October 18, 2019

RE: Support the National Association of Forest Retirees’ Increasing Workforce Capacity Report

Dear Secretary Perdue,

On behalf of the Wyoming County Commissioners Association (“WCCA”), an organization representing the Boards of County Commissioners for all twenty-three of Wyoming’s counties, I write in support of the findings, conclusions and recommendations set forth in the National Association of Forest Retirees’ (“NAFSR”) report entitled “Increasing Workforce Capacity to Increase the Pace and Scale of Restoration on National Forest System Lands” (the “Report”).

Wyoming values its many National Forests and Grasslands, relying on them for economic benefits, such as timber harvests, grazing and mineral development, and recreation, including hunting, hiking, fishing, camping, biking and other activities. National Forests and Grasslands are part of the custom and culture of counties across the state.

At the same time, our Nation’s forests are in need of better management. Catastrophic wildfires, resulting from years of fires suppression and disease and outbreak, threaten forests, water quality, human safety and public welfare. Such events also drain the coffers of the U.S Forest Service and relocate personnel from management and restoration activities to firefighting.

As the NAFSR Report describes, in recent decades, the Forest Service has experienced a reduction of personnel trained in forest management and restoration. Instead, the Service has increased the number of fire-oriented employees. As a result, the agency does not have sufficient skills and expertise to plan for and conduct the kind of landscape-scale vegetative restoration treatments necessary to manage Forests.

To remedy this situation, WCCA asks that the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Forest Service consider implementing the following recommendations provided in the Report:

- Hire employees with skills sets necessary to increase the pace and scale of forest restoration
- Totally revamp the hiring process, streamlining procedures, removing all roadblocks and restoring connections with field units
- Eliminate unnecessary administrative burdens
• Increase funding to hire new employees, contract work and enter into partnerships
• Delegate authority to field units

WCCA and county commissioners across the state are eager to partner with the Service to advance and accomplish these actions, including through shared stewardship, good neighbor authority agreements and stewardship contracting. There may be ways Wyoming counties can help add capacity and get work done on the ground. As you review the Report, please keep in mind how Wyoming counties may be able to help with the management of our Forests.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss the matter further, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Dr. Troy Thompson
President
Wyoming County Commissioners Association

Cc:

Doug Crandall
Chris French