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Comments: Board of Commissioners

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Commissioner Jim Doherty, Chair

Commissioner Melissa Lindsay

Commissioner Don Russell

January 9, 2019

Brandon Houck, Heppner Ranger District Office

ATTN: Leslie Taylor

P.O. Box 7

Heppner, Oregon 97836

RE: Ellis Integrated Vegetation Project (Ellis Project)

Comment to the Ellis Project Proposal

Request for Cooperating Agency Status

Dear Mr. Houck:

The Morrow County Board of Commissioners appreciates the opportunity to comment during this initial phase of what we know will be a long and involved process. Your recent visit to the Board of Commissioners meeting in Heppner to discuss the project was much appreciated.

After hearing your presentation, reviewing material concerned with the Ellis Project, and talking to various Morrow County Department Directors, the Board of Commissioners will be watching the Scoping process and will review the draft Environmental Impact Statement (dEIS) for the following components to see how they will be addressed: Grazing; Recreation; Forest Health; Road Access and Maintenance, including protections of county infrastructure; Fire Fuels Reduction; and Job Creation. Generally, the Board hopes this process will protect and enhance all of these activities, as well as limit unnecessary road closures. Without the specifics that the dEIS will provide, more specific comment is difficult at this time.

Documents that may inform the United States Forest Service (USFS) work on the dEIS would "include the following: Greater Eastern Oregon Development Corporation's (GEODC) Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), the recently adopted Morrow County Parks Master Plan, and the Economic Element of the Morrow County Comprehensive Plan. Morrow County Planning Director Carla McLane can assist you in obtaining these and other potentially helpful documents to inform the Ellis Project dEIS.

This letter is also a request to be considered for Cooperating Agency status for the Ellis Project. Over the past dozen years or so, the County has acted as a Cooperating Agency with three other federal actions - the Boardman-to-Hemingway transmission line (BLM), the suspended Cascade Crossing transmission line (USFS) and the Carty Lateral gas pipeline (FERC). Morrow County has also worked with the Army and the Navy on separate actions concerning the Umatilla Army

Depot closure and the enhanced uses proposed at the Boardman Bombing Range. Morrow

County has an understanding of what it means to take on this role and the impacts it can have. Morrow County infrastructure, in the form of roads and parks in the general vicinity of the Ellis Project, creates a desire to be as fully engaged in this process as possible. Cooperating Agency status provides that opportunity and would allow the USFS staff and consultants more ability to fully engage Morrow County staff in the creation of the dEIS.

We look forward to working with you and others on this process. If you have any questions concerning this letter or our request for Cooperator Agency status, please contact Board Chair Jim Doherty. His contact information is as follows: P.O. Box 788, Heppner, Oregon, 97836, 541-676-5613, jdohertry@co.morrow.or.us.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment and your consideration of our request for Cooperating Agency status.

Jim Doherty
Chair

Melissa Lindsay
Commissioner

Don Russell
Commissioner