

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4705

December 8, 2023

Mr. Randy Moore
Chief
U.S. Forest Service
201 14th Street SW
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Chief Moore,

I am writing in support of the Washington State Department of Natural Resources' (WDNR) application for the Cle Elum Ridge Large Landscape project to the U.S. Forest Service's Forest Legacy Program.

Cle Elum Ridge is located in the Cascade Mountains in central Washington and is directly adjacent to the Teanaway Community Forest. The Cle Elum Ridge Large Landscape project presents an opportunity to protect 9,700 acres of dry forest including significant old growth. This tract of land is vital habitat for the endangered gray wolf and threatened steelhead and bull trout. With shaded streams and long-lasting snowmelt, the Ridge also supports the Yakima River Basin, the state's most climate vulnerable watershed.

This project would protect the Ridge from conversion to housing and resort development. By protecting the Ridge, the 40 miles of year-round trails will be preserved and the streams that the aforementioned trout rely on will be protected. The Ridge is also the last area in need of protection to create a contiguous chain of protected land through the Teanaway Community Forest and the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest. By maintaining these lands as working forests, the local timber industry will continue to operate and provide over 100 high paying jobs to the local communities.

We thank you for your full and fair consideration of the Washington State Department of Natural Resources' application to the U.S. Forest Service's Forest Legacy Program.

Sincerely,



Maria Cantwell
United States Senator