

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 29, 2013

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Jamie L. Whitten Building
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20010

The Honorable Tom Vilsack:

We appreciate your continued efforts to accelerate restoration of forests across the country through the National Restoration Strategy and the Cohesive Fire Strategy, and especially in the Rocky Mountain Region (RMR). Last year, we wrote to you about the need for investment in the timber program as an important element of the RMR's restoration agenda and appreciate the U.S. Forest Service's efforts to respond. However, this year, in the face of more historic wildfires, a continuing drought, and vast stretches of overgrown and bark-beetle infested forests, we again ask for your renewed support.

The National Forest management program in this Region falls far short of meeting the need for hazardous fuels reduction and forest restoration. In our region alone, the U.S. Forest Service recognizes that millions of acres are in need of restoration, yet the timber target for Fiscal Year 2013, which includes both timber sales and stewardship contracts, was only about 450,000 CCF. Our states are home to re-emerging forest products businesses that can partner with the U.S. Forest Service, yet the dramatic gap between what these businesses can manage and the timber targets of the RMR endanger their viability and success just as they are about to reach a scale that could meaningfully contribute to more proactive management of forest health (the attached letter provides additional industry detail on the minimum capacity our timber industry has to support forest restoration).

Stakeholders including communities, environmentalists, and industry recognize the need to work together. The re-emerging forest products industry in Colorado, Wyoming, and South Dakota gives us the opportunity to demonstrate an integrated forest management infrastructure that includes both traditional wood products and biomass energy. There has never been a better time to foster industry partnerships that will reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfires, restore forest health, and create sustainable rural jobs.

That is why we ask for your renewed commitment to increasing the pace and scale of forest restoration in the RMR – particularly in the wildland-urban interface and in backcountry areas supporting critical infrastructure and water supplies. Specifically, we ask you to consider increasing the investment in restoration and timber management, and continuing to pursue

operational efficiencies. The RMR is already leading the way on collaborative approaches and operational efficiency, and we have been particularly impressed with pilot projects that streamline analysis on the Black Hills and Uncompahgre Plateau. We appreciate your leadership on these important issues and lend our support to your efforts to accelerate restoration across the Region.

Sincerely,



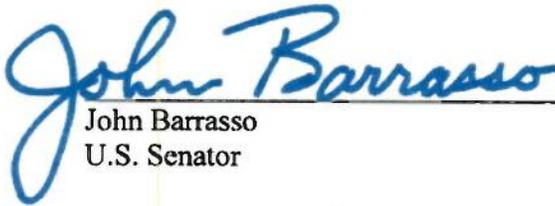
Mark Udall
U.S. Senator



Mike Enzi
U.S. Senator



Michael Bennet
U.S. Senator



John Barrasso
U.S. Senator



Tim Johnson
U.S. Senator



John Thune
U.S. Senator



Kristi Noem
U.S. Representative



Cynthia Lummis
U.S. Representative



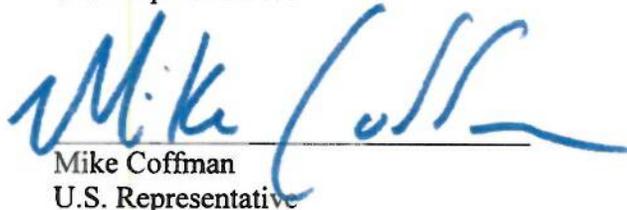
Scott Tipton
U.S. Representative



Cory Gardner
U.S. Representative



Doug Lamborn
U.S. Representative



Mike Coffman
U.S. Representative