OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

October 30, 2015

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary, U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

California is facing the worst epidemic of tree mortality in modern history. Four years of drought and resulting native bark beetle infestation have killed millions of trees on federal, state, and private land, and millions more trees are currently dying. The United States Forest Service recently estimated that 22 million trees have already died due to current conditions, while other scientific studies identify even higher estimates. Tree mortality across California's forests is putting lives and critical infrastructure at risk - greatly increasing already dangerous wildfire conditions and exacerbating threats posed by falling trees. Today, I am declaring a State of Emergency to respond to this threat.

Several actions by our federal partners can reduce life safety risks to our residents including: providing federal matching funds authorized in the 2014 U.S. Farm Bill for insect and disease designated areas to augment state resources; deploying more technical assistance and program support of the Natural Resources Conservation Service to assist private land owners overwhelmed by the number of dead and dying trees on their properties; redirecting funding by the U.S. Forest Service to remove trees on federal lands adjacent to communities; and expediting federal approvals of emergency actions on or nearby federal lands..

Changes to our forests driven by climate change require that federal, state and local governments think creatively and act aggressively. It is essential to immediately reduce risks from widespread tree mortality while working together to improve the long-term health of California's forests. A crisis of this magnitude demands action on all fronts.

Thank you for your consideration of this request for federal support and partnership.

Sincerely,

Edmund G. Brown Jr.

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