

STATE OF COLORADO

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John W. Hickenlooper
Governor

USDA Forest Service
Attn: Tony Tooke, Associate Deputy Chief for the National Forest System, 5NW
1400 Independence Ave SW
Mailstop 1106
Washington, DC 20250

April 7, 2014

Dear Mr. Tooke,

We are writing pursuant to the Agricultural Act of 2014 signed into law February 7, 2014, to request that certain National Forests and portions of National Forests in Colorado be designated as Insect and Disease Treatment Areas. We welcome this new approach, as our forests have seen unprecedented damage from Mountain Pine Beetle and, more recently, Spruce Beetle. This damage is likely to continue given the significant drought conditions that we are experiencing in Colorado, that further reduce the health and resiliency of our forested lands.

It is our understanding that such designation does not mean that every acre within a designated treatment area will be treated; instead, within these designated treatment areas, individual projects can then be developed and must be done so through a collaborative process. These individual projects can occur any time after the treatment areas are designated, and are eligible for expedited review. Further, we understand that lands with the National Wilderness Preservation System, including Congressionally designated Wilderness Study Areas, and any other areas in which tree removal would be inconsistent with the applicable forest plan will be excluded from any treatment.

Colorado has a rich history of local collaboration for forestry projects, and we have already begun to gather ideas for potential work under these newly expanded authorities. Additionally, our forest products industry has rebounded in recent years and we hope to find opportunities that benefit those businesses as well. The opportunity to honor collaboratively developed project ideas in concert with supplying the timber for traditional forestry as well as newer biomass energy industries is timely for Colorado.

The following National Forests have experienced such massive infestation of beetles and other threats to their health that they merit designation in their entirety: Arapaho, Grand Mesa, Rio Grande, Roosevelt, Routt, San Juan, and the Pike. Other National Forests have experienced epidemics in only a portion of their expanse. Accordingly, we suggest designating the Gunnison Ranger District portion of the Gunnison National Forest, and the Aspen, Dillon, Eagle, Holy Cross, and Sopris Ranger Districts of the White River National Forest. Only the Uncompaghre and San Isabel National Forests have so far largely escaped widespread insect and disease infestation.

We look forward to working with the U.S. Forest Service to identify projects within these designated areas that will receive both priority attention and expedited review. It is our hope that the success of early projects will reinforce the importance of this new provision, and that additional treatment areas may be designated in the future. Thanks again for your attention to this critical issue facing the forests and watersheds of Colorado.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "John W. Hickenlooper". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "J".

Governor John W. Hickenlooper