

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

September 30, 2013

The Honorable Tom Tidwell
Chief
USDA Forest Service
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Chief Tidwell,

We write to you today requesting your assistance in completing the Upper Lochsa Land Exchange between the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and Western Pacific Timber (WPT).

After carefully reviewing the progress and status of the ongoing administrative effort, we conclude that the effort, however well intentioned, is unlikely to end with a successful exchange that adequately balances national interests in acquiring environmentally sensitive land with the interest of Tribal and local governments and the people of Idaho.

We believe that these interests can be better reconciled by the additional authorities and protections that could be embodied in an exchange directed by authorizing legislation.

Consequently, we request the Forest Service and WPT to pause the administrative exchange and, instead, stand ready to assist in the development of a balanced, legislative proposal. In proceeding with this effort, we will work collaboratively with all stakeholders to ensure a work product that is developed transparently and that balances state, local, Tribal, and national interests. The following seven principles will guide our efforts:

1. The exchange legislation will be developed through a transparent, public process. We anticipate that local working sessions with stakeholder groups, as well as more formal, legislative hearings will be part of our process.
2. The exchange legislation must provide a net economic benefit to the citizens of Idaho County.
3. The exchange legislation must protect important environmental and watershed values on ecologically sensitive lands.
4. The exchange legislation must explicitly recognize and extend historic Tribal rights to lands acquired by the federal government.

5. The exchange legislation must protect historic recreation and other public uses of federal lands that are being conveyed out of federal ownership.
6. The protection of such rights should not impose any additional fiscal burdens on the federal government.
7. The exchange legislation must be crafted in a way that respects private property rights.

We appreciate that it is within the Forest Service's existing authority to complete an equal value administrative exchange with a willing landowner like WPT. We are also mindful and supportive of the efforts that both the agency and the company have already made to reach out to various stakeholder groups. At the same time, some of the concerns already raised by stakeholders cannot be addressed without additional legislative authority.

We hope to work with the Forest Service, WPT, and interested stakeholders in a collaborative fashion to provide that authority. To that end, members of our staff will be in contact with you and with the Forest Service's Office of Legislative Affairs shortly to discuss a schedule for a path forward.

On behalf of all of our constituents, we look forward to working with you to produce a result which reflects the interests of the nation, the Forest Service, and all of the people of Idaho.

Sincerely,



Mike Crapo
United States Senator



James E. Risch
United States Senator



Raúl Labrador
Member of Congress