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September 12, 2006

Dr. John H. Marburger, III  
Director, Office of Science & Technology Policy  
Executive Office of the President  
Eisenhower Executive Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20502

Dear Dr. Marburger:

On behalf of the Western Governors' Association, we would like to express our support for maintaining a thermal band as part of the Landsat Data Continuity Mission.

In June 2006, the Western Governors adopted the report *Water Needs and Strategies for a Sustainable Future* (<http://www.westgov.org/wga/publicat/Water06.pdf>). Among the many findings in the report, the Governors concluded that there is a need for more and better water information—specifically data on water use, efficiencies and water availability—to facilitate decision making. A substantial amount of data on streamflows exist, much of which is now available on a real-time basis, but there is less data and less reliable information related to water use, water quality and ground water and rural water supplies. Increasingly, what water information is available is threatened by reductions in federal funding and a lack of necessary network maintenance.

On the list of key data on which water managers depend, the Governors included remote sensing capabilities of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), especially the USGS and NASA's Landsat thermal remote sensing and other imaging capabilities. A related recommendation in the report states:

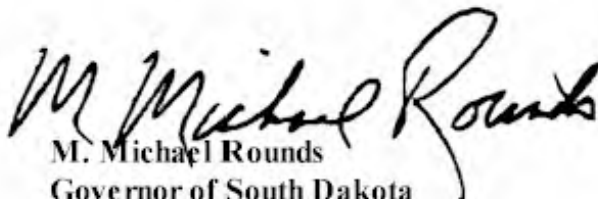
*Remote sensing capabilities, including Landsat thermal data, and developing technologies, such as the use of Doppler radar to measure streamflows, are important tools that need to be retained and fostered.*

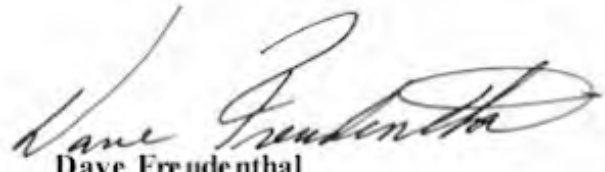
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We understand that current plans call for a new Landsat satellite to back up and replace the aging and failing Landsat 5 and Landsat 7 and that a request for proposals includes an optional thermal band. Including a thermal imaging instrument on the next Landsat vehicle is critical to the continued use of this information in western states for monitoring and measuring agricultural and other outdoor water uses, related evapotranspiration, and administering state water rights, interstate compacts, and surface and ground water budgets.

We fully concur with the July 31, 2006, letter to you from our affiliated organization, the Western States Water Council (attached). We urge you to support funding for the continued availability of Landsat-comparable thermal data and oppose any move to omit or delete the thermal band from future satellites.

Sincerely,

  
M. Michael Rounds  
Governor of South Dakota  
Chairman

  
Dave Freudenthal  
Governor of Wyoming  
Vice Chairman

cc: Dr. Michael Griffin, Administrator, NASA  
VADM Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Administrator NOAA  
P. Patrick Leahy, Acting Director, USGS  
Josh B. Bolten, Director, Office of Management and Budget

Attachments:

- July 31, 2006, Western States Water Council letter to Dr. Marburger
- "Water Needs and Strategies for a Sustainable Future" – WGA report adopted in June 2006