

December 13, 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 nearly nine million acres in Washington State. These are public lands that provide vital protection for fish and wildlife and clean drinking water and outdoor experiences for millions of people nationwide.

Today, our national forests, and the wildlife, water resources and recreation they support, including those in Washington State, 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 long-term 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 viable fish and wildlife populations and their habitats, secure safe, clean water by creating substantive management standards to protect and restore streams, rivers and watersheds and ensure sustainable outdoor experiences for current and future generations.

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,

Nalani Askov
Executive Director
Washington Wilderness Coalition

Matt Perkins
Secretary
Washington Climbers Coalition

Eric Linxweiler
Interim Executive Director
The Mountaineers

Brett Swift
Director, Northwest Regional Office,
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Bill Weiler
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Jim Davis
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Kathy Johnson
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Jonathan Guzzo
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Washington Trails Association