

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

April 28, 2020

Vicki Christiansen
Chief, United States Forest Service
United States Department of Agriculture
201 14th Street SW
Washington, DC 20227

Dear Chief Christiansen:

We write regarding the United States Forest Service's recent publication of Significant Overriding Public Interest (SOPI) document for the federal register to allow for up to 2-year extensions on all timber sale contracts, and request that you extend this flexibility to integrated resource service contracts (IRSC) as well.

As you know, stewardship contracts use IRSCs to implement task orders. Stewardship contracting accomplishes important restoration work and provides a steady supply of lumber to local mills, and, importantly, use the value of wood products to offset the costs of the restoration work. The ongoing stewardship contract on the Malheur National Forest, for example, has seen tremendous success diversifying the local economy, completing collaborative forest restoration and wildfire resiliency projects, and providing lumber to the local mill.

Because of stewardship contracting's unique goods-for-services approach to forest management, they require a faster timeline for implementation than do traditional timber contracts. Due to the current economic effects of COVID-19, such a quick timeline for implementation is unfeasible.

We support the Forest Service's decision to allow for a two-year extension of timber contracts. However, given that the same market conditions that apply to timber sales are at work in a stewardship sale, we urge the Forest Service to extend the same consideration for IRSC holders. Without a two-year extension for IRSCs, the Forest Service is threatening the integrity of stewardship contracts and, in effect, creating an uneven forest management playing field.

We thank you for your consideration of our request and look forward to continuing working with you to advance sustainable forest management practices across the West.

Sincerely,



RON WYDEN
United States Senator



JEFFREY A. MERKLEY
United States Senator



GREG WALDEN
U.S. Representative