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Route To:

Subject: Cultural Transformation

To: All Employees

The health and well-being of our employees is vitally important to me. In recent years, several analyses and surveys have identified significant issues negatively affecting workplace environment and employees' satisfaction in the Forest Service. These include the 2008 and 2010 Best Places to Work in the Federal Government survey, and others. In response to these cultural issues, I am strengthening measures in place to transform our culture to be more of an employer of choice, becoming a more diverse, inclusive, and high-performing organization.

Many of us have been addressing workplace concerns from employees to improve the workplace environment. Secretary Vilsack is leading a department-wide effort called Cultural Transformation. I have designated Business Operations Deputy Chief Chuck Myers as executive lead to guide the Forest Service in our Cultural Transformation and asked him to develop an action plan to guide leaders in the Forest Service in these efforts. The action plan focuses on six areas:

- Leadership
- Employee development
- Talent management
- Recruitment and retention
- Customer focus and community outreach
- Process improvement

Jim Reaves, Deputy Chief for Research and Development, has volunteered to lead a diversity and inclusiveness journey for the agency with the National Leadership Council (NLC) as part of cultural transformation.

A few of the actions we have already taken:

- The Chief's Sensing Group, who talks regularly with me, to identify workforce issues and opportunities impacting employee morale;
- An analysis of the 2008 Best Places to Work survey using 16 focus groups and benchmarking results of 5 other federal agencies;
- Annual review and improvement of our leadership training program;
- A revamped outreach and recruitment program under the Multi-cultural Workforce Strategic Initiative, expanding the initiative's focus beyond natural resource and forestry positions and traditional partners and universities;



- Reporting of performance evaluations in a national database, eliminating the need to mail to the Albuquerque Service Center over 30,000 documents for processing, with 36,000 evaluations complete for the 2010 performance cycle;
- A dialogue on diversity, inclusiveness, and Civil Rights by the NLC to ascertain root causes of slow progress on diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

Senior leadership is responsible for leading a cultural change by modeling this change and providing opportunities and tools to ease burdens on employees. Each of you has a role in creating an inclusive and high performing organization, by small acts of support of others, taking opportunities to learn, and doing the best that you can do. Together we can make this cultural change if we leverage our unique talents, abilities, and perspectives to improve decision-making, increase our efficiency and effectiveness, help boost morale, and improve customer service.

Further information and a dedicated website on Forest Service efforts will be forthcoming. Information on USDA's Cultural Transformation can be found at -

<http://culturaltransformation.usda.gov/>. Secretary Vilsack's January progress report on Cultural Transformation can be found at - <http://www.dm.usda.gov/CulturalTransformationSummaryReportNov2010-Feb2011FINAL.pdf>.

/s/ Thomas L. Tidwell
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Chief