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United States Senate

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March 18, 2015

The Honorable Robert Bonnie
Under Secretary for
Natural Resources and the Environment
US Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Mr. Bonnie:

I recently learned of the Forest Service's effort to revise the Northwest Forest Plan. As a part of that effort, the Forest Service is holding listening sessions to gather public input on what should be considered and included in the upcoming revision. However, the number and locations of the planned listening sessions cause me a lot of concern. There is only one listening session planned for the entire State of Washington State, and it is in Seattle rather than the communities adjacent to the impacted National Forests. I am requesting that you direct the Forest Service to hold additional listening sessions across my State.

The Obama Administration has a great record of soliciting public input when it comes to issues surrounding the National Forests. I am perplexed by the apparent change in course. Holding only one meeting in Seattle creates limited opportunity for the public to provide input on this important effort, and poses a real hardship on residents that live near the National Forests and whose livelihoods are tied to the Agency's decisions concerning these Forests.

Specifically, I am requesting that the Forest Service hold three additional sessions near the National Forests of Washington that are covered in the Northwest Forest Plan. One session should be in Port Angeles, WA and another in Aberdeen, WA or Montesano, WA. A third listening session should be hosted in Mount Vernon, WA or Darrington, WA. These would afford my constituents a more realistic opportunity to have their voice heard. Again, these areas reflect the rural communities that are likely to feel the direct impacts of a revised Northwest Forest Plan.

The Forest Service should gather public input from both urban residents and rural residents.
Thank you for your attention on this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Maria Cantwell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Maria" and the last name "Cantwell" clearly distinguishable.

Maria Cantwell
Ranking Member
Committee on Energy and Natural Resources

CC: Chief Tom Tidwell, Regional Forester Jim Pena