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To: Private Forest Accords Mitigation Advisory Committee  
From: Columbia Land Trust  
Date: April 8, 2024  
RE: Development of Acquisitions & Easements under the PFA Grant Program

Dear Members of the Mitigation Advisory Committee,

On behalf of the Columbia Land Trust, thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the Private Forest Accord (PFA) Grant Program's development of its acquisitions and easement project category.

Columbia Land Trust has been actively investing in our forests for more than 30 years. We have a rich history of working closely with landowners and communities in Oregon and Washington along the lower 200 miles of the Columbia River. Across five ecoregions and countless expressions of community interests, we seek collaborative approaches to conservation.

Forest conservation, to us, is an assurance that the footprint of diverse and productive forests across the Northwest does not diminish. Whether forests are dedicated to producing timber, pulling and storing carbon to stem climate change, offering a place to ramble, hunt, or fish or simply being home to birds, fish, and wildlife, we need our forests.

Our approach to forest conservation recognizes the diverse ways that forests are valued, which includes the ability to draw our wood products from Northwest forests. We have worked for decades to conserve forestland with family forestland owners, regional timber companies, and international investment organizations for different outcomes, using a variety of transaction tools.

The most successful funders we work with understand and appreciate how important it is to support landowner choice and to be flexible so that voluntary sellers and buyers can chart a mutually compatible path to forest conservation. Here are a few examples of how private forest landowners work with land trusts to meet management goals across diverse sites, specifically where they required fee simple acquisition:

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- **Habitat restoration and continued forestry.** Weyerhaeuser owned timberland with a 60-year-old dam and recreational lake. Because of the dam's poor condition, the property was deemed a liability and Weyerhaeuser sought fee title sale. They originally listed the property for development, but Columbia Land Trust was able to raise the money to buy it in its entirety: the reservoir, dam, and surrounding forestland. Thanks to fee title ownership, the Land Trust has prevented land use conversion, continues to manage the upland 1,000 acres for timber harvest, and is collaborating with the Cowlitz Indian Tribe to remove the dam and restore more than six miles of important salmon habitat.
- **Marginal timberland.** Hancock Timber Resource Group (now Manulife) initiated a transaction to sell conservation easements over thousands of acres of working timberland. They then determined that their marginal timberland is better managed for wildlife habitat than forest products, and they would not sell a conservation easement, requiring that the Land Trust buy fee simple ownership instead.
- **Reinvestment into higher value timberlands.** SDS Lumber Company, under then-CEO Jason Spadaro's leadership, collaborated with Columbia Land Trust as they sought forestry investments to expand their timber basket for their mill. They sold lands with oak and unproductive timberland attributes to Columbia Land Trust – using the revenues from these sales to invest in more productive forests, helping to keep their mill open and operating.
- **Portfolio management.** A family-owned forest management group asked Columbia Land Trust to buy their less productive and remote properties so they can invest in higher grade and geographically closer forestlands that better fit their needs.

We also have deep experience acquiring working forest conservation easements such as the following:

- Nuveen collaborated with us to sell a conservation easement on 2,000 acres of coastal forestland in Oregon where it was important to their timber operations.
- As Green Diamond invested increasingly in Oregon and Washington forests where development pressure is high, they collaborated with The Conservation Fund and Columbia Land Trust to sell development rights through a conservation easement over thousands of acres – ensuring that rural, forested landscape will stay in productive forestry for generations into the future.

These mutual benefits are possible when funders support a variety of conservation tools and players. In the case of the PFA, partners and distinct ownership models will be especially important to meeting the program's goals of enhancing and protecting species covered under the Habitat Conservation Plan while also ensuring continued forest practices. Conservation ownership, like ours at Columbia Land Trust, offers the ability to tailor management plans, including for public access for hunting and fishing, invasive weed reduction, timber operations, habitat uplift for imperiled species, and riparian protection. In other words, conservation ownership is an important thread in the fabric of healthy and enduring forests in Oregon.

We encourage the PFA Mitigation Advisory Committee to embrace funding conservation easements *and* fee simple acquisitions in its subsequent grant-making cycles. Landowners, communities, and partners like land trusts need to do both types of acquisitions to keep forestry economically viable while benefiting sensitive fish and wildlife species, which is why it is important for grantors to support both.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'CK', written in a cursive style.

Cherie Kearney, Forest Conservation Director

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Cathy P. Kellon', written in a cursive style.

Cathy P. Kellon, Conservation Director