

December 14, 2010

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary, U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave. S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We, the undersigned sporting and conservation organizations, are writing to reinforce our support of a new national forest planning rule that provides assurances for sustainable fish and wildlife populations.

America's 155 national forests and 20 national grasslands total 193 million acres. Together they constitute highly significant resource areas that provide key habitats for fish and wildlife species, including many that are enjoyed by hunters and anglers. As sportsmen, we depend on these natural resources and therefore have a stake in these public lands maintaining strong fish and wildlife populations.

Big-game animals such as elk require blocks of core habitat where they can find security cover and avoid excessive disturbance during hunting season, calving season, migration and cold winter months. Wild trout and salmon rely on intact watersheds that offer woody debris, silt-free spawning beds and cool summer temperatures with consistent streamflows. Ruffed grouse need early-successional habitats for food, nesting, brood-rearing, and escape cover. The national forest planning rule must require the Forest Service to safeguard and enhance the habitats on which these and other species depend. These commitments to fish and wildlife should be achievable and realistic, but not optional.

Thank you for considering the importance of maintaining diverse and abundant fish and wildlife populations on America's national forests and grasslands as you proceed with this critical planning process. We encourage you to incorporate our recommendations into the national forest planning rule and offer our assistance as this process moves toward completion.

Sincerely,

Backcountry Hunters & Anglers
Jim Akenson, Executive Director

Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
Whit Fosburgh, President/CEO

Izaak Walton League of America
Scott Kovaroviks, Conservation Director

The Wildlife Society
Thomas J. Ryder, Certified Wildlife Biologist,
President

CC:

Robert Bonnie
Harris Sherman
Meryl Harrell
Tom Tidwell