



C.L. "BUTCH" OTTER

GOVERNOR

July 25, 2013

Nancy Sutley, Chair
Council on Environmental Quality

David Agnew, Director
Office of Intergovernmental Affairs

Dear Ms. Sutley and Mr. Agnew,

In response to your letter to governors dated July 11, 2013, soliciting nominations for the State, Local, and Tribal Leaders Task Force on Climate Preparedness, I have some comments and concerns.

Idaho remains very low in carbon emissions, ranking in the bottom five nationally. And while the degree and extent to which carbon emissions play a role in climate change is still debatable, the fact that Idaho is significantly impacted by the federal government's actions and inactions is not. For example, the federal government controls 79 percent of Idaho's forest lands, and federal management of those forest lands has contributed to millions of acres being burned by wildfires and the subsequent release of millions of metric tons of carbon dioxide. When managed properly, our public lands have the potential to actively remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and store it on-site in forest carbon sinks and off-site in wood products. If the administration is serious about "preparing the United States for the impacts of climate change," the role that forest management plays in this effort cannot be overlooked. Similarly, the role that states can and should play in developing and implementing solutions to these challenges must be recognized.

With that in mind, I am concerned about the administration's plans to keep this Task Force small and what that means for representation, particularly as it relates to the interests of rural states in the West. I request that a particular emphasis be placed upon appointing members to the Task Force from the Intermountain West.

I also am concerned about state representation in other areas of the administration's Action Plan and request that concentrated effort be put towards engaging and involving state and local governments

before any new federal programs are developed and rolled out. Members of organizations such as the Western Governors' Association already are actively working on many of the issues this plan is likely to address. The last thing states need is to be trumped by another one-size-fits-all federal "solution."

Many in this country may applaud President Obama's charge to the Task Force. However, I am concerned that a predetermined course of action as outlined in "The President's Climate Action Plan" will result in excessive and onerous regulations that will set back our nascent economic recovery. My concerns are amplified by the fact that the United States is not alone in emitting greenhouse gases. In fact, the United States is not the world's largest contributor. Any additional governmental controls in this country will not fix what is perceived as a global problem and will penalize our businesses and our citizens with restrictions to which the rest of the world will not adhere. No matter how much President Obama would like to impose our ideals and restrictions on the rest of the world, that goal is just not pragmatic.

It is time for our leaders to implement practical solutions – not additional regulations. Managing our public lands for the benefit of our people and our environment is one of those solutions. Re-establishing the health of vast federally "managed" lands in Idaho and other western states is a good first step in improving our atmosphere.

Thank you for the opportunity to express my concerns about the administration's Task Force addressing "climate change." Certainly, as we learn more about the issue and as more definitive science is developed, we can take some positive steps to restore the health of our national forests and in turn, help our climate.

As Always – Idaho, "Esto Perpetua"

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C.L. Butch Otter". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "C" and "O".

C.L. "Butch" Otter
Governor of Idaho