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November 14, 2018

The Honorable Bill Northey
Under Secretary
Farm Production and Conservation
Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Undersecretary Northey:

We write to request the expedient approval of Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) funds for projects in Colorado. Affected communities, county governments and the State of Colorado have committed significant time and resources to complete the required paperwork for USDA EWP funding. We urge you to take the steps necessary to approve the federal match for these requests so that the projects can move forward.

Colorado's 2018 wildfire season was one of the most destructive ever and recovery efforts are underway. The Spring Creek Fire, in Costilla and Huerfano County, was the second largest in Colorado history. The Spring Creek Fire, combined with the 416 Fire and Lake Christine Fire, burned around 175,000 acres and affected watersheds in La Plata, Huerfano, Costilla and Eagle counties. The 416 Fire has already had significant effects on water quality and the fishery in the Animas River downstream from the burn scare. Without emergency watershed restoration, there will continue to be a high degree of risk to lives and property from debris flow and flooding as a result of these fires.

We request that you formally approve EWP funds as soon as possible, which are critical to recovery efforts in Colorado to protect life and property. Furthermore, some of these projects are urgent and time sensitive, classified as exigent by NRCS, and need to happen before winter sets in. Thank you for considering this request.

Sincerely,



Michael F. Bennet
U.S. Senator

cc: Leonard Jordan, Acting Chief, NRCS