

December 15, 2010

The Honorable Thomas Vilsack
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W., Suite 200-A
Washington DC 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

Sweeping new national forest management rules set to be released by the Obama administration in early 2011 provide a unique opportunity to continue the conservation legacy of President Theodore Roosevelt, who had the foresight to protect these treasured lands more than a century ago. Because of this vision, America enjoys 193 million acres of national forests and grasslands – including 20 million acres in California.ⁱ These are public lands that provide vital protection for fish and wildlife and clean drinking water for millions nationwide.

Today, our national forests and the wildlife and water resources they support, including those in California, face unprecedented threats that even a visionary leader such as Roosevelt could not have anticipated. Our forests, wildlife and watersheds, which require comprehensive restoration to remedy the effects of mismanagement, also face new challenges associated with climate change and encroaching development.

The new National Forest Management Act regulations must effectively protect and restore our national forests as we face the challenges of the 21st century. They must serve to anchor Forest Service management by giving the agency clear non-discretionary direction, as has been the case with the current regulations which were developed in 1982. At the same time, the new regulations must use sound and current science to safeguard healthy fish and wildlife populations and their habitats, and secure safe, clean water by creating management standards to protect and restore streams, rivers and watersheds.

We see the development of these comprehensive national forest management rules as one of the most important environmental actions that the administration will take during this term. The course set by these critical rules will determine the future of our forests, wildlife and watersheds for generations to come.

We look forward to working with you to develop a new framework for managing our national forests in this century of which President Roosevelt would be proud.

Sincerely,

Karen Schambach
President
Center for Sierra Nevada Conservation

Kim Delfino
California Program Director
Defenders of Wildlife

John Buckley
Executive Director
Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center

Scott Greacen
Executive Director
Environmental Protection Information Center

Don Rivenes
Executive Director
Forest Issues Group

Craig Thomas
Executive Director
Sierra Forest Legacy

Bill Magavern
Director
Sierra Club California

David Edelson
Regional Director
The Wilderness Society

Terry Davis
Conservation Program Coordinator
Sierra Club, Mother Lode Chapter

Carla Cloer
President
Tule River Conservancy

ⁱ http://www.fs.fed.us/land/staff/lar/2009/LAR_Table_04.html