FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WASHINGTON, OREGON AND CALIFORNIA COUNTIES REQUEST COOPERATING AGENCY STATUS ON ALL FUTURE DELIBERATIONS CONCERNING THE PROPOSED CRITICAL HABITAT FOR THE NORTHERN SPOTTED OWL.

THE REQUEST COMES FROM SKAMANIA COUNTY WASHINGTON, DOUGLAS COUNTY OREGON AND SISKIYOU COUNTY CALIFORNIA

Regulations implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (“NEPA”) mandate that Federal agencies consider designation of non-Federal agencies as Cooperating Agencies in the preparation of environmental documents. In a memo dated June 30th, 2002, the Council on Environmental Quality (“CEQ”) also directed Federal agencies responsible for preparing the analysis and making decisions that may have an effect on the “human environment” to do so ‘in cooperation with state and local governments.”

The CEQ defines the “human environment” to include the natural and physical environment and the relationship of people to that environment. Effects on the human environment include ecological, aesthetic, historical, cultural, economic, and social or health whether direct or indirect, or cumulative, whether beneficial or detrimental.

To fulfill the mandates of NEPA and the CEQ directive, local counties are asking for Cooperating Agency status in the designation of critical habitat for the Northern spotted owl. “Douglas County views its participation in this process as crucial to the County’s overall health. Counties have specific, special and statutory expertise with respect to the economic conditions, land planning and resources on private and public lands. The Fish and Wildlife Service cannot satisfy the requirements of NEPA without the inclusion of County input,” said Commissioner Doug Robertson.

“On February 28th President Obama directed Secretary of Interior Salazar to pay special attention to the impact on jobs of any proposed actions. Further, the President asked the Secretary to ‘give careful consideration to providing the maximum exclusion [of land] from the final revised critical habitat.’ The only reasonable way to meet the intent of the President’s memo is to look at the cumulative impacts on jobs and our County’s economy from 1992 forward. This cannot be done without input from the counties affected,” said Skamania County Commissioner Paul Pearce.

“The social and economic health of citizens in dozens of local, rural communities - including school children - is at stake with a final critical habitat decision. To not allow Cooperating Agency Status would be a clear sign that federal decisions are increasingly out-of-touch with the needs of local governments and rural communities”, said Siskiyou County Supervisor Grace Bennett.

Letters and additional information may be found at [www.SkamaniaCounty.org/Owl](http://www.SkamaniaCounty.org/Owl)

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