

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 3, 2019

Vicki Christiansen, Chief  
United States Forest Service  
Sidney R. Yates Federal Building  
201 14th Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20024

Dear Chief Christiansen:

In the wake of the recent decision to withdraw the Blue Mountain Forest Plan, we are writing to request that the agency undertake separate and robust planning processes for each of the forests covered within the Blue Mountain Forest Plan – the Umatilla, Wallowa Whitman and Malheur National Forests. We believe this approach will likely lead to more effective stakeholder and community engagement.

These forests span three states, multiple counties and a number of rural communities with varied landscapes, economies and uses of these public lands. Clearly, the complexity of this three-forest planning effort, which covers such a large landscape, has not been efficient. Despite 15 years of work, efforts to establish these forest plans have not resulted in solid and balanced plans that support timber harvest, recreation, ranching, wildlife habitat and protection of these public treasures.

Each forest has its own ecosystem, and each forest has communities dedicated to its health and revitalization. We believe that, using collaborative and cooperative approaches that vary by community, the Forest Service should update each of these forest plans on a forest-by-forest basis. In doing so, the agency should utilize the best available science, and define standards that are protective and well understood.

We also want to recognize the highly skilled and dedicated workers who devoted years on the failed attempt to update the Blue Mountain Forest Plan. It is disappointing and frustrating that these employees were unable to complete a successful plan. However, we hope that the groundwork and the data helps feed into any planning processes going forward.

Thank you for considering our request. Finding the right balance for multi-use public lands is always a challenge, but this work is too important and should move forward in a positive and effective way that strengthens relationships and supports these rural communities, on a forest-by-forest basis.

Sincerely,



RON WYDEN  
United States Senator



JEFFREY A. MERKLEY  
United States Senator

CC: Glenn Casamassa