



United States Department of Agriculture

Office of the Secretary
Washington, D.C. 20250

DEC - 3 2014

Mr. Bill Wickman
Sustainable Forest Action Coalition
542 Main Street
Placerville, California 95667

Dear Mr. Wickman:

Thank you for your letter of September 23, 2014, cosigned by Ms. Laura Brent-Bumb, requesting the designation of additional areas pursuant to Section 8204 of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (Farm Bill). I recognize the importance of public land management to communities and share your concern about the increased susceptibility of forested lands to insect and disease infestations as a result of catastrophic wildfires. I apologize for the delayed response.


Ecological restoration and maintaining healthy, resilient landscapes are priorities for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service. The authorities in the Farm Bill will afford the Forest Service many opportunities to help create healthy, resilient forests that can provide a multitude of benefits to society and withstand stressors such as wildfire, insects, and disease. I encourage you to work closely with the Forest Service in determining additional areas of designation. I will also work with the Forest Service, as appropriate, to review and consider additional areas for designation based on the criteria outlined in the Farm Bill.

Furthermore, the Forest Service maintains a robust salvage program that actively pursues projects in areas subjected to catastrophic wildfire or insect and disease damage. Fire salvage activities were carried out in California following the recent Rim Fire, and salvage of insect and disease damaged trees is considered wherever these conditions exist on National Forest System lands.

The Forest Service is currently undertaking the advance planning necessary to effectively implement the new Farm Bill insect and disease management authorities. In fiscal year 2015, the Agency will continue these planning efforts and expand implementation of projects in designated treatment areas to create resilient ecosystems that can more easily recover from catastrophic events. The Forest Service looks forward to working with the Sustainable Forest Action Coalition and other partners to develop and implement landscape scale restoration projects in areas at risk of insect and disease infestations.

Thank you for your interest in forest and ecosystem management and your continued support for implementation of the 2014 Farm Bill. A similar response is being mailed to Ms. Brent-Bumb.

Sincerely,



Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary