June 4, 2018

The Honorable Rob Bishop

Chairman

House Natural Resources Committee

US House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Raul Grijalva

Ranking Member

House Natural Resources Committee

US House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Bishop and Ranking Member Grijalva:

The heads of state forestry agencies around the country have been key partners with the Agriculture Department’s Forest Service and the Interior Department’s Bureau of Land Management for many years. Collectively, we are represented by the National Association of State Foresters (NASF) and share with our federal partners the common goal of promoting the health and well-being of all of the nation’s forest resources. This letter is to express our gratitude for the work of your committee in support of increasing active forest management on federal lands and our appreciation of the steps the Forest Service and Interior Department are taking to begin implementing newly enacted authorities.

Notably, recent improvements to the Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) have strengthened the ability of State Foresters to work with federal land managers to achieve even more results on the ground. We fully embrace this role and see it continuing to grow. Attached is a report we completed that assessed current and future work by state foresters under GNA. As noted in the report, 28 states have entered into GNA agreements and six more intend to do so. It is likely the remaining states do not have significant portions of federal land. Since the report and passage of the legislation, the agencies have provided additional training and the number of GNA projects continue to increase.

At the time we collected the information, 133 GNA agreements had been executed. These agreements led to a number of important projects that reduced fire risk, restored forests, curtailed invasive species/insect/disease, and allowed for important trail work, commercial timber sales, and fire salvage operations to occur. The Forest Service utilized categorical exclusions on many of these projects. On average, over 400 acres per vegetation management project were treated. We would expect this average to increase with the new authorities recently provided. It’s also important to note that states invested some thirty percent of the project costs as many of these were cross boundary projects.

NASF believes significant improvements have been made through recent legislation and will continue to be made with the commitment from the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management to work with the nation’s State Foresters to more fully utilize this authority. These improvements will have lasting positive implications for America’s forests. We expect to resurvey our Members within the next two years and find a significantly increased level of GNA participation and accomplishment. State Foresters do, however, believe GNA could be utilized to even greater effect if all Interior Department agencies were allowed to participate in GNA projects and if State Foresters were able to partner with the Forest Service on forest inventory work on federal lands.

Again, thank you for your efforts in providing expanded authorities to improve all of our nation’s forests. We are encouraged by the results of GNA efforts to date and look forward to an even stronger partnership with the Forest Service and the Department of Interior as we move forward.

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| George Geissler  Washington State Forester  President, National Association of State Foresters |  |