USDA United States Department of Agriculture
Office of the Secretary
Washington, DC 20250

November 1, 2023

THE HONORABLE JEFF MERKLEY
Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies
United States Senate
125 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Merkley:

This letter transmits the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service response to the Committee's request, in House Report 117-400, to consider the feasibility of establishing a pilot program to combat salt cedar and Russian olive trees in the West. The report shall detail the parameters of a potential pilot program, including how the program would be scientifically based and take a watershed approach; performance metrics to track species removed annually; costs to support the program over seven fiscal years; the uniform policies and procedures to transparently carry out supporting grants; and plans to collaborate with local stakeholders and identify high-priority areas. As part of this report, the Forest Service should consider how a pilot program could build on and enhance existing Forest Service efforts for controlling salt cedar and Russian olive trees.

After 45 days from the date of the transmittal to Congress, this report will be posted to the Forest Service website at: https://www.fs.usda.gov/about-agency/budget-performance.

If you have any questions, please have a member of your staff contact the Office of Congressional Relations at (202) 720–7095. A similar letter is being sent to Ranking Member Lisa Murkowski.

Sincerely,

THOMAS J. VILSACK
Secretary

Enclosure