



Board of County Commissioners
1820 Jefferson Street
PO Box 1220
Port Townsend, WA 98368

Kate Dean, District 1 Heidi Eisenhour, District 2 Greg Brotherton, District 3

10/02/2023

United States Department of Agriculture/US Forest Service
Attention: Mr. Brad Simpkins, Grantor
201 14th Street, Southwest
Washington, DC 20024

RE: Funding Opportunity Number USDA-FS-2023-CWDG-CWSF/Mason PUD 1

Dear Mr. Simpkins,

The Jefferson County Board of Commissioners has been advised by Mason County PUD No. 1 of their proposed comprehensive vegetation management (VM) project to clear vegetation fuels within their easement land. We see this as the most timely and critical means to best mitigate future wildfire risk within the heavily forested lands of south Jefferson County, where Mason PUD 1 serves. In response to our need, Mason PUD 1 has developed a fuels mitigation project that will trim the entire system, which we understand will allow for the PUD to effectively maintain thereafter with the procurement of a highline bucket truck, chip truck, and chipping/saw machinery included in this grant request.

We also understand the PUD only has the financial means to address small portions of easement annually, and the removal of a few dead trees. Most outages in south Jefferson County are caused by treefalls so the PUD's comprehensive plan to proactively remove danger trees, as identified by an arborist under the project, represents a most effective wildfire mitigation strategy. We applaud the PUD's intention to pursue federal funds for this highly needed wildfire preventative work without putting additional pressure on electric rates in our low-income community in south Jefferson County.

The PUD is only able to engage in this intentional mitigation of wildfire risk **if** they receive funding from the USDA/FS via the *Community Wildfire Defense Grant Program*. We support their plan for fuel stock removal and ask the USDA/FS to fund the PUD's grant application so that this critical clear-cut can occur before a major wildfire jeopardizes our power lines and the life and property of our residents.

Jefferson County has engaged in multiple partnerships with the PUD and enjoys a mutually cooperative relationship for infrastructure projects, FEMA and other emergency management activities. The PUD's management team collaborates with our department of emergency management on projects like this one, specifically. We see their proposed Whole-System VM Project as one that will help to protect the electrical service that Jefferson County depends upon for business, education, healthcare, and household use.

The Jefferson County Board of Commissioners recommends the USDA/Forest Service approve the PUD's application for funding their VM project.

Thank you for your consideration of Mason PUD 1's proposal.

Sincerely,

Kate Dean, Dist. No. 1

Heidi Eisenhour, Dist. No. 2

Greg Brotherton, Chair, Dist. No. 3