WALLOWA COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
STATE OF OREGON

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CHAIRMAN, MIKE HAYWARD
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March 12, 2013

The Honorable Betsy Johnson
Joint Subcommittee on
Transportation and Economic Development
900 Court St NE, S-209
Salem, OR, 97301

The Honorable Bob Jenson
Joint Subcommittee on Transportation and
Economic Development
900 Court St NE, H-481
Salem, OR, 97301

Dear Co-Chairs Johnson and Jenson:

Re: Funding Package for Forest Collaboratives

As you consider funding levels for the FY2013 - FY2015 state budget, I urge you to support Governor Kitzhaber's $4 million budget proposal to increase the pace and scale of federal forest management and provide critical support to forest collaboratives in Oregon. This request is detailed in Oregon Business Development Department Policy Option Package #102 under the subject of Eastern Oregon Forest Collaboration Funding. I am actively engaged in supporting the sustainable management of our state's federal forests and creating economic opportunities in adjacent rural communities. The Governor's proposed budget package for federal forest related efforts is a commitment to advancing the increased pace and scale of federal forest management through the collaborative model and a real opportunity for a different partnership with the federal government.

I have been a County Commissioner in Wallowa County for the past 16 years and have seen both the ecological health of our national forest decline as well as the economic health of our rural communities. It was for that reason that I became actively involved in the Umatilla Forest Collaborative when that group was formed as well as more recently when the Wallowa Whitman Forest Collaborative was created.

We have a significant challenge in Oregon but also a tremendous opportunity. We can improve forest habitat and the resilience of our lands to fire; expand rural jobs; secure reliable supply to maintain existing mill infrastructure and grow woody biomass and other forest related businesses; reduce social cost tied to declines in rural workforces and limit impacts from wildfire to community infrastructure, public health, tourism and adjacent landowners.

Fortunately in Oregon the mill infrastructure is still in place and that is critical to moving forward with forest restoration, however time is short and the remaining sawmills need a reliable supply of material. Forest restoration projects have been historically mired in appeals and lawsuits and collaborative efforts throughout eastern Oregon have shown that there is a way forward through working together to reach consensus.

The challenge for the various collaboratives, despite some significant successes, is a lack of a coordinated effort between groups and most if not all of the collaboratives struggle for adequate funding for technical and facilitation support. The Governor's proposal would address these issues at a critical time for the benefit of our forest and local communities.

Governor Kitzhaber and many others have recognized the significant role our federal forest play in the well-being of Oregon's rural communities. This proposal is not the end game but is an important piece in moving forward to secure our ecological, social and economic health of our forest and communities. We respectfully ask for your support.

Sincerely,

Mike Hayward
Chairman

CC: Honorable Representative Tobias Read
Honorable Representative Caddy McKeown
Honorable Senator Bill Hansell
Honorable Senator Chip Shields
Steve Bender