

JOHN McCAIN  
ARIZONA

CHAIRMAN, COMMITTEE ON  
ARMED SERVICES  
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY  
AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS  
COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS

## United States Senate

February 19, 2016

225 RUSSELL SENATE OFFICE BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0303  
(202) 224-2235

2201 EAST CAMELBACK ROAD  
SUITE 115  
PHOENIX, AZ 85016  
(602) 952-2410

122 NORTH CORTEZ STREET  
SUITE 108  
PRESCOTT, AZ 86301  
(928) 445-0833

407 WEST CONGRESS STREET  
SUITE 103  
TUCSON, AZ 85701  
(520) 670-6334

TELEPHONE FOR HEARING IMPAIRED  
(602) 952-0170

The Honorable Thomas L. Tidwell  
Chief  
U.S. Forest Service  
1400 Independence Ave., SW  
Washington, D.C.  
20250-0003

Dear Chief Tidwell:

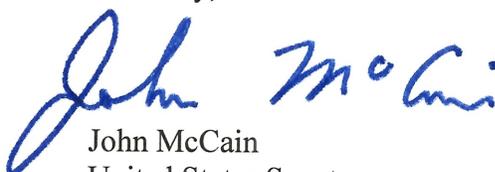
I write concerning the request by the Eastern Arizona Counties Organization (EACO) that you increase the supply of Forest Service lands for industry-driven forest restoration. I also write to express my appreciation that you agreed to meet with EACO leaders recently to discuss their request.

As you know, the forest products industry in Arizona was instrumental in supporting the Forest Service's White Mountain Stewardship Contract, the forerunner to the Four Forest Restoration Initiative (4FRI). The forest restoration work in eastern Arizona not only treated approximately 50,000 acres in some of the most fire prone forests of our state, it seeded the region with a sustainable wood products industry that will be vital to 4FRI's objective of treating 2.4 million acres of federal land in Arizona.

My constituents, however, warn me that the timber industry in eastern Arizona is currently in survival mode and barely operating due to a lack of lands that are NEPA-approved for treatment. It is imperative that the Forest Service effectively maintain the viability of this industrial base by ensuring a stable supply of forest treatment task orders. To this end, I have enclosed a letter addressed to you by EACO leaders that contains several action items that I ask you to actively consider. Among these requested actions include the rapid release of the 68,000-acre Upper Rocky Arroyo Project Area and the 30,000-acre Larson Forest Project Area (which was finalized in August 2014). Respectfully, these projects should not remain on the shelf until the fourth quarter of FY2016 as currently planned.

Finally, I note with gratitude that you have provided an additional \$10 million to the 4FRI program to accelerate environmental clearances and that you are working to reallocate task orders that have gone underutilized by your agency's anchor contractor, Good Earth Power. Actions such as these are laudable movements in the right direction, and I ask that these rebalanced task orders be transferred this spring. I am hopeful that my continued dialogue with you and my constituents will lead to more successes in restoring Arizona's forest ecosystem.

Sincerely,



John McCain  
United States Senator