



United States Department of Agriculture

MAR 27 2013

Office of the Secretary
Washington, D.C. 20250

The Honorable Jack Reed
Chairman
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
131 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with an update on the status of developing a process, in consultation with State Foresters, that provides for the consideration and incorporation of Forest Action Plans in the annual budget preparation process, responds to state-specific priorities by allowing State Foresters the flexibility to reallocate a percentage of authorizations for the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act, and supports an effective competitive grant procedure that addresses national and regional priorities as requested in Conference Report 112-331 as well as House Report 112-151.

In consultation with the Forest Service Deputy Chief for State and Private Forestry, the National Association of State Foresters worked with its membership to develop a proposal to the Forest Service outlining a collaborative process for incorporating changes to be considered during the Agency's budget formulation process to ensure consideration and incorporation of Forest Action Plans. The proposed options addressed the desire for "funding flexibility" expressed by State Foresters. In fiscal year (FY) 2012, the Forest Service also funded projects through the State and Private Forestry Redesign competitive grant process to respond to state-specific priorities consistent with Forest Action Plans.

Many concerns about funding flexibility and the effectiveness of the competitive grant program would be addressed by the proposed Landscape Scale Restoration Budget Line Item (BLI), in the FY 2013 President's Budget. The proposed BLI would allow States to propose projects that align with their priorities, regardless of funding type, providing significant flexibility and increasing effectiveness. The proposed BLI would reduce the process burden of the current competitive allocation process and would also enhance States' flexibility to implement their action plans.

In compliance with section 435 of Public Law 111-88, after 45 days this report will be posted to the Forest Service Web site at <http://www.fs.fed.us/aboutus/budget/congressional-directives.shtml>.

Similar letters are being sent to Senator Lisa Murkowski and Congressmen Michael K. Simpson and James P. Moran.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tom Vilsack", is written over a faint, circular official seal of the USDA.

Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary



United States Department of Agriculture

MAR 27 2013

Office of the Secretary
Washington, D.C. 20250

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
125 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Murkowski:

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with an update on the status of developing a process, in consultation with State Foresters, that provides for the consideration and incorporation of Forest Action Plans in the annual budget preparation process, responds to state-specific priorities by allowing State Foresters the flexibility to reallocate a percentage of authorizations for the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act, and supports an effective competitive grant procedure that addresses national and regional priorities as requested in Conference Report 112-331 as well as House Report 112-151.

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Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary



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Office of the Secretary
Washington, D.C. 20250

The Honorable Michael K. Simpson
Chairman
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
B-308 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

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Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary



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Office of the Secretary
Washington, D.C. 20250

The Honorable James P. Moran
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20215

Dear Congressman Moran:

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with an update on the status of developing a process, in consultation with State Foresters, that provides for the consideration and incorporation of Forest Action Plans in the annual budget preparation process, responds to state-specific priorities by allowing State Foresters the flexibility to reallocate a percentage of authorizations for the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act, and supports an effective competitive grant procedure that addresses national and regional priorities as requested in Conference Report 112-331 as well as House Report 112-151.

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Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary