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Route To:

Subject: Shared Stewardship - Leaders' Intent

To: USFS Northern Region, MT Forest and Grassland Supervisors, MT DNRC Area Managers

The USDA Forest Service's Northern Region and State of Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) will work together to advance the vision, intent, and objectives stated in the following two initiatives: the USDA Forest Service, 'Toward Shared Stewardship Across Landscapes: An Outcome Based Investment Strategy' (August 2018) and Governor Bullock's Forest in Focus 2.0 Initiative: A Cross-boundary Collaborative Approach (September 2018). Both agencies commit to working in good faith and close partnership to improve forest conditions across all of Montana's forests.

Federal, state and private managers of forests and rangelands face a range of urgent challenges, including catastrophic wildfires, invasive species, degraded watersheds and epidemic proportions of insects and disease. Forest health, wildfire and other natural resources are *not* confined or defined by ownership and administrative boundaries. Although we have a long history of working cooperatively together when it comes to wildfire response, we are newly poised under these two initiatives to further expand that relationship to accomplish cross-boundary landscape-scale management. To accomplish this, the State of Montana and Northern Region of the USFS are committed to working side by side, using the best available scientific information and innovative tools and authorities to accomplish landscape-scale treatments in priority areas that make a meaningful difference in and around our communities.

Collectively we started discussing how to make this happen during the fall of 2018, when leaders from both agencies convened to strategize how to successfully implement the USFS Shared Stewardship and Forest in Focus 2.0 vision and principles. These meetings, as well as the follow-up meetings many of you have been having, reemphasized the positive work already being accomplished between the two agencies while also highlighting many opportunities to capitalize on this growing partnership.

The following principles outline our collective leaders' intent on how we work together to move forward and get the most benefit from the opportunities presented to us through these initiatives. Specifically, as we grow our partnership and prioritize and organize work for our respective agencies as it pertains to these two initiatives:

- ***We will draw strength from our interdependence and diversity.*** We will exemplify through our actions our interdependence on each other by respecting the diversity of our

missions, respecting one another, and working cooperatively to deliver services to Montana's communities. Through strong leadership and our actions, we are committed to sharing this same expectation with employees and field staff within our respective agencies.

- ***We will organize our work together under all three tenets of the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy.*** We commit to continue to work to improve our coordination of wildfire response, to increase the resilience of forested landscapes, and to work towards making our communities more fire-adapted to help reduce the threat to Montana communities from catastrophic wildfires.
- ***We will plan and implement across boundaries.*** We commit to look beyond respective federal state, and private jurisdictional boundaries. Cross-boundary coordination and implementation of meaningful projects at meaningful scales will best benefit communities and landscapes. We will prioritize projects that will bolster landscape scale restoration and result in protecting and enhancing wildlife and aquatic habitat, watersheds, communities and infrastructure, while producing fiber.
- ***We will value our partnerships and strive to identify shared outcomes.*** We commit to maintaining and improving our relationships with tribal governments, counties, collaborative groups, community groups, conservation groups, soil and water districts, and other stakeholders, allowing us to think, plan and act in a more coordinated manner. We commit to work with our partners to identify shared outcomes when it comes to cross-boundary work.
- ***We will be innovative and effective.*** We commit to using all available tools and innovations available, to better focus our collective investments and focus on outcomes at the right scale, regardless of ownership.
- ***We will prioritize Good Neighbor Authority as a joint program.*** We commit to continue developing a strong Good Neighbor Authority program with the intention of providing additional capacity which will increase our collective ability to improve conditions across Montana's landscapes. We will strive to grow the use of this authority in new and innovative ways by engaging and leveraging partnerships to carry out restoration and management on National Forest System lands and across boundaries. We will utilize program revenue to accomplish large landscape scale restoration projects, cross-boundary projects, and to address the highest needs of the communities on National Forest System lands and adjacent lands.
- ***We will prioritize our work to revise and complete the Montana Forest Action Plan.*** We commit to having the Forest Service actively engaged with the Montana DNRC to help complete the State Assessment of Forest Resources and the Statewide Resource Strategy, collectively known as the Montana Forest Action Plan. We commit to working in good faith and in close partnership with multiple tribal governments and stakeholders to develop a statewide plan of action for all of Montana's forests. The Montana Forest Action Plan will synthesize data from multiple agencies and partners and will be used to inform identification of priority landscapes, regardless of jurisdiction.

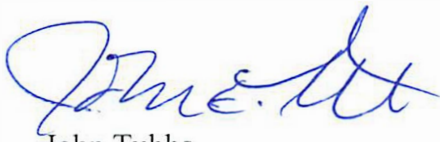
Adhering to these principles and using them to help set priorities allows for shared decision making and more coordinated management of critical areas. This will result in improved forest conditions and help provide sustainable jobs and economies for our communities.

We need all agency leaders to work alongside us, and to enroll your staff to meet these challenges and new opportunities. In the coming months we will continue working to advance the concepts outlined in the Shared Stewardship and Forest in Focus 2.0 initiatives.

We appreciate your commitment to help create a new culture that encourages and inspires each other and allows us to manage landscapes in a more integrated way.



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