



February 23, 2018

Honorable Ryan Zinke
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Zinke:

On behalf of Western Governors and counties throughout the region, we seek to provide feedback on the preliminary plans to reorganize the Department of the Interior (the Department) and its bureaus.

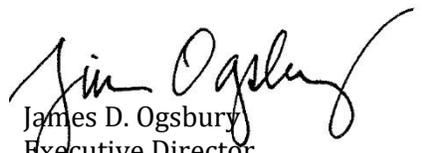
We appreciate your desire to make the Department more efficient and support your goal of moving the Department's offices, employees, and decision-making closer to the lands and resources it manages. We also urge you to use this reorganization as an opportunity to improve the working relationship between the federal government and state and local governments.

To accomplish these objectives, Western Governors and counties advocate for Departmental office boundaries that follow state lines and state-level decision-making authority. State-based regions help achieve the partnerships needed to solve our mutual and complex resource challenges. Each state and its governments represent local needs and can capitalize on resources to address common objectives, including wildlife, land use planning, environmental quality, and water resources management. Continuing this approach, while also moving agency decision-makers closer to the lands they manage, would increase efficiency and decentralize decision-making, while also respecting state authority and improving the Department's ability to consult and cooperate with state and local governments.

We greatly appreciate the Department's just revised map of proposed regional office boundaries, in which those boundaries more closely follow state lines. In addition, we commend your addition of the goal of improving coordination among federal, state and local agencies to the Department's Frequently Asked Questions on the reorganization, as well as your clarification that the process for implementing any proposed unified boundaries will not begin until you finish discussions with Governors and state and local elected leaders.

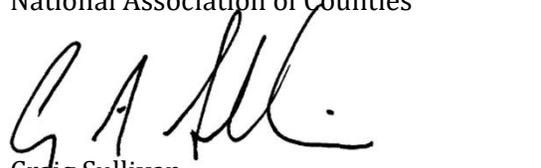
We are committed to improving the partnership that must exist between our governments and Departmental agencies for the responsible management of the land and resources of the West. We look forward to providing additional feedback, input and assistance on the Department's reorganization.

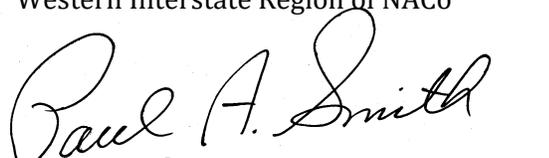
Sincerely,


James D. Ogsbury
Executive Director
Western Governors' Association


Matthew D. Chase
Executive Director
National Association of Counties

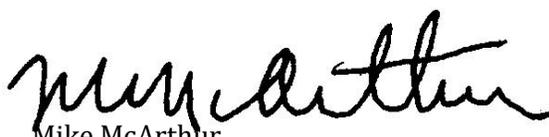

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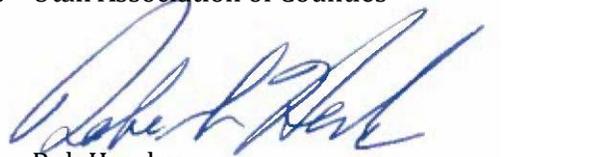

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