



February 19, 2020

Senate Wildfire Committee

**RE: Information hearing for the Senate Wildfire Reduction and Recovery Committee**

Dear Senators Golden, Baertschiger, Prozanski, Thatcher, and Frederick:

I deeply appreciate the invitation to join you today on behalf of Blue Mountains Forest Partners (BMFP), for what is an incredibly important and critical discussion. However, I am unable to do so, and apologize for any inconvenience this might cause you. In place of my participation I offer a white paper that provides some information relevant to your interests, a map, and a brief response to a couple questions you've raised.

The enclosed white paper is a two-pager. Page 1 describes in abbreviated form key characteristics of BMFP's collaborative approach, our history, and some of our accomplishments. This information might not make much sense apart from the larger context of our efforts with the Harney County Restoration Collaborative (HCRC) on the Malheur National Forest. Still, I hope it enables you to appreciate in some small way that effective collaborative efforts take time to mature; and that this maturation grows out the willingness of diverse stakeholder groups to utilize best available science and develop working relationships based on trust that enable the diverse groups to become solution oriented and thereby take risks around public land management decisions.

Page 2 describes the socioeconomic impacts of our efforts in partnership with HCRC and the Malheur National Forest through 2017, the last time we reviewed the data. The impacts are significant and incredibly positive for the natural resource dependent communities we work in. Indeed, they would not have occurred apart from ongoing and, at times, slow and painful collaborative efforts.

The enclosed Malheur National Forest Restoration Priority Watersheds map visually depicts the pace and scale (or scope) of collaboratively informed work currently happening or being planned on the Malheur National Forest. That level of work is not happening anywhere else in Oregon. Moreover, that it's happening on the Malheur National Forest in Grant and Harney counties is both unlikely and incredibly surprising. I say that as a former County Judge for Grant County and contractor who knows the culture of these counties well and the associated challenges collaborative efforts have faced and continue to face.

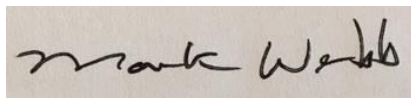
Finally, today's hearing is intended to consider "what role forest and rangeland collaboratives can and do play in the wildfire work needed in Oregon." And hearing participants have been asked to address, among other questions, "What value do you think your collaborative/collaboratives in general could add to a comprehensive wildfire program in

Oregon?" I'll be frank and to the point here: Given BMFP's experience, Oregon is unlikely to develop a comprehensive wildfire program that proves effective long-term *apart from the informed and ongoing involvement of Oregon's collaboratives*.

This is because a comprehensive and effective wildfire program is *not* primarily about the amount of work that occurs, important as that is, *but rather the nature of that work*. By that I mean how we harvest timber and treat forested landscapes must undergo significant change compared to how we executed these efforts historically; and they must do so at a scale that is unprecedented. BMFP's experience is that such changes *will not occur apart* from the kind of social engagement and public support experienced collaborative efforts provide.

Again, I am sorry I could not join today's hearing for what is a critically important effort. I trust the material I've provided, along with my written comments, prove useful as you consider how best to execute your responsibilities. Please let me know if I can help in any other way. And please know that I'm happy to sit down to discuss these matters with in the future.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light-colored rectangular background. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style and reads "Mark Webb".

Mark Webb  
Executive Director  
Blue Mountains Forest Partners  
543-620-2546  
[bmfp06@gmail.com](mailto:bmfp06@gmail.com)