

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 16, 2018

Sonny Perdue, Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20250

Tony Tooke, Chief
U.S. Forest Service, Yates Building
201 Fourteenth St., SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue and Chief Tooke:

As you consider priorities for the Department of Agriculture's FY2019 Budget, we write in support of important forest restoration tools used extensively across the West, including the collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration (CFLR) program and the Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership (JCLRP). Without adequate funding for these programs, rural communities will continue to sink into further economic and ecological distress due to the many overstocked and unhealthy tree stands within some of our national forests.

As you are well aware, much of the West struggled with a devastating fire season that burned well into December. The smoke from fires in Oregon, neighboring states and Canada created unhealthy air quality and severe smoke conditions for much of the summer. Oregonians all across the state saw and felt the impact of the fires. For example, while there were no large landscape fires on the Blue Mountain forests of Eastern Oregon in 2017, air quality was affected for weeks. Additionally, due to this year's record-breaking wildfire, many rural forested communities are also deeply concerned that their local economies, which rely on forest products and recreational opportunities from our public lands, will be negatively impacted.

Strong collaboration between stakeholders, as well as steady funding through the CFLR, has become an important part of practicing the Oregon way in our forests. In fact, the collaborative work supporting the Malheur National Forest has curtailed environmental lawsuits, supported ecological and economic forest health projects, and increased timber harvest to a level that has allowed the last sawmill in Grant County to remain in operation. We worked to support a 10-year stewardship contract that has significantly increased the pace and scale of forest restoration projects without jeopardizing the environment.

Given the record of success within the CFLR program, we are concerned the Trump Administration will continue its effort to defund the program as it did in the FY2018 Presidential Budget request. In order to build on this successful collaboration and to increase forest health and create a sustainable log supply, the CFLR program should not only be maintained, but also expanded to increase the acreage treated.

In addition, strengthening the JCLRP program, which is an important partnership between the Forest Service and the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) should likewise be a

priority. The JCLRP projects have supported work on public and private lands to reduce fire danger and improve water quality and wildlife habitat. Initial research on the program found that focused funding, adequate staffing and leadership, and support for collaborative approaches was significant in delivering successful projects.

In recent years, eastern Oregon has seen an increase in the pace and scale of forest restoration activities as a result of continued on the ground collaboration and targeted investment in the Eastside Restoration Strategy (ERS) and the Blue Mountains Initiative. Without increased funding capacity to reduce hazardous fuels, our communities will continue suffer the economic and public health impacts of longer, hotter fire seasons.

Thank you for your consideration of the needs of our forests, including adequate staffing and funding to support collaborative, science-based restoration work, maintenance and expansion of the CFLR and JCLRP programs and stewardship authorities. We stand ready to assist you in improving and protecting Oregon's and the nation's forests and rural communities.

Sincerely,



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator

Cc: Jim Pena, Regional Forester