

May 3, 2022

Randy Moore, Chief  
U.S. Forest Service  
Sydney R. Yates Federal Building  
Washington, DC 20227

RE: Migration Corridors and Seasonal Habitats on USFS Lands

Dear Chief Moore:

The below signed hunting and wildlife conservation organizations and professional societies are writing to encourage the U.S. Forest Service to prioritize the conservation of migration corridors and seasonal habitats for big game and other species as you implement the agency's 10-year Wildfire Crisis Strategy, engage in National Forest planning, and work toward the Administration's priorities on climate change and biodiversity. America's 193 million acres of national forests and grasslands are fundamentally important to wildlife migration and habitat connectivity, and a strong commitment from the USFS would help maintain and restore these habitats throughout the U.S.

The Administration set forth its commitment to "expand[ing] collaborative conservation of fish and wildlife habitats and corridors" in the May 2021 *Conserving and Restoring the America the Beautiful* report. It is our understanding that, to implement this directive across jurisdictional boundaries, several Interior Department bureaus and the Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service are actively collaborating to conserve migratory habitats, seasonal ranges, and connectivity.

Given the centrality of our national forests and grasslands to wildlife migration and habitat connectivity, the USFS's engagement in this process would create significant opportunities to address the needs of migratory wildlife. In doing so, the agency could enhance, complement, and build upon ongoing efforts at the federal, state, tribal, and local levels, and more effectively conserve habitats and biodiversity across meaningful landscapes as well as in areas with complex land ownership patterns. This work would not only ensure sustained populations of big game and the future of our hunting traditions, it would support a diversity of other species, contribute to watershed health and important ecological services, and create resiliency to drought conditions and catastrophic wildfires.

Specifically, we request that the USFS take steps to fully implement the wildlife migration conservation commitments identified in *Conserving and Restoring America the Beautiful* by:

- Working closely with NRCS and DOI bureaus to coordinate and align wildlife corridor conservation and enhancement at a landscape level, including across public lands, as well as private lands through voluntary, non-regulatory measures that respect the rights and privacy sensitivities of private landowners.
- Incorporating and acknowledging the benefit to wildlife corridors, seasonal habitats and habitat connectivity from investments made through implementation of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, including the nearly \$3 billion for the 10-year Wildfire Crisis Strategy.
- Directing USFS regions to work closely with states and tribes to consider and incorporate the conservation of wildlife corridors and seasonal ranges into land use planning, and to consider

conservation benefits that can be created through implementation level decisions, such as vegetation management projects and transportation planning.

- Contributing at least \$2 million in FY23 to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's Improving Habitat Quality in Western Big Game and Migration Corridors Program.

Wildlife corridors and seasonal habitats are essential to the wildlife abundance and biodiversity that define the American landscape, as well as critically important to resilience against climate change and the future of our outdoor traditions. We hope the USFS will take advantage of the immediate opportunity to coordinate with DOI, NRCS, and State and Tribal agencies to ensure the conservation and restoration of these important habitats. Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

American Woodcock Society

Archery Trade Association

Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies

Backcountry Hunters & Anglers

Camp Fire Club of America

Catch-A-Dream Foundation

Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation

Conservation Force

Council to Advance Hunting and the Shooting Sports

Delta Waterfowl

Houston Safari Club

Izaak Walton League of America

Masters of Foxhounds Association

Mule Deer Foundation

National Deer Association

National Shooting Sports Foundation

National Wildlife Federation

National Wild Turkey Federation

North American Falconers Association

North American Grouse Partnership

Orion: The Hunters Institute

Pheasants Forever

Quail Forever

Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation

Ruffed Grouse Society

Safari Club International

Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership

Whitetails Unlimited

Wild Sheep Foundation

Wildlife Forever

Wildlife Management Institute

The Wildlife Society

Cc:

Homer Wilkes, Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment, USDA

Robert Bonnie, Under Secretary for Farm Production and Conservation, USDA

Meryl Harrell, Deputy Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment, USDA

Chris French, Deputy Chief, USFS