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March 20, 2019

The Honorable Jim Hubbard  
Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Under Secretary Hubbard:

On behalf of Western Governors, I appreciate the opportunity to provide comments on implementation of the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 ([Pub. L. 115-334](#), a.k.a. the Farm Bill), which includes many provisions to support forest and rangeland management in the West. Several Farm Bill programs address priorities identified in the Western Governors' Association's (WGA) [National Forest and Rangeland Management Initiative](#), and in WGA Policy Resolution [2017-10, National Forest and Rangeland Management](#).

Western Governors are encouraged by the enactment of Farm Bill provisions that call for greater collaboration between the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and state and local agencies. Such provisions include reauthorization of the annual statewide assessment and strategies for forest resources through Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 and the State and Private Forest Landscape-Scale Restoration Program. Programs such as these leverage state, tribal, and local expertise while reducing legislative and regulatory barriers to restoration activities. Governors also support the Farm Bill's expansion of Good Neighbor Authority to counties and tribes, which should provide greater flexibility for local and tribal governments to participate in cross-boundary projects. Each of these provisions promotes cooperation between federal, state, local, tribal and private land managers and can be helpful in collaboratively addressing western land management needs.

Effective restoration is a vital component of forest and rangeland management. The Farm Bill contains several programs to improve forest and rangeland restoration practices. Among these are the reauthorization of hazardous fuel reduction on federal lands, and the authorization of grants from the competitive forestry, natural resources, and environmental grant program to support forest restoration in addition to research. These programs address Western Governors' call to prioritize restoration activities across all ownerships and create resilient landscapes in areas facing high wildfire risk, significant watershed health issues, and wildlife and fish habitat degradation.

Western Governors hope that the Shared Stewardship initiative of Secretary Perdue will be an effective avenue to facilitate additional communication about, and action on, cross-boundary management priorities across the West. WGA appreciates the Secretary's engagement with Western Governors at their 2018 Winter Meeting, and his execution with WGA leadership of a joint Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on shared stewardship. I look forward to implementation of several cross-boundary projects of regional concern through the MOU, and to the completion of additional agreements between the U.S. Department of Agriculture and states to address specific priority projects and management needs.

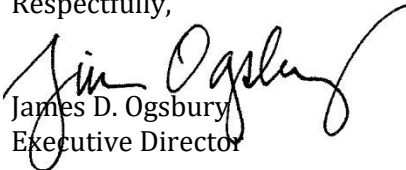
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I appreciate your attention to forest and rangeland management and restoration priorities in the West. Please consider Western Governors a resource as you begin implementing Farm Bill provisions and addressing these important issues. In the meantime, with warm regards and best wishes, I am

Respectfully,



James D. Ogsbury  
Executive Director