

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

December 20, 2011

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

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

This letter is to urge you to select the Colville National Forest to receive funding in the current round of national Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP) competition. The Northeast Washington Forestry Coalition and the Colville National Forest submitted a strong proposal that ranked fourth among all projects nationally. If selected, the Colville National Forest proposal would generate 258 part- and full-time jobs with a labor value of \$9.5 million in one of the more economically challenged parts of our State.

We understand that in spite of its high ranking, there are other proposals in Region 6 that ranked higher and that the Forest Service is statutorily limited to selecting no more than two projects in a given Region annually. This would suggest that the Colville National Forest may be once again passed-over, despite the fact that the Colville National Forest proposal would generate more jobs and save more in wildfire costs than the two other proposals in the region combined.

The Colville National Forest has an unmatched track record of successful collaboration that 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 National Forest has been appeal and litigation free for eight years as a result of its partners' hard-won collaborative successes. Funding and agency manpower are the two stumbling blocks for successful forest restoration and economic growth in an area of eastern Washington whose unemployment continues to exceed ten percent.

We feel an added measure of urgency in selecting the Colville National Forest 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 National Forest has helped define a zone of durable agreement around forest health management that balances effectively with critical environmental outcomes. We are concerned that the Colville National Forest 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.

We strongly urge you to work within your authority, once the CFLRP is sufficiently funded, to award the Colville National Forest as a 2012 CFLRP recipient.

Sincerely,



Maria Cantwell
United States Senator



Patty Murray
United States Senator



Norm Dicks
United States Representative



Cathy McMorris Rodgers
United States Representative

cc: Kent Connaughton, USFS, Regional Forester, Pacific NW Region
Laura Jo West, Forest Supervisor, Colville National Forest