



THEODORE R. KULONGOSKI
Governor

December 5, 2007

Eastern Oregon Rural Alliance
c/o Union County
1106 K Avenue
La Grande, OR 97850

Dear Eastern Oregon Rural Alliance, Wheeler County Commission and Harney County Court:

Thank you for your recent letter asking for my support for various initiatives to revitalize and sustain the forest-based economies of Eastern Oregon. I appreciate you taking the time to write and engage in a proactive dialogue.

I share your concerns for the long-term vitality of this industry. To that end, I have asked the Department of Forestry to designate representatives to the Economic Revitalization Team in Eastern Oregon. State Forester Marvin Brown is the principal contact and may designate others in his agency to serve on the team depending on the projects being worked on at any given time. I also signed, in March of this year, a Memorandum of Agreement with the Forest Service seeking "cooperating agency" status in the revision of management plans for Oregon's national forests. The Department of Forestry (ODF) will serve as lead agency in the revision of those plans. Kevin Birch of the Department of Forestry is the staff person designated as the main point of contact.

Kevin already serves as liaison to the Forest Service in the revision of Blue Mountains National Forest Management Plans. After consulting with State Forester Marvin Brown, he has indicated he would be happy to designate either Kevin or a local ODF employee to serve as a member of the Blue Mountains Collaborative Process. With the support of my office, the ODF liaison will enlist the participation of other state natural resource agencies as needed.

Additionally, I am supporting the efforts of the Department of Forestry to seek funding in the 2008 Special Legislative Session to add staff and capacity to assist the Forest Service in accelerating work to recover from the severe wildfires of 2007. Included in that proposal will be funds to assist the Service in completing the necessary environmental analysis and other work preceding salvage logging and landscape restoration following the Egley Complex fires. I am asking the Department to give consideration of your request for a fund to support local collaboration as part of the request we will be making to the Legislature.

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Further, I want to encourage you to work with ODF in finding a legislative sponsor for this concept. If we are unsuccessful in 2008, we will look for similar opportunities in the 2009 Legislative Session. An alternative approach for building capacity for local collaboration might be to identify a specific project (or projects) that have high potential to result in new business investment and that require local governmental collaboration to succeed. Upon identifying the support required for local collaboration, you could explore making application to the Governor's Strategic Reserve Fund for economic development.

Be assured that as we work on the many opportunities for use of biomass for energy production, the opportunities and needs of Eastern Oregon's forests are paramount. I will pass this message on to our staff and agencies working in the biomass/energy arena and to our federal partners as we continue to discuss the need to address forest health, the reduction of fire risks and biomass energy potential in our eastern forests.

Finally, your request for a summit to address policy changes to foster healthy communities and healthy forests is noted. The issues that would arise from such a summit, however, should transcend natural resource issues to include the total suite of diverse economic opportunities for Eastern Oregon. Thus, I am asking that Ray Naff, Director of the Economic Revitalization Team, and Bob Repine, Director of Economic and Community Development, to work with Mike Carrier, my Natural Resources Policy Director, and offer their perspectives on how such a summit should be convened and what it should cover. One of them will be in touch with you on this matter.

I look forward to continuing this dialogue and thank you, again, for taking the time to write.

Sincerely,



THEODORE R. KULONGOSKI
Governor

TRK:mc:jb
c: Tim Nesbitt, Deputy Chief of Staff
Mike Carrier, Governor's Natural Resources Policy Director
Ray Naff, Intergovernmental Relations and ERT Director
Bob Repine, Director, Oregon Economic and Community Development
Marvin Brown, Director, Oregon Department of Forestry
Kevin Birch, Oregon Department of Forestry