

NORTH CENTRAL WASHINGTON FOREST HEALTH COLLABORATIVE

July 11, 2014

State Forester Aaron Everett
WA Department of Natural Resources
Box 47037
Olympia, WA 98504-7037

Dear Mr. Everett:

The North Central Washington Forest Health Collaborative (NCWFHC) is a representative group of timber industry, conservation, and local, state, federal, and tribal governments working with the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest (OWNF) to increase the pace and footprint of much-needed forest and watershed restoration on the OOWNF in Chelan and Okanogan Counties. We appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback on potential designations under the *Agricultural Act of 2014* that support federal restoration activities.

Priority goals of the NCWFHC are to advance implementation of the OOWNF's Restoration Strategy (FRS) and full collaboration on the development of landscape-scale restoration projects.

In alignment with these goals, the NCWFHC supports the FRS, including Ecosystem Management Decision Support as a tool to identify priority treatment areas. The FRS is a science-based approach to prioritize and treat areas on the National Forest that enhance forest and watershed resilience and sustainability, and incrementally return the ecosystem to a condition within its historical range of variability.

Therefore, the NCWFHC would like to recommend the following project areas, each part of larger landscape analyses, be designated under the *Agricultural Act* (map attached):

- 1. Upper Peshastin Creek Restoration Project, Wenatchee River Ranger District**
- 2. 25-Mile Restoration Project, Chelan Ranger District**
- 3. Annie Restoration Project, Tonasket Ranger District**
- 4. Dinkelman Restoration Project, Entiat Ranger District**
- 5. Tillicum Restoration Project, Entiat Ranger District**

The landscape analyses associated with the above projects may result in adjacent priority project areas in the near future, which could benefit from expanded designations in these areas under the *Agricultural Act*. Furthermore, as implementation of the FRS has just begun on the five northern Ranger Districts of the OOWNF, the Collaborative may recommend future designations in other watersheds, if possible.

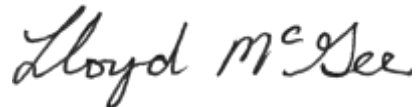
Within the designated areas, it is our expectation that projects will be designed through full and open collaboration with interested parties and consulting agencies, be consistent with existing project purpose and need statements, and proactively restore green stands and watersheds to increase resilience to natural disturbances. While the expanded Categorical Exclusion authority provided by this *Agricultural Act* is expected to be rarely employed, the NCWFHC appreciates the capacity provided by multiple tools to increase efficiencies and lower costs of restoration.

Please contact Melody Kreimes, Forest Health Program Manager, Upper Columbia Salmon Recovery Board, at (509) 888-0321 or melody.kreimes@ucsrb.org for any further information regarding the North Central Washington Forest Health Collaborative. We thank you for your attention to the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest.

Sincerely,



Paul Ward, Yakama Nation
NCWFHC Co-Chair



Lloyd McGee, The Nature Conservancy
NCWFHC Co-Chair

Cc: Lauren Burnes via email