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**Innovative Conservation Partnership Gains Federal Funds to  
Protect Threatened Species and Excellent Forestry on Siskiyou Crest**

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (September 21, 2016) — The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has announced the award of a \$1 million grant to the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife to fund a significant portion of Pacific Forest Trust's acquisition of a conservation easement on almost 2,000 acres of working forestland with significant habitat values on the Siskiyou Crest near Ashland, Oregon, owned and managed by the Mountcrest Forest family partnership. This unique partnership, which includes the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB), will ensure that the Mountcrest Forest will never be broken up or developed, but will continue to be managed by its family owners for important habitat and watershed values under the terms of the conservation easement.

The grant is being made from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund (CESCF) as part of \$44.8 million in competitive grants across the U.S. for conservation projects that protect species identified as threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). This includes projects such as the Mountcrest Forest that will aid in the recovery of the northern spotted owl and protect other imperiled species such as the Pacific fisher. CESCF grants are funded in part by the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

The Mountcrest Forest provides an essential connection for wildlife on the move between the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument and the Rogue River National Forest. At the heart of one of the most biodiverse spots on the planet, Mountcrest straddles the crossroads of the Klamath, Siskiyou, and Cascade mountain ranges. Just west of Interstate 5, minutes from Ashland, Oregon, Mountcrest hosts myriad of creatures within its verdant and diverse conifer, oak, riparian, and mountain meadow habitats. Mountcrest is the largest remaining non-industrial owned working forest in an area that has experienced tremendous development for residential subdivisions and recreational purposes.

"I've managed the Mountcrest Forest on behalf of my family for over 60 years," said Jud Parsons, one of the landowners. "I love the property and want to see its many significant natural qualities protected, yet remain a working forest. We practice sustainable forestry and the wildlife here seem to appreciate our efforts to maintain healthy habitats for them. Oregon's land use laws are good, but they are subject to change. We want to grant the conservation easement to the Pacific Forest Trust to ensure lasting protection."

"The USFWS award for the conservation of the Mountcrest Forest reflects the importance of conserving this important property," said Constance Best, Co-CEO of Pacific Forest Trust. "This generous grant gets us very close to having all the funds necessary to acquire this conservation easement, which will help sustain the heritage of excellent forestry by the Parsons family of this large property. The family's commitment to voluntary conservation to benefit threatened fish and wildlife is inspiring. We are honored to be their partner."

“This project is a model of voluntary private-public cooperation to conserve Oregon timberland to benefit not only listed species but ecological functionality of the site and broader landscape. The Mountcrest Forest strategically links the Rogue-Siskiyou National Forest and Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument, bridging gaps within important habitat for the northern spotted owl,” said Paul Henson, Oregon State Supervisor of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Curt Melcher, Director of the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife said, “We look forward to working with the Pacific Forest Trust and the family owners to complete the conservation of the Mountcrest property so that the forest remains intact and undeveloped with management that maintains and enhances ecological and hydrologic function while continuing to contribute to the economic vitality of the region.”

“These critical federal funds will leverage a grant of \$957,700 approved by the OWEB board last spring for the conservation of the Mountcrest Forest’s important ecological values,” said Meta Loftsgaarten, Executive Director of the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board. “The collaborative conservation of Oregon’s working forests can make great contributions to the viability of our fish and wildlife and provide essential connections with public lands.”

Senator Ron Wyden congratulated the Mountcrest Working Forest Conservation Easement partners on the grant award stating, “I applaud the project for so successfully tapping into our state’s innovative mindset and for working with collaborative-minded landowners to create a solution that benefits the environment held dear by Oregonians.”

Senator Jeff Merkley also noted, “Collaboration that benefits both our economy and environment is the Oregon way. The Mountcrest Forest partnership is showing how voluntary collaboration can achieve many state priorities for wildlife and watersheds while keeping timberland in private ownership and productive economic use.”

The ESA provides a critical safety net for North America’s native fish, wildlife, and plants. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working to actively engage conservation partners and the public in the search for improved and innovative ways to conserve and recover imperiled species, including collaborative partnerships among state and federal agencies with land trusts and private landowners, such as the one Pacific Forest Trust is leading to implement the Mountcrest Working Forest Conservation Easement.

For a complete list of FY 2016 CESCO funded projects visit:

<https://www.fws.gov/angered/grants/index.html>

To learn more about the Mountcrest project visit:

<https://www.pacificforest.org/conservation-project/mountcrest/>

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### **About Pacific Forest Trust**

Since 1993, the Pacific Forest Trust has been dedicated to conserving and sustaining America’s vital, productive forest landscapes. Working with forest owners, communities and an array of partners, we advance innovative, incentive-based strategies to safeguard our nation’s diverse forests. In so doing, we’re ensuring forests continue to provide people everywhere—from rural communities to urban centers—with a wealth of benefits, including clean water, sustainably harvested wood, green jobs, wildlife habitat and a livable climate. **[www.pacificforest.org](http://www.pacificforest.org)**