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November 19, 2021

Idaho Conservation League  
Attention: John Robison and Josh Johnson  
PO Box 844  
Boise ID 83702

via email: [jrobison@idahoconservation.org](mailto:jrobison@idahoconservation.org)  
[jjohnson@idahoconservation.org](mailto:jjohnson@idahoconservation.org)

Re: Forest Health – Clear Creek Parcel

Dear Mr. Robison and Mr. Johnson:

I received your letter dated November 11, 2021. The Idaho Department of Lands (IDL) agrees with Idaho Conservation League's (ICL) assessment of the high levels of unnatural fuels loads and the increasing amount of forest-restoration and fuel-treatment projects that are needed to bring Idaho's forestlands into a sustainable level of forest health. However, we find a great deal of fault with ICL's critique of efforts to address forest health issues on the Clear Creek parcel. Your letter misrepresented IDL's commitment to work collaboratively and the simple fact that Shared Stewardship's goals do not conflict with the needs of active-management landowners. Quite the opposite: active harvesting and thinning operations, especially those focused on improving forest-health like the treatment prescribed for the Clear Creek parcel, are integral to meeting the goals of Shared Stewardship projects.

Idaho's Shared Stewardship efforts, including IDL's Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) program, are resulting in stronger relationships with our National Forest and BLM partners, as well as collaborations which include state forest managers, private landowners, NRCS, private companies, non-governmental organizations, and several counties around the state.

Currently, IDL does not have a GNA agreement with the Sawtooth National Forest (SNF). However, IDL GNA foresters, including George Nuesse and Jon Songster, have shared correspondence with the national forest timber managers and participated in several 5B Restoration Coalition meetings, including an in-person meeting at IDL's Southwest Area Office in January 2020. Mr. Songster, IDL's GNA Bureau Chief, last communicated with SNF managers in April of this year to discuss potential opportunities for IDL GNA to administer or implement any of the proposed operations being carried out under the Bald Mountain Forest Stewardship Project.

Upon invitation, our IDL forester-in-charge of the Clear Creek salvage operation, Laurie Stone, also participated in multiple meetings with the 5B Restoration Coalition and the Greater Bald

Mountain Area Workgroup. In October of 2020, she met online with members of the workgroup to discuss issues related to IDL's planned Clear Creek operation. In March she hosted an onsite meeting of the workgroup to walk the state unit and discuss viewshed concerns. In May, Ms. Stone met with an SNF forester at the Clear Creek unit to discuss IDL's proposed cutting prescription and to best ensure alignment with the National Forest's silvicultural goals with planned salvage operations on adjacent federal forestlands, to the extent practicable. However, what needs to be understood is that these landscape efforts must be approached in a way that respects the individual agency's mandates and regulations. The Clear Creek parcel is state endowment trust land and must be managed to produce the maximum amount of income to the beneficiary to which it belongs. Additionally, all harvest activities on this parcel must meet the standards set forth in the Idaho Forest Practices Act.

Tyre Holfeltz, IDL's Fire Risk Mitigation Program Manager, administers several grant projects for implementing needed fuels-reduction treatments on nearby private forestlands in Blaine County. In addition, Mr. Holfeltz administers the Landscape Scale Restoration grant that Ecosystem Sciences has contributed toward the cross-boundary goals of the Bald Mountain Forest Stewardship Project. He has participated in, and presented at, several 5B Restoration Coalition and workgroup meetings regarding IDL's role in extending these needed treatments onto private forestlands. He has also hosted almost 10 field tours over the last four years to show community members these implemented treatments.

IDL is committed to strengthening communications and relationships with our land-management partners. We are proud of the strides we have made in this respect through our growing GNA and Shared Stewardship cross-boundary projects. As you are aware, with our current focus on cross-boundary work near the Payette and Boise National Forests in the south-Idaho Shared Stewardship Priority Landscape, we have successfully built a Shared Stewardship team for implementing cross-boundary work. This cadre includes engaged state-forest managers, IDL Private Forestry Specialists, a GNA forest manager, a GNA-Shared Stewardship forester, a shared National Forest Shared Stewardship Coordinator, a contracted private-forestry consultant and two sub-grantees to work cooperatively on project work. The formation of this team took time, thoughtful consideration, and solid development of project work in the region. While our current team growth and no-boundaries-forestry project focus has primarily revolved around the Payette, Boise, Idaho Panhandle and Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests, we are making efforts to forge new collaborative relationships with other National Forests, including the SNF.

Work is underway to build a strong cross-boundary team with the SNF. IDL has engaged with the national forest's timber-management staff to begin building the relationships needed to facilitate cross-boundary projects, starting via an agreement with IDL's GNA Bureau.

Opportunities abound for strengthening connections created through the many years of cross-boundary work being implemented on neighboring private forestlands through IDL's Fire Risk Mitigation Program. There is already a great cross-boundary story occurring in the Wood River Valley; we just need to build on that by expanding the team of Shared Stewardship partners in this area.

IDL sincerely wants to establish and build these Shared Stewardship teams across the state, and we will explore opportunities as project areas develop. We are also committed to continuing our cross-boundary communications to help partners understand how operations carried out on endowment forestlands are meeting our silvicultural goals and fiduciary responsibilities.

In closing, staff at IDL have been nothing but transparent, collaborative, and responsive with regards to the Bald Mountain Stewardship Project, and for ICL to allude otherwise is disingenuous. However, we would be happy to meet to further discuss your concerns regarding our collaborative involvement with the partners of the Bald Mountain Stewardship Project and others.

Sincerely,



Dustin T. Miller  
Director

cc: Senator Michelle Stennett  
Dani Southard  
Sam Eaton  
Nate Fisher, Jr.  
Craig Foss  
Ara Andrea  
Jon Songster