



THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR
WASHINGTON

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Office of the Governor
Carson City, NV

The Honorable Brian Sandoval
Vice Chairman, Western Governors' Association
1600 Broadway, Suite 1700
Denver, Colorado 80202

Dear Governor Sandoval:

Thank you for your letter of January 21, 2014, regarding my Secretarial Order (SO) 3330: Improving Mitigation Policies and Practices of the Department of the Interior. Effective engagement with state government is critical to the work of the Department of the Interior (Department), and I appreciate your personal interest, as well as that of the other Western Governors.

As you note in your letter, protection of Western landscapes is a goal we all share and one that demands strong partnerships and collaborative land management. Large landscape impacts such as wildland fire, invasive species, transmission lines, and highways do not stop at state borders, and Governors from across the West have partnered to address these common challenges. For example, our experience permitting solar development in the desert Southwest has shown that planning and close coordination among states and Federal agencies can produce faster and smarter permitting that result in more efficient energy development and better environmental outcomes. The Western Governors' Association (WGA) is also leading in this regard with development of its Critical Habitat Assessment Tool, a key aggregator of state wildlife data that Federal managers currently use.

This approach is not without challenges, and my team and I are committed to working closely with Governors, tribes, local officials, and other stakeholders to craft solutions that can achieve broad and durable results. As part of SO 3330, I commissioned a task force to examine the Department's existing mitigation practices and to develop a science-based strategy for landscape-scale planning. The task force is to identify new or revised policies or practices, including any regulatory changes that would be needed, and draft a strategy for how we should address them. I anticipate that report will be completed in the near future. I also have directed my staff to reach out to the staff at WGA to discuss the issues raised in your letter in depth, including your inquiry about the Bureau of Land Management's Regional Mitigation Manual. I understand that productive discussions have already taken place. Our outreach will continue as our work in this area progresses, both with WGA and with individual Governors and state agencies.

I value the strong working relationship the Department has with WGA, and I personally appreciate my partnership with you and your fellow Governors. Should your staff have additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact Letty Belin, Counselor to the Deputy Secretary (202-208-6291), Jim Lyons, Counselor to the Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management (202-208-6734), or Neil Kornze, Principal Deputy Director of the Bureau of Land Management (202-208-3801). A similar letter is being sent to Governor John Hickenlooper.

Sincerely,

Sally Jewell