



# United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
Montana Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program  
922 Bootlegger Trail  
Great Falls, Montana 59404-6133

April 30, 2010

Ms. Leslie Weldon  
Regional Forester  
USDA – Forest Service  
Northern Region One  
PO Box 7669  
Missoula, MT 59807-7669

Dear Ms. Weldon:

I am writing on behalf of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Montana Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program (MT PFW) to express my strong support for the Southwestern Crown of the Continent Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP) proposal recently submitted to your office. The MT PFW program has been working on cooperative habitat projects with private landowners in these important western Montana landscapes since the early 1990's. After reviewing the CFLRP submission, I am confident that the project represents a model collaborative effort. It blends sound science with successful community-based conservation principles to augment a long, productive history of effective collaboration on natural resource issues throughout Montana's Blackfoot, Clearwater and Swan Valleys.

The MT PFW program provides financial and technical assistance to private landowners for diverse habitat projects. Working in partnership with landowners, state and federal agencies, watershed groups, and non-government organizations across the Blackfoot, Clearwater and Swan Valley's, MT PFW has focused on improving habitat for native fish, migratory birds and other at-risk species such as trumpeter swans and grizzly bears. Participation is voluntary. Project diversity ranges from restoring aquatic systems to improving fish passage to invasive species management.

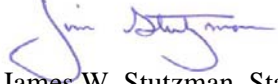
I believe the CFLRP proposal compliments MT PFW goals and objectives in western Montana. If selected for funding, the SW Crown CFLRP proposal will ensure that collaborative, science-based ecosystem restoration will continue to be a high priority in the Blackfoot, Clearwater and Swan Valleys. The proposal's 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 accelerate ongoing collaboration on the fuel reduction and forest restoration efforts outlined in the proposal.

The CFLRP proposal has a close link to past, present and future MT PFW activities. If approved, the proposal would protect and restore clean water, improve fish and wildlife habitat and treat tens of thousands of acres of terrestrial and aquatic invasive species infestations.

Finally, this proposal would provide much needed jobs in the woods where fuel reduction and forest restoration activities would assist struggling western Montana rural communities. This proposal would also provide much needed saw logs and biomass to existing and proposed future facilities in the region.

Thank you for providing the MT PFW program an opportunity to comment on the SW Crown CFLRP proposal. Please contact me if you have questions or need additional information.

Sincerely,



James W. Stutzman, State Coordinator  
Montana Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

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