



November 10, 2021

Representative Adam Smith
 2264 Rayburn House Office Building
 Washington, D.C. 20515

Re: Wild Olympics Inclusion in the National Defense Authorization Act

Dear Representative Smith,

The undersigned 32 progressive and environmental organizations, elected officials and local businesses or organizations representing or serving your constituents are writing to urge you to help ensure that the Wild Olympics Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (H.R. 999 & S. 455) and other public lands bills are included in the final National Defense Authorization Act when it emerges from the pending House-Senate Conference Committee.

We appreciate and applaud your earlier efforts to ensure Representative DeGette’s and Representative Neguse’s amendments were included in the National Defense Authorization Act (H.R. 4350) prior to the bill passing the House of Representatives. These amendments will protect public lands and rivers in California, Washington, Colorado, and Arizona, including Rep. Derek Kilmer’s (D-WA06) and Senator Patty Murray’s (D-WA) Wild Olympics bill.

We understand the value our constituents place on protecting wilderness and wild, free-flowing rivers. Time and again, we hear Peninsula residents with disparate political views share one common goal: protection of our natural heritage. Our ancient forests and wild rivers offer priceless natural amenities that make the Northwest such a wonderful place to live, and indeed, give the Evergreen State its name. They provide clean water, scenic beauty, solitude, fish and wildlife habitat, world-class outdoor recreation opportunities, and an unrivaled quality of life for our region.

The Wild Olympics would help protect the economic future for the Olympic Peninsula and the Puget Sound. The streams and waterways of the Olympic Peninsula support a vibrant fishing and shellfish industry, attract millions of dollars in tourism annually, support a thriving outdoor industry, and provide clean drinking water to local residents. They provide the stunning scenery and a high “Quality of Life” that attracts entrepreneurs, skilled workers, new residents, and investment in our communities.

These free-flowing rivers and streams are also vital to the long-term health and recovery of Hood Canal and Puget Sound. Acting to safeguard our healthy watersheds now is far less costly than restoring degraded watersheds later. By granting these natural treasures the permanent protection they lack today, your proposal makes a down payment on the economic future of generations to come.

The Wild Olympics proposal is a balanced proposal built on feedback from local stakeholders over years of discussions. The proposal strikes a balance between providing lasting and durable protection for the remaining intact watersheds on the Olympic Peninsula while preserving and enhancing existing recreational access and ensuring no impact to current timber jobs. The proposal also takes preserving public access to trails and recreational destinations seriously. No existing roads are included in the proposed Wilderness and the proposal will not impact the current Forest Service decision-making process related to travel management.

That is why the proposal has garnered more than 800 local endorsements from conservation, recreation and wildlife groups, hunters and anglers, local businesses, elected officials, faith leaders, and other stakeholders. Several local Tribes have also formally endorsed the proposal because it has been written to protect their tribal treaty rights and protect the fish wildlife and natural resources that are essential to preserve their tribal lifeways. In addition, more than 21,000 individuals from Washington State have supported the proposal including more than 12,000 from the Olympic Peninsula alone.

America's public lands help define us as a nation. The legislative proposals in these amendments, including Wild Olympics, are supported by Native American Tribes, business owners, local elected officials, veterans, scientists, conservationists, outdoor recreationists, and other local residents who are asking Congress to preserve access to the health and spiritual benefits of natural areas and safeguard clean water sources that boost local recreation and tourism economies and attract skilled workers for local businesses.

Thank you for successfully championing the effort to see these important public land conservation measures voted into the National Defense Authorization Act to preserve these exceptional places as a natural legacy for future generations. I urge you to please fight to ensure these vital amendments remain part of the NDAA as it moves through the Conference Committee.

Sincerely,

Tom Uniack
Executive Director
Washington Wild

Thomas O'Keefe, PhD
Pacific Northwest Stewardship Director
American Whitewater

Amy Brockhaus
Deputy Director
Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust

Wendy McDermott
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Ed Bronsdon

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Paula Sardinias
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Yvonne Kraus
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