March 1, 2011

Angela Farr  
USDS Forest Service Northern Region (R1)  
Federal Building  
200 East Broadway  
Missoula, MT 59807

Re: Support Letter for Idaho Forest Group  
2011 Hazardous Fuels Woody Biomass Utilization Grant Proposal

Dear Ms. Farr,

Please accept this Letter of Support on behalf of the Clearwater Basin Collaborative (CBC) for Idaho Forest Group’s grant proposal under the 2011 Hazardous Fuels Woody Biomass Utilization Grant Program. For further details regarding CBC, see www.clearwaterbasincollaborative.org.

The CBC strongly supports the biomass cogeneration project Idaho Forest Group would like to implement at its sawmill in Grangeville, Idaho because of the social and economic benefits such a facility would bring to the Clearwater Basin of Idaho. The funds Idaho Forest Group requests will be used to further the planning of this important proposed facility by funding the engineering services necessary for final design and cost analysis. Consistent with the intent of the Hazardous Fuels Woody Biomass Utilization Grant Program, Idaho Forest Group’s proposal outlines a project that will use woody biomass material from forest restoration activities, such as wildfire hazardous fuel treatments, insect and disease mitigation, forest management due to catastrophic weather events, and/or thinning overstocked stands to produce bioenergy. The CBC has a vested interest in the health of both the communities and the forests in the project area and see great opportunity to achieve both if this project is funded.

The Clearwater Basin is part of the largest complex of wild public lands in the continental United States. Economic changes have hit the timber industry in this area hard. The CBC worked hard in 2010 to successfully obtain funding through the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP) to implement restoration activities on the Clearwater and Nez Perce Nationals Forests. The broad goal of this restoration plan is to improve social, economic and ecological conditions on the forests of north-central Idaho.
The CFLRP project that the CBC is currently implementing with its partners includes forest management activities designed to reduce the effects of uncharacteristic fire across the landscape. These activities will also enhance wildfire control and reduced fire suppression costs. Wood products from vegetation treatment activities will provide revenue to pay for fuel reduction, road improvement and decommissioning where necessary as well as implementation of restoration and monitoring activities.

The Clearwater Basin is fortunate to be home to sawmill infrastructure that is designed to use small to medium diameter logs, including the state-of-the-art small diameter sawmill operated by Idaho Forest Group in Grangeville, Idaho. Sawtimber generated as a result of management activities in the CFLRP will provide the wood necessary to this critical Idaho industry and will provide a significant financial contribution toward funding both land management treatments and monitoring. Additionally, biomass material could be made available to the Idaho Forest Group’s Grangeville sawmill. Certainly, supply made available from this project could result in new investment in biomass energy infrastructure or could provide material to existing facilities.

We envision a new biomass cogeneration facility at Idaho Forest Group’s Grangeville sawmill to be a critical part of our work to restore this region’s forests as well as to bring much needed economic benefit to the area in the form of new jobs and a new market for materials that should be removed from our forestlands. The Clearwater Basin Collaborative strongly endorses this project and urges the Forest Service to award WGU grant funding as requested.

Sincerely,

/s/ Alex Irby

Alex Irby
Co-chair

Dale Harris
Co-chair

www.clearwaterbasincollaborative.org