March 24, 2025

The Honorable Brooke Rollins
Secretary of Agriculture
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

## Subj: Support for the BDO Zone Initiative

Dear Secretary Rollins,

My name is Bob Russell, and I am a retired Pulp and Paper Engineer living in Chehalis, WA. In 2023 a group of citizens began working with the University of Washington (UW) to promote a process to convert biomass to Nanocellulose. On advice from UW the local Economic Development Council (The Alliance) applied for a USDA grant to create a BDO Zone in Lewis County, WA. **In January 2024 Lewis County was awarded the 1st "AA Rating for Woody Biomass" in the United States and the 1st BDO Zone in Washington State.**

Since receiving the "AA" rating, The Alliance of Lewis County has had to develop a business strategy focused on promoting and growing a regional BDO Zone. The Alliance has held two (2) conferences promoting the Bioeconomy and "AA" rating. **The conference keynote speaker was Chris Cassidy, USDA, and featured five (5) industries discussing their technologies with local officials and citizens.** Additionally, Clean Fibre selected Lewis County as the site of a new insulation company and shared the BDO Zone aided the decision.

The Alliance is currently applying for a Washington State Department of Commerce grant whose purpose will be to consolidate 8-10 counties on the west side of Washington State under three (3) BDO Zones centering on Lewis County's existing "AA" rating. The consolidated BDO region would immediately become an international marketing tool for Washington State.

I strongly endorse the BDO Zone Initiative and urge the USDA to provide funding so that Lewis County and Washington State can continue to grow and market Bioeconomy Growth in this region.

Respectfully,

Bob Russell
Chehalis, WA