



American Wildlands

April 26, 2010

Leslie Weldon, Regional Forester
Northern Region
P.O. Box 7669
Missoula, MT
59807-7669

Dear Ms. Weldon:

I am writing on behalf of American Wildlands to express my strong support for the Southwestern Crown of the Continent Collaborative's Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP) proposal recently submitted to your office for consideration. I reviewed the proposal and I am confident that this proposal is the result of a model collaborative effort rooted in sound science and built upon a long, productive history of effective collaboration throughout Montana's Blackfoot, Clearwater and Swan Valleys.

Since 1978, American Wildlands has worked with communities, agencies, and other conservation groups to ensure habitat preservation for Northern Rockies wildlife. For the past fifteen years, we have focused solely on the maintenance and restoration of wildlife corridors- the vital landscape linkages that connect protected blocks of habitat, such as national parks and wilderness areas. Our mission is to leverage our science leadership through partnerships to link vital wildlife habitats.

In 2008 American Wildlands completed a Priority Linkage Assessment for the Northern Rockies of Montana and Idaho. This report provides a comprehensive landscape-scale information and mapping synthesis of the major wildlife movement areas in the region. The southwestern Crown of the Continent, as identified in the relevant proposal encompasses several of our highest priority wildlife linkage zones.

If selected for funding, the SW Crown CFLRP proposal will ensure that collaborative, science-based ecosystem restoration will continue to be a high priority in the Blackfoot, Clearwater and Swan Valleys. The proposal's emphasis on treating 80% of all high risk acres identified in the area's three Community Wildfire Protection Plans ensures that lives, homes and communities will face a significantly reduced risk from uncharacteristic wildfire. The participation by federal, state and local officials as well as a diverse array of non-profit organizations and private land owners, in the development of the proposal will facilitate ongoing collaboration on the fuel reduction and forest restoration efforts envisioned in the proposal.

In addition to its emphasis on fuel reduction and wildfire risk reduction, this proposal would protect and restore clean water, improve fish and wildlife habitat, enhance landscape connectivity and treat tens of thousands of acres of terrestrial and aquatic invasive species.

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Finally, this proposal would provide much needed jobs in the woods where fuel reduction and forest restoration would put people back to work. This proposal would also provide much needed saw logs and biomass to existing and proposed future facilities in the region.

Thank you very much for giving the SW Crown CFLRP proposal the strongest possible support as it moves forward through the selection process.

Sincerely,

Katie Meiklejohn
Conservation Director
American Wildlands

CC: *The Honorable Tom Vilsack, Secretary of Agriculture*
The Honorable Tom Tidwell, Chief of the Forest Service
Mr. William Timko, Deputy Director of Forest Management Staff

Leveraging our science leadership through partnerships to link vital wildlife habitat within the U.S. Northern Rockies.

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