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April 21, 2000

USDA – Forest Service
Content Analysis Enterprise Team
ATTN: UFP
Building 2, Suite 295
5500 Amelia Earhart Drive
Salt Lake City, UT 84116

Dear Sir:

I would like the following comments considered regarding the "Unified Federal Policy for Ensuring a Watershed Approach to Federal Land and Resource Management".

1. This action will cause a major change in management direction in Western States. Having only 4 public meetings is not adequate to inform the public and allow their participation. This is their land, not the governments. How have you insured that you have a plan that carries out the desires of the people?

2. Ground water has been included in the plan. In the West there is not enough scientific information to determine where – when – how much, etc., to even begin to talk about ground water in watershed management. What facts do you have to support inclusion of ground water?

3. Plans were developed only within Federal, State, or Tribal agencies, yet the decisions made will affect all landowners. How will you compensate private landowners and include their needs in your decisions?

4. Even though this policy only affects Federal lands, many State agencies such as Conservation Districts must deal with the outcome of these decisions and policies. How have you insured that your policies can be implemented?

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5. A policy that requires Federal agencies to follow BMP's is very good. In Montana our 3rd party audits show that Federal lands have the most problems and are the farthest out of compliance. What specific program will be used to get Federal lands up to compliance?

6. Where will funding come from to support this Watershed approach?

Current direction is taking money away from the ground and putting it into administration. This is not acceptable. The proof to successful management is what happens on the ground!

Thank you for considering my comments.

Sincerely yours,

Ronald Buentemeier

Ronald Buentemeier
Timber & Lands Manager

RB/tc

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