

March 29, 2012

The Honorable John Kitzhaber
Governor of the State of Oregon
State Capitol, Room 160
900 Court Street, NE
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Governor Kitzhaber,

We are writing to request your designation of the current ad hoc Juniper Planning Group as an Oregon Solutions project to increase juniper utilization for biomass and other value-added uses.

This Group has met three times since September 2011. At the recent March 19 meeting the Group discussed the results achieved since September. We feel an Oregon Solutions project approach will enable us build on and expand these results in the coming year by providing a high level, neutral forum to advance a collaborative approach to sagebrush habitat restoration and the utilization of juniper removed as a part of restoration projects.

There is general agreement that invasive juniper needs to be removed from both public and privately-owned lands to improve grazing conditions, discourage the spread of invasive weeds, improve water supplies, decrease wildfire risks in our communities, and to protect and restore available habitat for sensitive species like the sage grouse. In addition, we believe that juniper treatment is a key component of rangeland restoration, has tremendous potential to create jobs, provide new economic opportunities to the timber and wood products industries throughout Oregon, and provide another plentiful resource for biomass energy-related uses.

Oregon ranchers, the US Department of Agriculture and federal land managers are aggressively pursuing rangeland restoration projects to benefit sage grouse habitat and support the state's interests in maintaining and growing sage grouse populations while also seeking to assure the long-term viability of ranching and our ranching communities. We see that by expanding opportunities related to utilization of juniper we can also create additional jobs beyond those created by the restoration projects themselves. The extent of these opportunities is framed in large part by the location and volume of invasive juniper potentially available as a byproduct of restoration projects after factoring in environmental and logistical considerations.

We believe an Oregon Solutions project will allow state and local government, federal agencies, tribes, private businesses and environmental groups to continue to identify opportunities and leverage investments to unlock the opportunities with rangeland restoration and juniper on public and private lands. These include removing cut juniper off the land when and where appropriate for use in value-added products and as biomass feedstock.

We appreciate your support in our endeavor and are eager to utilize the Oregon Solutions Community Governance System.

Sincerely,



Mike M. McArthur
Executive Director, Association of Oregon Counties

cc: Greg Wolf, Governor's Intergovernmental/ Regional Solutions Director
Richard Whitman, Governor's Natural Resource Director
Brett Brownscombe, Governor's Natural Resource Advisor
Scott Fairley, Governor's Eastern Oregon Regional Coordinator
Annette Liebe, Governor's Central Oregon Regional Coordinator
Jim Johnson, Oregon Solutions