

JOHN A. KITZHABER, M.D.
GOVERNOR



September 14, 2001

Harv Forsgren, Regional Forester
USDA Forest Service
Pacific Northwest Region
P.O. Box 3623
Portland OR 97208

Dear Mr. Forsgren:

With this letter I am submitting Oregon's Assessment of Need (AON) for the Forest Legacy Program. The Oregon Department of Forestry (as lead agency) and the Oregon Natural Heritage Program (ORNHP) developed the AON in consultation with Oregon's State Stewardship Coordinating Committee. The AON elects the State grant option of the Forest Legacy Program. Therefore, all Forest Legacy acquisitions (in the form of easements or fee title) shall be transacted by the State with title vested in the State or a unit of State or local government.

We were very fortunate to have ORNHP conduct the analysis and compile the AON. In particular, the experience and expertise of ORNHP Director Jimmy Kagan allowed us to capitalize on a wealth of ecological, social and economic information about Oregon's private forests compiled in previous assessments and studies. Timely access to this data allowed us to complete a quality AON in one-third the time it might have normally taken.

The AON Develops a Forest Legacy Program for Oregon that provides private forest landowners the opportunity to keep their forestland as forests so as to preserve the flow of ecological, social and economic benefits these forestlands produce for Oregon. In particular, the AON identifies 15 Forest Legacy Areas located throughout the state that have significant amounts of private forestland threatened by the possibility of conversion to non-forest uses, in particular residential and urban development, within the next 10 years. The 15 Forest Legacy Areas were also chosen to focus the program where important forest resources such as habitat for threatened and endangered species, aesthetics and recreation opportunity and timber supply are threatened by forest losses to non-forest uses. The 15 legacy areas are broadly spaced geographically in recognition that these resources and the threats to them are not confined to one region in Oregon.

As you may be aware, the Western Governor's Association and I have adopted a framework, *Enlibra*, for guiding western natural resource and environmental policy development well into the next millenium. As a voluntary program reliant on landowners, communities, agencies, non-governmental organizations such as land trusts and other interests working together, I feel Oregon's Forest Legacy Program as developed in our AON is consistent with this framework.

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We would also like to acknowledge the efforts and encouragement of your staff, especially Ray Abriel and Charlie Krebs, in assisting us with the AON. We are thankful of your support and look forward to final approval of the AON by national program staff and the Secretary of Agriculture so we can begin implementing the program immediately.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "John A. Kitzhaber". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "John" being the most prominent.

John A. Kitzhaber, M.D.

JAK/NR/sm