

October 4, 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 thank you for the recent recommitment—via Deputy Chief Chris French’s letter to Regional Foresters (dated August 19, 2022)—to ecological connectivity and migration corridors on lands managed by the US Forest Service in planning and decision making. We also applaud the attention to a cross jurisdictional approach as this will foster better partnerships and aid in addressing common needs and priorities like reducing the risk of catastrophic wildfire and treatment of hazardous fuels.

To strengthen this connection and to address a much-needed funding issue, we ask that you direct \$5 million of the wildfire risk and hazardous fuels funds allocated in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) and Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) to the USFS’s annual commitment of funds to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation’s Improving Habitat Quality in Western Big Game Migration Corridors and Habitat Connectivity Program. Since launched in 2019, this NFWF grant program has contributed \$11.7 million across 52 projects, leveraging \$57.5 million in matching contributions to generate a total conservation impact of more than \$69.2 million. As you know, federal funding for this program has historically been redirected from existing agency budgets and programs, competing for limited agency resources. The IIJA and IRA provide extensive funding for on-the-ground conservation efforts, and the USFS has significant new capacity to conserve and enhance migratory habitat. Applying this modest level of funding to forest restoration projects that reduce the risk of wildfire while simultaneously improving habitat connectivity would fulfill the goals of the IIJA and IRA while also making a big difference for big game. We also recommend adjusting the match requirements for this Program similar to those in the America the Beautiful Challenge to alleviate any potential financial obstacles partners may have in partnering with the USFS to implement projects associated with these funds.

Our community has long been invested in the identification and conservation of big game migration corridors on both private and public lands, and we have been partners with the USFS on conservation of these special habitats in many areas. We believe the August letter to USFS Regional Foresters provides clear direction and leadership for integration by USFS staff in addressing these needs in their work and will be of great value in ensuring the continued conservation of these habitats. We are similarly optimistic it will guide the implementation of Secretary Vilsack’s direction in Secretarial Memo 1077, to build cross jurisdictional partnerships on wildlife migration with States, Tribes, and other partners.

We appreciate the USFS’s commitment to considering and managing for wildlife corridors through forest planning and through implementation level projects, including shared stewardship and implementation of the Wildfire Crisis Strategy. The purpose and need of a great many National Forest projects—whether focused on fire, fiber, or habitat—could benefit migration objectives, and the agency will not need to

depart from its priorities to play a greater role in migration conservation. We offer our assistance as the agency considers subsequent policy options as mentioned in the letter.

Thank you again for the recent meaningful actions on ecological connectivity and wildlife migration conservation and for your service on behalf of America's public lands. We stand ready and willing to partner with the USFS to continue to implement its commitments to habitat conservation.

Sincerely,

American Woodcock Society  
Archery Trade Association  
Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies  
Backcountry Hunters & Anglers  
Boone and Crockett Club  
California Waterfowl Association  
Camp Fire Club of America  
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation  
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 Bobwhite & Grassland Initiative  
National Deer Association  
National Shooting Sports Foundation  
National Trappers Association  
National Wild Turkey Federation  
National Wildlife Federation  
North American Falconers Association  
North American Grouse Partnership  
Orion: The Hunter's Institute  
Pheasants Forever  
Quail Forever  
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation  
Ruffed Grouse Society  
Sportsmen's Alliance  
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership  
The Wildlife Society  
Whitetails Unlimited  
Wild Sheep Foundation  
Wildlife Forever  
Wildlife Management Institute

CC:

Chris French, Deputy Chief