United States Department of Agriculture
Forest Service
Pacific Northwest Region
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Governor Kitzhaber and Members of Oregon's
Legislative Assembly
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Governor Kitzhaber and Members of Oregon's Legislative Assembly:

Improving the health and resilience of fire-prone forests and associated communities and economies in Oregon will require a departure from "business as usual" given the scope of effort needed, available federal funding, and market conditions for forest products. Community-based collaborative groups have built a common ground for moving forward at a landscape level. The Governor's proposed budget includes a significant investment in a new approach to increase the pace and scale of management on the State's dry-side federal public lands.

I want to underscore my commitment to advancing a new business model that prioritizes funding, gains efficiencies and cost savings, and leverages partnerships to increase the pace and scale of management. I have heard from collaboratives, scientists and public leaders and believe there is broad public support for actively managing our forests to be more resilient to the uncertainties of climate change, uncharacteristically destructive wildfires and inevitable disease outbreaks. We want to leverage the gains made by collaboratives that have moved us beyond gridlock over active management. We see a tremendous opportunity to find new ways of working with the State of Oregon, NGOs, local counties, communities and private industry to increase capacity. We believe this will lead to management actions that reduce wildfire threat, retain and create forest-derived jobs and products, including saw logs, and improve terrestrial and aquatic habitat. In short, advancing an accelerated program of work *that is developed with communities* will produce desired ecological outcomes, enhance family-wage jobs and strengthen local economic vitality.

To date, my team and I have taken the following actions:

1. Drafted a **Strategy for Increased Action in the Blue Mountains**, including the Malheur, Ochoco, Wallowa-Whitman and Umatilla National Forests.
2. Created a **Board of Directors** to oversee the Strategy's direction and provide additional recommendations needed to increase the pace and scale of our efforts.
3. **Hired a Blue Mountains Restoration Coordinator** to function as the lead on implementing the Strategy. The Coordinator will manage leadership, communications, logistics, scheduling and collaboration.
4. Taken steps to **hire a Blue Mountains NEPA Team** to increase our capacity to conduct environmental analyses and explore innovations to get to decisions differently.

5. Made plans to **hire a Blue Mountains Prep Team** to increase our capacity for sale layout and timber marking.
6. Tasked staff to **explore innovative methods to generate NEPA Planning and other efficiencies**, including partnerships with state agencies and private entities.

As with the Malheur NF, I have asked the Forest Supervisors on the Umatilla, Wallowa-Whitman and Ochoco National Forests to increase their program of work that will serve the needs of the ecosystem and benefit local economies. This program of work will be developed with communities and collaborative interests. As described in the State's National Forest Health Restoration Economic Assessment for Oregon, I believe a partnership with the State of Oregon is ripe to advance our collective desire to increase the pace and scale of management. I am hopeful a new business model can generate creative new approaches to funding, increased planning efficiencies, and collaborative alignment needed to achieve this outcome.

I commend our State, NGO, local collaborative and private industry partners for recognizing that new partnerships could catalyze benefits for public forest health, communities, and local economies. Indeed, success is only possible if we work together. My team and I stand ready to explore innovative approaches and partnerships with you.

Sincerely,

/s/ Jeremiah C. Ingersoll (for)

KENT P. CONNAUGHTON
Regional Forester

cc: Lisa E Freedman, John A Laurence, Kevin D Martin, Teresa Raaf, Kathleen Klein, John P Allen, Frederick L Way, Peter Courtney, Diane Rosenbaum, Ted Ferrioli, Tina Kotek, Mike McLane, Richard Devlin, Peter Buckley, Betsy Johnson, Val Hoyle