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September 26, 2018

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Acting Director  
Bureau of Land Management  
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Washington D.C. 20240

Vicki Christiansen  
Interim Chief  
U.S. Forest Service  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
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Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Acting Director Steed and Interim Chief Christiansen:

We appreciate recent outreach by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and U.S. Forest Service (USFS) regarding the review of the pipeline, transmission and distribution right-of-way corridors on federal lands in the West (West-wide energy corridors). These corridors were designated pursuant to Section 368 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005.

The Corridor Study that preceded the reviews directed the agencies to consider new and relevant information, because “energy development and associated infrastructure are dynamic environments” and “agency actions and public opinions regarding land uses and siting opportunities and constraints on public lands constantly evolve.” This letter describes new developments that should be considered as BLM and USFS move forward with the reviews. These are in addition to the agencies’ land use planning and environmental review reform efforts noted in our previous correspondence ([Nov. 21, 2017 letter](#)).

### **Habitat and Wildlife Management**

Secretarial Order 3362, Improving Habitat Quality in Western Big-Game Winter Range and Migration Corridors ([Order](#)), directs Department of the Interior (DOI) agencies to work with western states in developing Action Plans to enhance and improve the quality of big-game winter range and migration corridor habitat on federal lands. Western Governors ask BLM to consider the geographical intersection between the West-wide energy corridors and migration corridor habitat and to address any conflicts between their associated management directives. BLM should consult with Governors before addressing any such conflicts.

### **Vegetation Management and Wildfire Considerations**

As noted in the BLM and Edison Electric Institute’s recently updated [Memorandum of Understanding](#), Vegetation Management in Electric Utility Corridors, the destructive 2017 fire season demonstrates the need to effectively address vegetation and fuels management issues associated with electrical transmission lines. Additionally, USFS’s [strategy](#), Toward Shared Stewardship Across Landscapes, describes partnerships with energy utilities, corporate partners, and others to restore healthy forests near critical energy infrastructure. BLM and USFS should facilitate proactive vegetation management, as well as the prevention and minimization of potential wildfire impacts on grid reliability, in the West-wide energy corridors. The agencies should also consider the possibility of using these corridors for other land management responsibilities, including emergency vehicle access during wildfire suppression and search and rescue operations.

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## **Broadband Infrastructure**

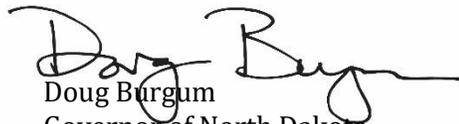
[Executive Order 13821](#) directs agencies to use, “all viable tools to accelerate the deployment and adoption of affordable, reliable, modern high-speed broadband connectivity in rural America.” The Executive Order’s accompanying [memorandum](#) directs DOI to develop a plan to increase access to its infrastructure to support rural broadband development. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) [Report](#) from the Task Force on Agriculture and Rural Prosperity and USDA’s [2018 Farm Bill & Legislative Priorities](#) emphasize the need to enhance high-speed internet access to support rural development. To accomplish these ends, Western Governors urge BLM and USFS to incentivize the co-location of broadband infrastructure in the West-wide energy corridors wherever possible.

Please consider Western Governors as a resource and partner in addressing the issues described above. We look forward to reviewing the draft Region 1 report and working with you on future West-wide energy corridor reviews.

Sincerely,



David Ige  
Governor of Hawaii  
Chair, WGA



Doug Burgum  
Governor of North Dakota  
Vice Chair, WGA