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FORESTS, AND PUBLIC LANDS

September 10, 2008

<http://markudall.house.gov/HoR/Co02/home>

Ms. Gail Kimbell  
Chief, U.S. Forest Service  
1400 Independence Ave., SW  
Washington, D.C., 20250-0003

Dear Chief Kimbell:

As you know, Colorado has been in the grips of an unprecedented bark beetle epidemic. The epidemic is not abating and is now threatening not only lodgepole, but also ponderosa pine forests in Colorado.

Coloradans have come together to find ways to respond to the wide swaths of dead trees produced by this epidemic. However, there still is a serious lack of resources to respond to these impacts. Now, the Forest Service is facing the need to close campgrounds, trails and roads due to the risks to the public of falling beetle-killed trees.

I understand that Regional Forester Rick Cables has recently sent you a letter requesting additional funds to not only respond to the recent issue of falling dead trees, but also to continue the much needed work of reducing the wildfire threat to communities and the environment from these dead trees. I wanted to add my voice to Regional Forester Cables's entreaty for more funds. It is clear that the effects of this epidemic will be felt for many years to come. We need to do as much as we can as soon as we can to reduce threats and increase public safety—while also improving the health of our forests for successive generations. Additional funding can help create a future forest condition that will help forests be more resilient and better able to respond to insects, drought and other natural conditions.

I hope you will appreciate the extent of this crisis and allocate the additional funds we need to more effectively respond. Thanks for your serious consideration.

Sincerely,

Mark Udall