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**File Code:** 1950  
**Date:** June 1, 2016

Senator Ron Wyden  
313 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Senator Jeffrey A. Merkley  
313 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Congressman Earl Blumenauer  
1111 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Senator Merkley, Senator Wyden and Congressman Blumenauer:

I am in receipt of your letter dated May 11, 2016, requesting that we defer the final National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) decision on the Polallie Cooper Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project until the legislated Government Camp - Cooper Spur land exchange has been completed. As I stated in a previous letter dated March 21, 2016, we take our responsibility seriously to ensure the protection of the Crystal Springs watershed as a clean drinking water source, as well as our role in protecting the water supply from the risks of catastrophic wildfire. Although the land exchange has not yet been completed, none of the activities proposed in the Polallie Cooper Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project are contrary to the direction stated in the 2009 Omnibus Public Lands Management Act (PL 111-11). In fact, the 2009 Omnibus Act allows for fuel reduction and forest health management treatments to occur within the Crystal Springs Watershed Special Resources Management Unit to protect the ecological and social values associated with the area.

Similar to the collaborative work that contributed in developing the language for the 2009 Omnibus Act, many years of local collaboration has also been paramount in the development of the Polallie Cooper Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project. The Hood River Stew Crew is a local collaborative group comprised of landowners and Forest users, who reviewed site-specific information and made numerous field visits to the planning area to develop the recommendations that were incorporated into Polallie Cooper Project. Included in that discussion was the impact of treating the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) that was developed by Hood River County in their Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP), which overlaps the Crystal Springs watershed. The CWPP identified the Polallie Cooper planning area as a high risk area and recognized the significance and importance of the watershed, as it serves an important role in providing dependable drinking water to nearby residents. The CWPP explicitly outlines that the Crystal Springs watershed will be more susceptible to the effects of catastrophic wildfire than other watersheds in Hood River County.



Because of the very real threat to neighboring communities located within and adjacent to the WUI and in an attempt to be responsive to your request to delay this project's NEPA decision, I will have further discussions with my staff and the collaborative group to determine the feasibility of implementing the Polallie Cooper Hazardous Fuel Reduction Project in two phases.

The first phase of implementation may include all fuels reduction activities that are outside of the Crystal Springs Watershed Special Resources Management Unit; and the second phase of implementation may include the remaining portion of the project area after the land exchange has been executed. This approach may allow for reduced risk to neighboring communities and defer the decision for treatment within the Crystal Springs Watershed Special Resources Management Unit until the land exchange has occurred.

It is important to protect and manage the resources and values essential to the American public. As such, reducing the risk of fire continues to be a high priority for the last untreated WUI in Hood River County, as well as meeting the intentions outlined in the 2009 Omnibus Act. Further, we will continue to strive to meet the interests of our diverse public and look forward to finding a solution that resolves the concerns of those interested in the management of Mt. Hood National Forest.

I look forward to further dialogue with you and your staff on achieving a successful outcome for this important project.

Sincerely,



LISA A. NORTHRUP  
Forest Supervisor