



September 30, 2021

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow  
Chairwoman  
Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry  
328A Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable John Boozman  
Ranking Member  
Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry  
328A Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairwoman Stabenow and Ranking Member Boozman,

As western governors, we write to express our strong support for the inclusion of important forestry, natural and working lands focused investments in the developing budget reconciliation package. As western states, where federally owned and managed lands make up significant portions, if not the majority, of lands in our states; these resources represent a vast and critical natural infrastructure. This natural infrastructure not only forms a key cornerstone in our ability to adapt to the climate crisis, but is also particularly vulnerable to its effects. Whether extreme drought, record setting wildfire seasons and oppressive wildfire smoke, more intense storms and corresponding flash-floods or landslides, or the broader impacts of climate change on wildlife and ecosystems, our states and our landscapes are on the front lines of the climate crisis, and the federal package must account for this fact.

A number of key proposed investments will help our lands, communities and states prepare for, and ideally avoid, the frequency and severity of future disastrous climate impacts that our states have faced in recent years. Specifically we would draw your attention to and call upon you to support those items currently included in the House Agriculture Committee mark, and proposed by the Senate Agriculture Committee relating to forestry, climate smart agriculture, research and clean energy. These investments include over \$50 billion to address critical elements of addressing and responding to the climate crisis for sectors foundational to the West. These investments will also serve to reduce over an estimated billion tons of carbon pollution, supporting the administration's greenhouse gas goals, all while supporting farmers, ranchers and landowners facing head-on the challenges brought upon them by our changing climate.

Our natural and working lands are a key component of a comprehensive approach to the climate crisis. The House Agriculture Committee Mark and Senate Agriculture Committee proposal contains vital investments totaling roughly \$40 billion particularly focused on landscape restoration and wildfire mitigation for both private and public forests. The west-wide wildfire impacts of the last several years underscore the urgent and critical nature of investing in our national forest system, as well as federal owned and managed rangelands, grasslands, and other multipurpose public lands located throughout the West. With response and recovery burdens all too frequently bestowed upon the states. These proposals include \$20 billion in targeted Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) investments, including fuels reduction, forest restoration and conservation on national forest lands, critical and targeted investments that will yield measurable benefits. Critical prevention, restoration and adaptation work is being done on non-federal lands and the proposed investment of roughly \$15 billion in grants to states, tribes and private landowners will ensure this critical work isn't undermined by the frequent checkerboard of land ownership we see in the West. With significant growth pressures in the WUI, conservation is a critical tool in helping states and localities ensure smart-growth and avoid the expansion of dangerous living conditions, the proposed \$4.5 billion in grants for programs like the Forest Legacy program and other conservation ends is vital funding for western states and communities. Finally, the improved research abilities enabled by the proposed \$500 million investment, will enable land management agencies, local communities and states to better plan, better understand and better invest in and better adapt to the needs of a climate-changed West. Smart, targeted investments today in science-based land management efforts will help avoid exponentially greater costs in the future.

As western governors, we have seen firsthand the devastation that comes with climate change, and these impacts have captured national headlines throughout the unprecedented and now never-ending wildfire seasons, through intense droughts, flash floods, mudslides and myriad of other impacts endured by our communities and citizens. The investments contained in the proposed reconciliation packages aimed at our western states, communities and especially landscapes and ecosystems will have direct benefits in alleviating those attention grabbing disasters. As leaders of states where every dollar matters, we understand the pressures associated with trimming public expenditures and detailed fiscal responsibility. Yet these disasters and the impacts of climate change will only increase as our climate warms, and for the sake of our states, communities, lands and budgets; in this case an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

We urge you to support these valuable investments without delay, as waiting any longer would only result in increasing and more expensive needs in the near future.

Sincerely,



Governor Jared Polis  
State of Colorado



Governor Gavin Newsom  
State of California



Governor Steve Sisolak  
State of Nevada



Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham  
State of New Mexico



Governor Kate Brown  
State of Oregon

cc: The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Speaker, United States House of Representatives  
The Honorable Charles E. Schumer, Majority Leader, United States Senate  
The Honorable Tom Vilsack, Secretary, United States Department of Agriculture  
The Honorable Rep. David Scott, Chair, House Agriculture Committee  
Members of the California Congressional Delegation  
Members of the Colorado Congressional Delegation  
Members of the Nevada Congressional Delegation  
Members of the New Mexico Congressional Delegation  
Members of the Oregon Congressional Delegation  
Julie Chavez Rodriguez, Director, White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs