.S. Forest Chief