



October 20, 2009

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary
US Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

We, the undersigned organizations, write to express our interest in working collaboratively with the Department and the US Forest Service as the Agency considers promulgating a new rule for Land and Resource Management Planning under the National Forest Management Act. While planning regulations do not often earn the billing and attention that some other Agency-wide policy decisions do, the planning rule will have a lasting effect upon management outcomes for the national forests that we each care deeply about.

While we all have the benefit of intimate familiarity with its requirements, few who work directly with field units of the Forest Service have been satisfied with forest planning or forest plan implementation under the 1982/83 Rule. The 2005 and 2008 proposed rules caused dissatisfaction and skepticism of their own among conservation and forestry advocates alike.

Together, we are willing to work toward agreement and support a planning rule that includes appropriate protections for viable, diverse wildlife populations and their habitat, contains meaningful analyses, and operates through an open public process. We also believe new-era forest plans must make “desired future condition” or objective-based management direction a more central theme than their predecessors did, in order to improve and better guide on-the-ground project outcomes.

We therefore offer our support to you in crafting a new rule, and our willingness to formally or informally work on solutions for the differing views that have mired past rulemaking efforts.

Signed,

Council of Western State Foresters

The Lands Council

The Nature Conservancy

Society of American Foresters

WildLaw

Washington State Dept. of Natural Resources