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April 28, 2022

The Honorable Deb Haaland  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20240

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

Dear Secretaries Haaland and Vilsack:

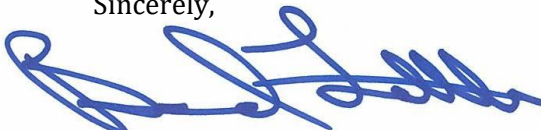
As we collectively begin the work to responsibly implement provisions of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA, Pub. L. 117- 58), Western Governors are concerned about the effect some procedural rules may have on the ability to expedite project implementation on public lands. A specific example is the requirement to reinitiate endangered species consultations of existing management plans following any new information.

This requirement has the potential to block or delay essential land management activities, wildlife habitat enhancement, and wildfire fuel reduction projects on federal lands. If new information triggers re-initiation of consultation at the project level, the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management should not be required to have new consultation at the plan level. Forest Plans and Resource Management Plans should incorporate new information according to the timelines already established in statute.

Because species considerations are already incorporated at the project level, this change would neither affect how species are managed nor how habitat concerns are addressed. It would simply ensure that an entire Forest Plan or Resource Management Plan is not reopened due to the site-specific considerations of a local project. Modifying this requirement would avoid unnecessary and duplicative administrative processes and expedite other management activities already approved under Forest Plans and Resource Management Plans.

Western states are eager to increase the pace and scale of restoration activities on western forests and rangelands, mitigate the potential effects of uncharacteristic wildfire, and to support fire-adapted communities in the West. Western Governors stand ready to assist you in these important endeavors.

Sincerely,



Brad Little  
Governor of Idaho  
Chair, WGA



Jared Polis  
Governor of Colorado  
Vice Chair, WGA