



NOV 13 2009

United States Department of Agriculture

Office of the Secretary  
Washington, D.C. 20250

Mr. Chris Wood  
Chief Operating Officer  
Trout Unlimited  
1300 North 17th Street, Suite 500  
Arlington, Virginia 22209

Dear <sup>Chris</sup> Mr. Wood:

Thank you for your letter of August 25, 2009, congratulating the Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell and me on our appointments and offering your well-considered recommendations about a new planning rule.

I was gratified to receive your recommendations for the planning rule; your views about forest restoration and landscape approaches are consistent with the vision I have outlined for the future of the Forest Service. We must work toward a shared vision, and that vision must begin with a complete commitment to restoration. Restoration, for me, means managing forest lands first and foremost to protect our water resources while making our forests far more resilient to climate change.

In developing our shared vision, we must also be willing to look across property boundaries. In other words, we must operate on a landscape scale by taking an all-lands approach. The reality is that 80 percent of the forest area in the United States is outside of the National Forest System. Our national forests are adjacent to State and private land. Management decisions made on one ownership have important implications for the entire forest landscape.

This is an opportune time to develop a shared vision. Recently, I have asked Chief Tidwell to develop a new planning rule to ensure management and restoration of our national forests with the goal of protecting our water, climate, and wildlife while also creating economic opportunity. I want the Forest Service to work together in partnership with all groups: State foresters, conservation groups, the forest industry, and others to encourage, catalog, and expand the collaborative solutions that hold the most promise to protect our public lands and our working lands. I know that your views about empanelling a group of managers, State agency officials, scientists, and other interested parties to begin crafting restoration and adaptation strategies are being carefully considered as the Forest Service moves forward with developing the new planning rule.

Again, thank you for writing. Please share this response with your colleagues.

Sincerely,

Thomas J. Vilsack  
Secretary

*Hope you and family are doing well!*

An Equal Opportunity Employer