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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## Western Forestry Leaders Gather to Discuss the Connection Between People and Forests

Portland, OR – Today the [Western Forestry Leadership Coalition](#) (WFLC), in partnership with the [Council of Western State Foresters](#) (CWSF) concluded their 2016 Spring meeting. This event, hosted in conjunction with the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF), the US Forest Service Pacific Northwest Region and the Pacific Northwest Research Station, brought together Western forestry leaders to discuss the connection between people and forests.

The two-day event attracted nearly 100 attendees from across the United States, including state foresters from 23 western states and Pacific islands and their counterparts from the U.S. Forest Service. On behalf of Oregon Governor Kate Brown, Kristen Leonard, Governor Brown's Chief of Staff, greeted attendees and welcomed them to Oregon.

"The goals of the Western Forestry Leadership Coalition and the Council of Western State Foresters exemplify a lesson I learned early on as a Forest Service kid: forests are not ours, they are everyone's," said Leonard in her welcome. "Thank you for your commitment to preserving our nation's forests and ensuring their long-term resilience for future generations to enjoy."

The welcoming session also featured a keynote by Robert Bonnie, USDA Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment and an introduction to Oregon forest issues and dynamics from Oregon State Forester Doug Decker.

"The Western Forestry Leadership Coalition consistently brings together thought leaders and practitioners to discuss issues of the day," said Under Secretary Bonnie. "This meeting was focused around collaborative work among key partners and the connection of people and forests which is especially relevant here in the Pacific Northwest."

During the 2016 Spring Meeting, attendees had an opportunity to participate in a field tour to the Tillamook State Forest with stops along the way detailing the urban and community forestry work in Portland's Forest Park. ODF representatives helped to facilitate the tour and educate attendees on the complexities of the urban to rural continuum.

"With 30 million acres of forests in Oregon, Portland is a prime location to host a gathering of the public sector forest policy leaders in the Western United States," said Doug Decker, Oregon state forester. "We showcased the ways in which Oregonians are connected with forests, the diversity of different landowner objectives across public and private forest ownerships, and the innovative public-private partnerships arising around sustainable forestry."

Key topics of the meeting included regional and national partnerships, natural resources in the West and USDA Forest Service priorities in the Western United States. The meeting also included a presentation on the Intertribal Timber Council's Anchor Forests Project. Other notable speakers included representatives from partner organizations such as the Conservation Fund, the Society of American Foresters, the Rural Voices for Conservation Coalition and The Nature Conservancy.

"WFLC is a unique group that brings together the most current science and management to highlight issues and solutions in sustainable forest management in the west," said Rob Mangold, Pacific Northwest Forest Research Station Director.

The meeting concluded with the US Forest Service Deputy Chief of State & Private Forestry, Jim Hubbard, speaking to the group about the upcoming fire season, the important programs and work happening on the ground and his vision of what the next five years will entail.

"Holding the WFLC Spring Meeting in Oregon highlighted the complex issues facing our Western forests and how critical our engagement is in cross-boundary work and collaboration," said Jim Pena, WFLC member and Regional Forester for the Pacific Northwest Region headquartered in Portland.

To learn more about the Western Forestry Leadership Coalition, visit [www.wflccenter.org](http://www.wflccenter.org). WFLC is staffed and supported by CWSF. To learn more about CWSF, visit <http://www.westernforesters.org/>.

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### **About the Western Forestry Leadership Coalition**

Formally established in 2000, the Western Forestry Leadership Coalition (WFLC) represents a unique partnership between the Council of Western State Foresters and federal government forestry leaders. WFLC is comprised of 34 members from across the federal and state agencies of the West which include: 23 state members (also known as the Council of Western State Foresters) which include State, Territorial, and Commonwealth Foresters of the West and American-affiliated islands of the Pacific; and 11 USDA Forest Service members, which include: seven Western Regional Foresters, three Western USFS Research Station Directors, and one USFS Forest Products Lab Director.

### **About the Council of Western State Foresters**

The Council of Western State Foresters (CWSF) is a nonpartisan organization of state, territorial, and commonwealth foresters of the Western United States and Pacific Islands. State Foresters are charged with providing forest management assistance to landowners, managing state trust lands, and supplying wildfire and forest health protection services. CWSF staff and members participate in the Western Forestry Leadership Coalition with Western members of the U.S. Forest Service leadership. CWSF cultivates partnerships, raises awareness and takes action on the most important issues affecting forests in the Western United States and Pacific Islands.