



MAY 27 2010

The Honorable Wally Herger
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0502

Dear Congressman Herger:

On Friday, April 16, 2010, President Obama convened a White House Conference on America's Great Outdoors to learn more about how farmers, ranchers, hunters, anglers, land trusts, conservation groups, urban communities, state and local governments, tribes, and industry are developing partnerships and innovative strategies to enhance and conserve outdoor spaces. I know you hear from your constituents every day about this important work going on in your communities.

At the outset of the Conference, President Obama announced that the Department of the Interior, the Department of Agriculture, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Council on Environmental Quality will lead an Administration-wide initiative to form a conservation agenda for the 21st century.

Over the past several decades, Americans have lost many of the lands we love, including the historic and cultural places that tell our Nation's story. Our open lands, waters, and wildlife are disappearing under the pressures of population growth, habitat fragmentation, and climate change. Every year, our Country gives up more than 2 million acres of land to development, which amounts to an area roughly the size of Indiana each decade. At the same time, Americans are losing touch with outdoor places and traditions that make this country special. Children today spend half as much time outside as their parents did. Too few families are taking advantage of America's vast network of urban and rural landscapes, and waterways.

The President understands that protecting and restoring the lands and waters that we love and reconnecting people to the outdoors must happen at the local level. At the conference, he acknowledged, "We're not talking about a big Federal agenda being driven out of Washington... We're going to build on successful conservation efforts being spearheaded outside of Washington." So while our efforts play an important and limited role in advancing conservation, solutions must continue to come from states, communities, and citizens all over the Nation.

The White House Conference was a first step in understanding the challenges we face and touting the great work already taking place in local communities. The next step will be for Secretaries Salazar and Vilsack, Chair Sutley, and Administrator Jackson to travel across the

country, both together and separately, to listen to and learn from people directly involved in finding grassroots solutions to 21st century conservation challenges. These listening sessions will culminate in a report to the President, due on November 15, 2010.

Few are better positioned to understand and appreciate your District's special places. So as we begin this important national conversation, we want to hear your thoughts and ideas on those special places and how to best support local community efforts to conserve outdoor spaces and historic sites. If there are specific ideas or suggestions you wish to discuss with any of us, please contact our offices directly. In addition, we encourage you to share your insights with interested citizens around the Country by adding your comments to the conversation on the America's Great Outdoors Web site at <http://www.doi.gov/americasgreatoutdoors>.

We look forward to working with you on America's Great Outdoors, and thank you in advance for sharing your thoughts on conserving special places in your District.

Sincerely,



Ken Salazar
Secretary of the Interior



Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary of Agriculture



Lisa P. Jackson
Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency



Nancy H. Sutley
Chair, Council on Environmental Quality