



United States Department of Agriculture

Office of the Secretary
Washington, D.C. 20250

RECEIVED
MAR 31 2011

Executive Directors Office
DEPT. OF NATURAL RESOURCES

MAR 25 2011

The Honorable Mike King
Executive Director
Colorado Department of Natural Resources
1313 Sherman Street, Room 718
Denver Colorado 80203

Dear Mr. King:

Thank you for your letter of December 30, 2010, cosigned by your colleague, Mr. Jeff Jahnke, expressing support for Senator Mark Udall's request to review the current mountain pine bark beetle epidemic in Colorado. I am aware of the Governor's Forest Health Advisory Council (FHAC), and I appreciate your offer to assist the Forest Service. I apologize for the delayed response.

It is my understanding that the FHAC has endorsed the study that the Rocky Mountain Research Station and the Intermountain Region have developed and are undertaking. This study is expected to be completed by mid-April. Once the report is available, the Forest Service will be ready to work with the FHAC to review the findings and discuss the best way to work together to apply the lessons learned.

The Department of Agriculture's Forest Service is currently developing a national strategy that addresses the western bark beetle situation. Recovery and use in forests that have been devastated by the bark beetle and, also, the prevention of bark beetle infestation in forests where their populations have not reached critical levels will be addressed. In line with the review that Senator Udall requested, this national strategy will outline preemptive actions that can mitigate the impacts of such epidemics in the future; identify a range of solutions to administrative and budgetary obstacles; recommend new authorities and contracting mechanisms, including stewardship contracting; address special issues related to watersheds; outline costs associated with responding to the epidemic; and provide further related information and recommendations.

This national strategy will also highlight the lessons learned and the obstacles encountered in taking these and other actions, and help inform the location of future investments in forest recovery and epidemic prevention. I believe this is very similar to what the Senator had put forth in his letter and for which you have shared your support.

As you know, in fiscal year 2010, the Rocky Mountain Region of the Forest Service received an additional \$40 million to address the beetle infestations. Much of this funding was directed to address the infestation in northern Colorado and southern Wyoming. A direct result of this increase was hazardous tree removal from roads, trails, and campgrounds; hazardous fuels

Mr. Mike King
Page 2

removal from wildland urban interface and administrative sites; hazardous tree removal from infrastructure such as power lines, recreation residences, and ski area facilities working with permittees; informing the public about hazards through Web sites, brochures, and publications; increased signing; and added patrols.

Again, thank you for your interest and your offer to assist the Forest Service. A similar response is being sent to your colleague, Mr. Jeff Jahnke.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tom Wilsack', written in a cursive style.

Thomas J. Wilsack
Secretary