

April 3, 2009

original sent by e-mail

Ms. Pamela Haze
Acting Assistant Secretary for Policy Management and Budget
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Ms. Haze:

As we discussed in our meeting of March 19, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) provides the Department of the Interior with an opportunity to create jobs and address forest health, ecological restoration and fuels treatment needs on lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management and other DOI agencies. We believe that the \$15 million of recovery funding for Hazardous Fuels Reduction can be strategically allocated to meet the primary objective of job creation and also achieve ecological benefits. Recognizing that the Department is already far along in the process of deciding where to use the recovery funds, I wanted to respond to your request for information describing large landscapes where hazardous fuels reduction treatments are part of an overall program of ecological restoration and where local economies would benefit from sustainable biomass supplies for energy production and jobs.

The Nature Conservancy works in all fifty states and has hundreds of local partnerships with the Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, and Bureau of Indian Affairs to restore fire-adapted ecosystems and reduce hazardous fuels that threaten communities and alter forest health. In the West these landscapes typically encompass millions of acres and have strong collaborative groups of business owners, land managers, scientists and local government officials who have worked together on land restoration plans and strategies for employment, energy production, and value-added manufacturing. My colleague Laura McCarthy, Fire and Forest Restoration Program Director, has highlighted two of the many landscapes where there is strong evidence that hazardous fuels reduction treatment of forests would best achieve the goals of the ARRA. These are:

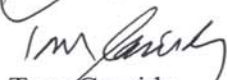
- The Klamath Mountains Ecoregion landscape that straddles the Oregon-California border with a checkerboard arrangement of Bureau of Land Management (Medford District), National Forest, and private lands. This landscape is where the 2003 Biscuit Fire occurred and the fire threats remain among the highest in the nation. Past hazardous fuels treatments have effectively altered the behavior of subsequent fires and protected communities. The region has numerous collaborative groups that have developed a restoration vision with the federal agencies, assessed wildfire and community risks, and agreed upon treatment plans for hazardous fuels reduction. Several wood-using businesses are transitioning to energy production as a secondary product and are in need of a sustained biomass supply.

- The Tapash Sustainable Forests Collaborative includes the leadership of land management agencies and tribal owners of the fire adapted landscape of the east Cascades Mountains range in Washington state. The Collaborative members collectively manage about four million acres of forests in the Yakama Nation, Wenatchee National Forest, and state wildlife lands. Over 70% of the forests require hazardous fuels reduction treatments to avoid the risk of catastrophic fire and insect epidemics. The Tapash Collaborative's goal is restore forest health across the entire landscape by stimulating new biomass utilization enterprises. The Yakama Nation has invested in mill infrastructure and is working toward a biomass-to-energy plant which will require a firm source of biomass from the surrounding national forest. The Collaborative has a list of 5 "shovel-ready" projects of which a quarter are on Tribal lands, and the remainder are on national forest, state and private lands.

Please note that Laura McCarthy and I are lobbyists registered under the Lobbying Disclosure Act and The Nature Conservancy is a registrant under the Lobbying Disclosure Act. Also, for your information, the Nature Conservancy has no financial interest in any of the projects described above. The Department's resource protection, resource use and community service goals have considerable overlap with The Nature Conservancy's conservation mission, and we appreciate the opportunity to provide information about projects where our mutual goals can be achieved.

Please do not hesitate to communicate with me if you have any questions or require additional information.

Sincerely,



Tom Cassidy
Director of Federal Programs
U.S. Government Relations