



November 9, 2017

Jeff Rivera, District Ranger  
Wenatchee River Ranger District, Okanagan-Wenatchee National Forest  
600 Sherbourne  
Leavenworth, WA 98826

Dear Jeff Rivera:

The undersigned conservation and recreation organizations represent more than 50,000 members in Washington who recreate in the Cascade range. As organizations largely made up of trail users, outdoor enthusiasts and advocates for wild places, our community includes the 91% of Washingtonians that walk, hike, climb or mountaineer each year. Together with our public land agency partners, we help contribute recreation user fees, maintain thousands of miles of trails, leverage grant funds for recreation, support sustainable recreation policies, and volunteer at recreation sites for activities such as outdoor education and youth programs. The outdoor recreation economy in Washington State generates \$22.5 billion in annual consumer spending and \$1.6 billion in state and local tax revenue and directly employs 227,000 people in our state.

The undersigned organizations would like to comment regarding a potential proposal to introduce day-use permits in the Enchantment Permit Area of the Wenatchee River Ranger District (WRRD). Collectively, we acknowledge the growing use of the area and its associated recreational and ecological impacts, but **ask that the United States Forest Service (USFS) expand the conversation to include multiple stakeholders and consider all variables and potential solutions before proceeding any further.** For an issue that garners considerable public passion, this process should involve the USFS, recreational users and conservation interests in a transparent and inclusive process.

Not only do hundreds of residents in the Upper Wenatchee Valley hike and climb in the Enchantments, but thousands of people travel from around the state, country and world to experience the high-quality hiking, climbing, and mountaineering opportunities which exist in one of the most stunning alpine landscapes of the state. As conservation and recreation organizations, we share the same concerns regarding increasing use and potential damage to this fragile alpine area and the need to comply with The Wilderness Act and Alpine Lake Wilderness designation and management plan. Many of our organizations supported the extension of the overnight permit season in 2016 given changes in recreational use and extended snow-free conditions in the spring and fall. The change in permit season carries out the guidelines set forth in the 1993 Alpine Lakes Wilderness Recreational Use Environmental Assessment and Decision Notice.

Together, our organizations recognize the need to address issues of crowded trails, erosion, user-conflicts, education, impacts on flora and fauna, and diminished Wilderness characteristics. Day-use permits and restrictions should always be a tool that is implemented thoughtfully and carefully to provide a balance between providing public access to visitors and protecting unique



landscapes. With the recent day-use fees and quotas proposed for the Willamette and Deschutes National Forests in Oregon, there is growing concern that the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest may consider a similar direction without involving a diversity of organizations early in the process and without exploring a range of potential solutions beyond permitting.

As key stakeholders, we request a meeting with the USFS to discuss our collective positions and ideas. We believe that working collaboratively on the issue of growing use in the Enchantments will provide better policies and outcomes if key stakeholders are involved at an earlier stage.

Thank you for your time and consideration, we look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

Joe Sambataro, Northwest Regional Director, Access Fund

Eddie Espinosa, Northwest Policy Advisor, American Alpine Club

Alison Miller, President, Leavenworth Mountain Association

Katherine Hollis, Conservation and Advocacy Director, The Mountaineers

Matt Perkins, Secretary/Treasurer, Washington Climbers Coalition

Andrea Imler, Advocacy Director, Washington Trails Association

Tom Uniack, Executive Director, Washington Wild

Kitty Craig, Washington State Deputy Director, The Wilderness Society

Cc:

Mason Schuur, Wenatchee River Ranger District

Mike Williams, Forest Supervisor, Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest