

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

May 11, 2016

Ms. Lisa Northrop, Supervisor
Mt. Hood National Forest
16400 Champion Way
Sandy, OR 97055

Re: NEPA Decision for Polallie-Cooper Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project

Dear Supervisor Northrup,

We are writing to request that you defer your final National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) decision on the proposed Polallie Cooper Hazardous Fuels Reduction project until the Government Camp-Cooper Spur Land Exchange is completed and all associated provisions of the Omnibus Public Lands Management Act of 2009 (PL 111-11) for the Mt. Hood National Forest are enacted.

The 7,300 acres within the Polallie-Cooper project area are extremely complex, encompassing a diverse array of forest ecosystem, community wildfire protection, watershed, and habitat values, as well as scenic and recreational opportunities. We recognize that the Forest Service faces real challenges in seeking to protect this area from high severity fire while also protecting the area's ecological values and recreation opportunities from potential negative impacts of forest thinning and road building activities. We appreciate your efforts to carefully weigh and balance these two interrelated risks.

As we have discussed in a recent letter and conversations with your office, Section 1205 of the 2009 Omnibus Act designates the Crystal Springs Watershed Special Resources Management Unit and includes special protections for the Unit. These provisions seek to "ensure the protection of the quality and quantity of the Crystal Springs watershed as a clean drinking water source," and specify the conditions under which new road construction, renovation of existing non-System roads, and harvesting of commercial timber can occur within the Unit. Importantly, these protections do not become binding and legally enforceable until the completion of the land exchange. Your letter dated March 22, 2016 to Senator Wyden and Congressman Blumenauer indicates that you feel that you have designed the Polallie Cooper project to comply with the protections outlined in the 2009 Omnibus Act.

The collaborative land management strategies for Cooper Spur, the Crystal Springs watershed, and surrounding Mt. Hood National Forest land included in the 2009 Omnibus Act were the result of many years of hard work and compromise between conservation organizations, local landowners, the Forest Service, Hood River County residents, and Oregon's Congressional delegation. Now, a number of the collaborative partners who crafted those agreements are concerned that proposed Polallie Cooper project road building and thinning - particularly in

recently unmanaged stands - may conflict with the agreements legislated in the 2009 Omnibus Act. We urge the Forest Service to weigh these concerns carefully and to not take any actions that could undermine the special protections listed above and the unique values of the area.

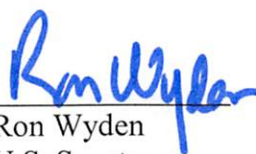
Therefore we encourage you to keep working towards collaborative agreement with all interested parties in the Polallie Cooper project, as well as a swift completion of the Government Camp-Cooper Spur Land Exchange, to ensure that Congress' intent in the 2009 Act is finally realized. In the interim, operating under the assumption that the land exchange will be complete within 12 months, we request that you defer your final NEPA decision on the Polallie Cooper project until the land exchange is completed.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey A. Merkley
U.S. Senator



Ron Wyden
U.S. Senator



Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress