



**MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT**  
**among**  
**THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**  
**and**  
**THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**  
**and**  
**THE WESTERN GOVERNORS' ASSOCIATION**

**I. BACKGROUND**

Across the West, healthy lands and waters serve as critical economic drivers, and they provide numerous conservation benefits, water supply, and recreational opportunities for western communities and the Nation. The West, however, is experiencing greater threats to these critical resources, including the increased presence of uncharacteristic wildfire, the effects of climate change and drought, and the proliferation of nonnative invasive species.

The interdependent relationships among western communities and State, Territorial, and Federal land resource management entities make State/Territorial/Federal collaboration essential in confronting land, water, and wildlife management challenges throughout the West. Western Governors, the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI), and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) have a strong history of working together to address conservation challenges, including sensitive species conservation, interagency wildfire and drought disaster response, vegetation management, and invasive species control in western States and Territories. These efforts address cross-boundary, cross-jurisdictional natural resource conservation management challenges and seek to improve outcomes for agencies and the communities they serve.

The Western Governors' Association (WGA) Task Force on Collaborative Conservation provides a venue to advance shared State, Territorial, and Federal goals, as well as common interests, including effective deployment of the historic restoration investments contained in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. As expressed in WGA Policy Resolution 2021-01, entitled "Strengthening the State-Federal Relationship," such cooperation "will result in more efficient, economic, effective, and durable policy, benefiting the Governors' and the federal government's shared constituents and resulting in a nation that is stronger, more resilient, and more united."

## **II. PURPOSE**

The WGA has established a Task Force on Collaborative Conservation. This agreement establishes a framework to allow the Task Force to serve as a forum for Federal, State, and Territorial representatives to work collaboratively to effectively respond to the challenges facing western landscapes through shared expertise and dialogue, strategic resource and capacity coordination, information and data sharing, and joint problem-solving.

## **III. OBJECTIVES**

Under this agreement, the parties will:

- A. Promote effective collaboration and coordination in implementation of priority conservation programs and policies, including those affecting wildlife corridors, wildfire and drought resilience and response, invasive species management, and forest and rangeland restoration;
- B. Identify opportunities to leverage State, Territorial, and Federal partners' capacities, as well as existing and new resources, including restoration investments outlined in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, to catalyze more effective cross-boundary conservation outcomes;
- C. Encourage and provide a forum for the exchange of data, research, and information, as well as prioritization of knowledge gaps, to inform State and Federal natural resource management policy decisions and science investments, to fully leverage new and existing Federal/State/Territorial programs, and inform critical science resources such as the Federal America the Beautiful American Conservation and Stewardship Atlas;
- D. Provide recommendations to remove barriers or solve problems that arise in the implementation of conservation initiatives;
- E. Establish working groups, as necessary, to address specific topics and/or regional priorities such as management of the greater sage-grouse and conservation and restoration of key habitat in the sagebrush ecosystem; and
- F. Prioritize opportunities to support the voluntary stewardship efforts of ranchers, farmers, and other private landowners and to keep working lands working.

## **IV. RESPONSIBILITIES**

The DOI, USDA, and WGA are bound by all applicable Federal, State, and local statutes and regulations.

The parties will communicate on a regular basis to enhance and develop the institutional arrangements necessary to facilitate the above activities.

The DOI, USDA, WGA, and relevant State and Territorial agency officials will conduct business pertaining to this agreement by means of in-person meetings, conference calls, or other means. In each calendar year, the parties will meet at least once in person.

Costs related to the execution of this agreement will be borne by the respective States, Territories, and agencies. The cost of providing meeting space and associated expenses will be shared equally by the States and Territories, collectively, and the Departments represented.

This Task Force will be one important forum for collaboration, but State, Territorial, and Federal participants maintain their commitments and obligations to consult with Tribal nations and engage with other key stakeholders on natural resource conservation and management priorities.

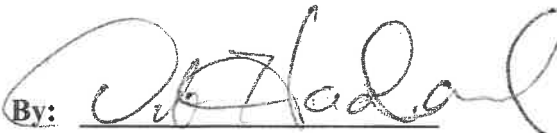
This agreement is executed as of the date of the most recent signature on it and will remain in force as long as deemed necessary and effective by the parties. On an annual basis, the parties will assess whether to continue or amend the agreement.

In witness whereof, the parties hereto have executed this agreement as of the most recent date written below.

**V. SIGNATORIES**


**U.S. Department of the Interior**

**Date:** Jan. 30, 2022

**By:**   
Deb Haaland  
Secretary of the Interior

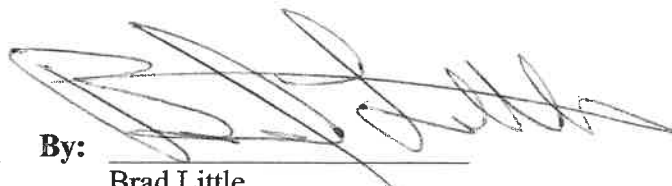
**U.S. Department of Agriculture**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

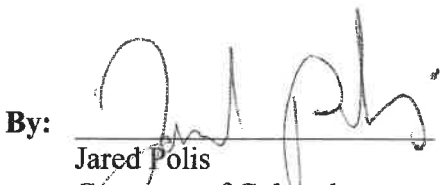
**By:**   
Thomas J. Vilsack  
Secretary of Agriculture

**Western Governors' Association**

**Date:** Jan 30, 2022

**By:**   
Brad Little  
Governor of Idaho  
Chair, Western Governors' Association

**Date:** Jan 30 2022

**By:**   
Jared Polis  
Governor of Colorado  
Vice Chair, Western Governors' Association