

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 20, 2022

Glenn Casamassa, Regional Forester, Region 6
United States Forest Service
United States Department of Agriculture
1220 SW 3rd Avenue
Portland, OR. 97204

Dear Mr. Casamassa:

Given that the original 10-year stewardship contract on the Malheur National Forest is coming to a close, I am writing to express support for additional investment in a long-term stewardship agreement on the forest to ensure that the previous 10-years of investment is retained and built upon.

As you are aware, I have long supported innovative ways to increase the pace, scale, and quality of large landscape restoration on national forests. Long-term stewardship contracts are an effective tool to implement those projects to reduce wildfire risks, improve forest health, and provide remarkable local economic benefit.

In 2012, I worked closely with your predecessor, Mr. Connaughton, local collaborative partners, and the forest products industry to develop and implement a 10-year stewardship contract for the Malheur National Forest. This contract has by all accounts been a massive success – it enjoyed broad local support, saved the last mill in Grant County, reduced local unemployment by almost half, stabilized local school enrollment, reduced wildfire risks on more than 55,000 acres, and led to the restoration of nearly 140,000 acres of wildlife habitat. Because of these successes, local businesses have invested tens of millions of dollars in new equipment and infrastructure, further benefitting local payroll and economic opportunities in Grant County.

To sustain and build on this success, it is imperative that future work on the Malheur adapt to and implement the many lessons learned in the execution of the current 10-year contract. As you know, the Ecosystem Workforce Program (EWP) recently prepared a report for the Forest Service that analyzed the development and implementation of long-term contracts throughout Region 6 and provided several actionable recommendations for improvement of future contracts.

In my view, I believe the stewardship contract has been a resounding ecological and socioeconomic success. Therefore, I would like to know whether the Forest Service will support another long-term stewardship contract on the Malheur and what specific challenges or concerns you have (if any) with executing another long-term contract.

The development and implementation of the 10-year stewardship contract on the Malheur National Forest is something that I am proud to have been part of, and something that has been wildly successful in forest restoration and economic development. I look forward to your responses, and to continue working with you and all interested stakeholders to ensuring that the positive legacy of the 10-year stewardship act endures to accomplish the large landscape restoration required on the forest. My staff is available to discuss the stewardship contract at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ron Wyden".

Ron Wyden
United States Senator

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jeffrey A. Merkley".

Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator