

September 09, 2011

The Honorable Jack Reed
Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior,
Environment, and Related Agencies
728 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior,
Environment, and Related Agencies
709 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Reed and Ranking Member Murkowski:

As the Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies considers the Fiscal Year (FY) 2012 budget for the USDA Forest Service (USFS) and the Department of the Interior (DOI), the undersigned organizations request your support for a 10-year reauthorization of the Stewardship Contracting authority within the FY 2012 budget. First enacted as a pilot program in the FY1999 Interior Appropriations bill and then reauthorized for another 10 years within the 2003 Omnibus Public Lands bill, stewardship contracting offers forest managers the use of innovative contracting methods to achieve forest management objectives, increase and diversify job opportunities, and lengthen work seasons. Our organizations collectively agree that stewardship contracting reauthorization is essential to restore and foster healthy forest ecosystems and provide stability and employment to rural communities.

Under Section 323 of Public Law 108-7, the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management have the authority to enter into stewardship agreements on federal lands to achieve landscape-scale management goals at minimal costs. Treatments authorized under contracts promote healthy forests and reduce fire hazards, increase watershed resilience, and expand business and job opportunities. Stewardship contracting encourages collaboration and long-term commitments among agencies, contractors, local communities, and other interested stakeholders. This contractual commitment promotes rural jobs and represents an investment to complete restoration projects.

Chief among the program's successes are its ability to establish jobs, expand forest products markets, diversify landscape treatments, and promote active management of forests through community-based collaboration. Stewardship contracting provides a unique funding mechanism that allows agencies to keep revenue on site to complete other stewardship projects, thus providing more work and subsequent job opportunities. While stewardship contracting does not replace traditional timber sale contracts, this tool provides a critical incentive for forest management, helps address the need for restoration activities in much of our national forests, and can compliment timber sale contracting.

We urge Congress to reauthorize stewardship contracting for another 10 years through inclusion in the FY 2012 budget. It has worked effectively for federal agencies and rural communities alike. Reauthorizing the program will continue to build on successes already achieved while expanding positive impacts to our national forests.

Sincerely,

Alliance of Forest Workers and Harvesters, Carl Wilmsen, Executive Director

American Forests, Rebecca R. Turner, Director of Public Policy

Central Oregon Intergovernmental Council, Phil Chang, Program Administrator

Conservation Northwest, Dave Werntz, Science and Conservation Director

Criley Consulting, Marnie Criley, Owner

Ecosystem Workforce Program, University of Oregon*, Cassandra Moseley, Director

Flathead Economic Policy Center, Carol Daly, President

Framing Our Community, Joyce Dearstyne, Executive Director

Gifford Pinchot Task Force, Lisa Moscinski, Deputy Director

Institute for Culture and Ecology, Dr. Eric T Jones, Senior Scientist

Lake County Resources Initiative, James K. Walls, Executive Director

Malheur Lumber Company, Mike Billman, Timber Manager

Mark Webb, County Judge, Grant County

National Association of Forest Service Retirees, Hank Kashdan, Legislative Director

National Association of State Foresters, Jay Farrell, Executive Director

National Wild Turkey Federation, James Earl Kennamer Ph.D., Chief Conservation Officer

Pinchot Institute for Conservation, Al Sample, President

Salmon Valley Stewardship, Gina Knudson, Executive Director

Siuslaw Institute, Johnny Sundstrom, President

Society of American Foresters, Michael T. Goergen Jr., Executive Vice-President and CEO

South Central Oregon Economic Development District, Betty Riley, Executive Director

Southern Oregon Small Diameter Collaborative, George McKinley, Director

Sustainable Northwest, Maia Enzer, Policy Program Director

The Nature Conservancy, Robert L. Bendick Jr., US Government Relations Director

The Watershed Center, Nick Goulette, Executive Director

Vander Meer's Wildland Conservation Services/Bad Goat Forest Products, Mark Vander Meer,
Owner

Wallowa Resources, Nils D. Christoffersen, Executive Director

*affiliation for information purposes only