



NEWS RELEASE

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State, Federal Agencies Align for Historic Partnership to Reduce Wildfire Risk and Improve Forests, Water and Habitat

“SHARED STEWARDSHIP” AGREEMENT SERVES AS MODEL FOR OTHER STATES

OLYMPIA – Commissioner of Public Lands Hilary Franz, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) Director Kelly Susewind, USDA Forest Service Chief Vicki Christiansen, and Regional Forester Glenn Casamassa today signed a “Shared Stewardship” Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), calling it a model for other states to follow.

The MOU, only the second of its kind in the nation, establishes a framework for Washington state and the USDA Forest Service to work collaboratively toward mutual goals and effectively respond to the increasing suite of challenges facing communities, landscapes, and natural resources across the state. The partnership will work together to improve forest health – a cornerstone of clean water and abundant wildlife habitat – and create exceptional recreational and outdoor opportunities across the state.

“The challenges we face transcend boundaries,” said **Chief Vicki Christiansen**. “This agreement strengthens and advances an already strong partnership between federal and state agencies in Washington state. Working together, we can ensure that we’re doing the right work at the right scale to improve forest health, reduce wildfire risk, and benefit local communities.”

“Wildfire, forest health, and habitat loss are not issues that respect property lines,” said **Commissioner Hilary Franz**. “To truly tackle our wildfire and forest health crisis, at the pace and scale this crisis demands, we need a strong partnership between Washington state and the USDA Forest Service. This agreement ensures that our response will be unified, well-coordinated, and deliver maximum benefit for the people.”

“Washington’s fish and wildlife are facing real challenges,” said **WDFW Director Kelly Susewind**. “Large-scale collaborations like this are critical if we are to preserve our native species. It is encouraging to have the state’s three largest landowners come together in this new agreement and work more effectively to promote healthy wildlife and ecosystems in Washington.”

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING SUMMARY

- The MOU establishes a framework to allow the State of Washington and the USDA Forest Service to collaboratively advance shared priorities, coordinate investments, and implement projects on a landscape scale across Washington.
- Under this Shared Stewardship strategy, agencies will focus on forest and watershed restoration projects that improve ecosystem health, reduce wildfire risks, and benefit fish and wildlife habitat, among other priorities.
- The “Shared Stewardship” MOU is just the second of its kind in the nation, serving as a model for other states. Idaho was the first state to sign such an agreement (December of 2018).
- The MOU builds on strong, existing partnerships, such as the Good Neighbor Authority agreement between DNR and USFS. Signed in 2017, the Good Neighbor Authority allows DNR to conduct forest health work on federal lands. A Good Neighbor Authority agreement with WDFW signed in January this year provides additional opportunities.
- The agreement supports Washington state goals and existing plans, such as DNR’s 20-Year [Forest Health Strategic Plan](#), which will restore the health of 1.25 million acres of federal, state, private, and tribal forest.
- By working together, the agencies will maximize resources and create the efficiencies needed to return Washington’s forests to health, which is a cornerstone to healthy wildlife habitat and clean water.
- This partnership creates a unified voice on issues before Congress and the state Legislature.
- A copy of the MOU is available [here](#).

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