

State of
Washington
House of
Representatives



January 24, 2012

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, despite its high national ranking, there are other proposals in Region 6 ranked higher than the Colville NF proposal – and that the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) is statutorily limited to selecting no more than two projects in a given region each year. That leaves us concerned 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.

Furthermore, we are concerned that funding the two higher ranked projects concentrates benefit in one state only – leaving the risk and costs of catastrophic wildfire to all the other states within the region. Selecting the Colville, however, would better distribute the funding and reduce the risk to a greater area within the region.

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 to select for funding 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 – a law which shows Washington's commitment to forest health across all ownerships. 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. If the Colville project is not funded, there will be great risk to private, state and tribal lands in addition to the risk to federal lands. All of the non-federal entities are working collaboratively and are depending on the NF to step up to its responsibility – or risk losing much of the work accomplished by these in-state collaborators.

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 and help to protect state, private, and tribal lands along with the federal lands of the Colville NF.

Sincerely,



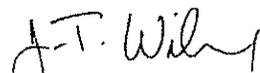
Rep. Brian Blake
19th District



Rep. Derek Stanford
1st District



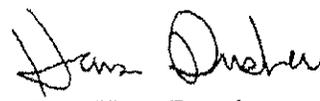
Rep. Bruce Chandler
15th District



Rep. JT Wilcox
2nd District



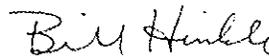
Rep. Vincent Buys
42nd District



Rep. Hans Dunshee
44th District



Rep. Fred Finn
35th District



Rep. Bill Hinkle
13th District



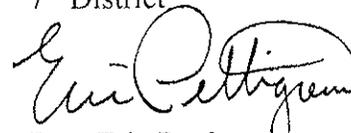
Rep. Joel Kretz
7th District



Rep. Kristine Lytton
40th District



Rep. Ed Orcutt
18th District



Rep. Eric Pettigrew
37th District



Rep. Kevin Van De Wege
24th District



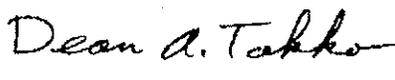
Rep. David Taylor
15th District



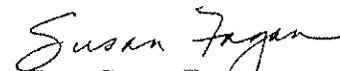
Rep. Jim McCune
2nd District



Rep. Joe Schmick
9th District

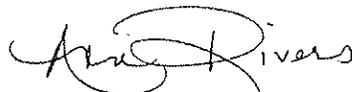


Rep. Dean Takko
19th District

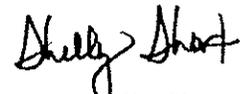


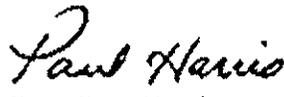
Rep. Susan Fagan
9th District

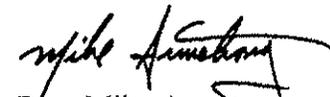

Rep. Judy Warnick
13th District

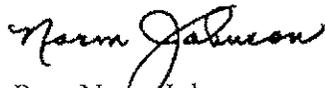

Rep. Ann Rivers
18th District

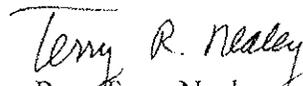

Rep. Larry Haler
8th District


Rep. Shelly Short
7th District

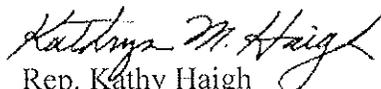

Rep. Paul Harris
17th District


Rep. Mike Armstrong
12th District


Rep. Norm Johnson
14th District

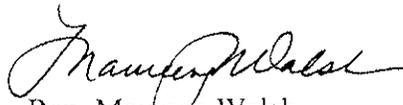

Rep. Terry Nealey
16th District

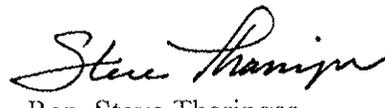

Rep. Timm Ormsby
3rd District

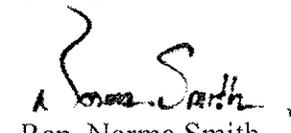

Rep. Kathy Haigh
35th District


Rep. Andy Billig
3rd District


Rep. Brad Klippert
8th District


Rep. Maureen Walsh
16th District


Rep. Steve Tharinger
24th District


Rep. Norma Smith
10th District

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