



STATE OF WASHINGTON

December 15, 2011

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

We write to urge you to select Colville National Forest (NF) to receive funding in the current round of national Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP) competition. The Northeast Washington Forestry Coalition and the Colville NF submitted a strong proposal that ranked fourth among all projects nationally. When implemented, these proposed projects would generate 258 part and fulltime jobs – with a labor value of \$9.5 million – in one of the more economically challenged areas of our state.

We understand that, in spite of its elevated placement, there are other proposals in Region 6 ranked higher and that the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) is statutorily limited to selecting no more than two projects in a given region each year. This would suggest that the Colville NF may be once again passed-over, despite the fact that the Colville NF proposal would generate more jobs and save more in wildfire costs than the two other proposals in the region combined.

The Colville NF has an unmatched track record of successful collaboration, which has produced over 30 large scale forest management projects working with a diverse local forest products infrastructure and a well represented conservation community. The Colville NF has been appeal and litigation free for eight years, as a result of its partners' hard-won collaborative successes. Funding and agency manpower remain the two stumbling blocks for successful forest restoration and economic growth in an area of Eastern Washington where unemployment continues to exceed ten percent.

We feel an added measure of urgency in selecting the Colville NF proposal, based on deteriorating forest health conditions in Eastern Washington. In November, the Washington State Department of Natural Resources initiated a forest health warning process under state law. The collaborative work on the Colville NF has helped define a zone of durable agreement around forest health management that strikes an effective balance with critical environmental objectives.

We are concerned that the Colville NF may be unable to implement agreed-upon forest health improvements, at a scale sufficient to address the forest's pressing restoration needs, without CFLRP funding.

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We strongly urge you to work within your authority, once the CFLRP is sufficiently funded, to select the Colville NF as a 2012 CFLRP project recipient.

Sincerely,



Christine O. Gregoire
Governor



Peter Goldmark
Commissioner of Public Lands

cc: The Honorable Patty Murray, U.S. Senate
The Honorable Maria Cantwell, U.S. Senate
The Honorable Norm Dicks, U.S. House of Representatives
The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rodgers, U.S. House of Representatives
The Honorable Doc Hastings, U.S. House of Representatives
Kent Connaughton, USFS, Regional Forester, Pacific NW Region
Laura Jo West, Forest Supervisor, Colville NF