



County of Del Norte County
Supervisor, District 3
981 "H" Street, Ste. 200 Crescent
City, California 95531

December 29, 2025

Pacific Southwest Region Regional Office
Attn: Ted McArthur, Acting Deputy Regional Forester
Transmitted electronically: ted.mcarthur@usda.gov

Re: Smith-to-Klamath Shared Stewardship Initiative

Dear Mr. McArthur,

This is Chris Howard, District 3 Supervisor for Del Norte County. I recently met with Aaron Babcock, County Coordinator for the Del Norte Fire Safe Council, who has been engaged in discussions with the Forest Service Washington Office, including Ellen Shultzabarger and Adam Mendonca, regarding a potential Smith-to-Klamath Shared Stewardship Initiative. I am writing to express our support for this emerging effort.

From our perspective, this initiative reflects the type of cross-boundary, shared stewardship approach needed to address wildfire risk and forest health in Del Norte County and the broader region. We see this as an opportunity for all of us—local government, Tribes, state and federal agencies, and landowners—to better align priorities and increase the pace and scale of forest management across ownerships.

From a county standpoint, potential benefits of this effort include:

- Improved wildfire risk reduction for communities, infrastructure, and critical access corridors through coordinated, landscape-scale treatments
- Stronger alignment of federal, state, tribal, and local investments, improving efficiency and reducing duplication
- Increased access to implementation funding by positioning the landscape for shared stewardship, stewardship contracting, or related authorities
- Clearer roles for county and local partners, allowing us to support Forest Service leadership with on-the-ground capacity, coordination, and accountability
- Opportunities to generate and utilize biomass from forest treatments, helping reduce disposal costs, support emerging biomass and biochar markets, and create local economic and workforce benefits
- Long-term resilience outcomes that support public safety, natural resources, and local economic stability

While we understand this work is still in an early, exploratory phase, the discussions around Shared Stewardship principles, governance options, and implementation pathways have been valuable in helping us understand how local capacity can support Forest Service leadership.

Del Norte County is interested in continuing to engage as this concept develops and looks forward to continued discussions with the Forest Service.

Please feel free to contact me at any time for further support (707) 218-7872.

Sincerely,

Chris Howard
District 3 Supervisor
Del Norte County Board of Supervisors