



## WESTERN GOVERNORS' ASSOCIATION

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October 28, 2009

The Honorable Tom Vilsack  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.  
Washington, DC 20250

The Honorable Steven Chu  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Energy  
1000 Independence Ave., S.W.  
Washington, DC 20585

The Honorable Ken Salazar  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street, N.W., Room 6151  
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretaries Vilsack, Chu, and Salazar:

We are writing to report on the status of the June 2009 Memorandum of Understanding that you signed with the Western Governors' Association (WGA) concerning wildlife corridors and crucial habitat and to discuss our next steps for implementation. The primary objective under the MOU is to coordinate the development of state-based wildlife decision support systems that will provide compatible wildlife data across political boundaries. These systems will assist us in evaluating development decisions in areas such as renewable energy generation, transmission and transportation projects. As we begin implementation of the MOU, there are a number of important next steps that require coordination between your Departments and Western states.

Since June, the Western Governors' Wildlife Council, a group chartered by and reporting to the Western Governors, has been actively preparing to engage with the federal agencies. At its meeting in Montana earlier this month, the Wildlife Council released a draft white paper to the agencies and the public that is intended to establish a consistent framework for wildlife data within each state, in order to create the compatible regional information systems envisioned in the MOU. Federal agency representatives from DOI and USDA provided preliminary feedback on the white paper. The Council is refining the paper based on suggestions heard at the meeting and seeks continued federal input as the regional framework evolves.

At its meeting, the Council agreed to establish a State-Federal Implementation Group to ensure effective coordination in implementing the MOU, including further developing the white paper. The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Council will participate on the State-Federal Implementation Group. Consistent with the MOU's requirement that each party designate a lead liaison

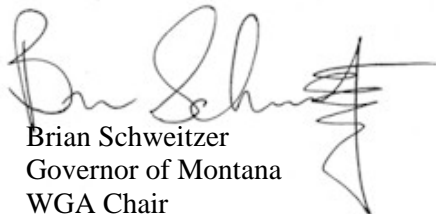
to oversee its implementation, we seek your formal designation of officials to the Implementation Group as soon as possible. Once your designees are named, WGA will host a meeting of the Implementation Group to define their priorities and begin refining the white paper.

In addition, we anticipate an announcement shortly from the U.S. Department of Energy regarding WGA's application for transmission planning resources. The DOE solicitation includes funding for wildlife pilot studies that is critical to verifying approaches to develop regionally compatible decision support systems. We appreciate DOE's willingness to make these funding resources available to all 18 of the WGA states that are members of the Wildlife Council. The Council members have already developed an impressive list of eight wildlife study proposals. All were discussed at the recent Wildlife Council meeting and are being refined based on the comments received. Wildlife Council members are committed to coordinating closely with federal land management agencies and stakeholders on these wildlife pilot studies to expedite digital mapping and development of new wildlife data. The Implementation Group will help ensure coordination on the pilot studies.

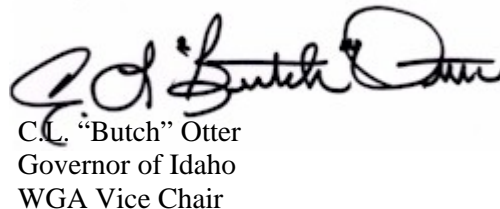
Finally, WGA's 2009 Winter Meeting will focus on expanding the energy transmission grid in the West, and a portion of the meeting will be devoted to the wildlife decision support system efforts. The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks will demonstrate the system it is developing and we will discuss pilot projects other states are preparing to undertake. The meeting will be held in San Diego on December 16 and 17, and we look forward to federal officials participating in the discussions.

Thank you for your leadership on this initiative that is so important to our states and the nation. We will continue to communicate with you on this initiative as developments warrant.

Sincerely,



Brian Schweitzer  
Governor of Montana  
WGA Chair



C.L. "Butch" Otter  
Governor of Idaho  
WGA Vice Chair

cc: Western Governors' Wildlife Council members  
Bob Abbey, BLM Director  
Sam Hamilton, FWS Director  
Marcia McNutt, USGS Director  
Tom Tidwell, USFS Chief  
Dave White, NRCS Chief