



October 1, 2021

Tiffany Odell
Senior Planner
Pierce County Parks
9850 64th St SW
University Place, WA 98467

RE: Draft Carbon River Corridor Cooperative Action Plan

Dear Ms. Odell,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Draft Carbon River Corridor Cooperative Action Plan. We appreciate the Parks' work to arrive at a draft plan and the public engagement process. Our 14,000 members regularly engage in active outdoor recreation in the Carbon River Corridor ("Corridor") and other public lands throughout the Pacific Northwest.

The Mountaineers, based in Seattle, Washington and founded in 1906, is a nonprofit outdoor education, conservation, and recreation organization whose mission is "to enrich the community by helping people explore, conserve, learn about and enjoy the lands and waters of the Pacific Northwest and beyond." The Mountaineers Books publishing division expands the mission internationally through award-winning publications including instructional guides, adventure narratives, and conservation photography. 1,600 skilled volunteers lead 3,200 outdoor education trips and courses annually for 14,000 members. Our youth programs provide over 10,000 opportunities each year for children to get outside. We are a passionate, engaged, and knowledgeable community that cares about the outdoors, and protects the outdoor experience for current and future generations.

As you know, The Mountaineers own the Irish Cabin Property, which is just outside the Carbon River Entrance to Mount Rainier National Park (MRNP). The property is occasionally used for course field trips and is available for use by individual members for primitive camping. At this time, we do not plan to open the Irish Cabin Property to the general public for camping or other recreation activities. In addition to our Irish Cabin Property, Mountaineers use the Carbon River Corridor to access nature viewing, hiking, backpacking, camping, trail running, scrambling, mountaineering, and peak-bagging opportunities. We also value the Corridor for its natural conservation values, including the inland temperate rainforest ecosystem, habitat for wildlife and threatened species, and contribution to climate resiliency.



The Mountaineers particularly supports the following objectives from the draft plan:

- P-2-1: Form an enforcement coordination work group
- R-1-1: Explore the opportunity to repair the Historic Boundary Trail inside Mount Rainier National Park
- R-1-2: Explore the opportunity to repair the Rainforest Trail within Mount Rainier National Park
- R-1-3: Complete the Foothills Trail from Wilkeson to Mount Rainier National Park Carbon River Entrance
- R-2-4: Build a pedestrian bridge over the Carbon River connecting future recreational properties, such as Fairfax Townsite, Foothills Trail, etc
- I-1-9: Convene a signage work group for logo development, sign standardization and common symbolism
- N-1-2: Engage local tribal groups regarding natural, historic, and cultural resources concerns.
- N-1-5: Acquire additional properties through conservation easements and land donations to protect wildlife migration zones and endangered species habitats.

We have the following additional comments on the draft plan:

Our community values the Corridor for its access to non-motorized recreation opportunities, such as those found in the Clearwater Wilderness and Mount Rainier National Park. We encourage you to work with the U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service, and other land managers to maintain and improve popular access roads such as Forest Service road 7810 and the Carbon River Entrance and Mowich Lake Entrance to MNRP, as well as explore developing recreation opportunities such as trails and campgrounds. Funding opportunities such as the Great American Outdoors Act and the Legacy Roads and Trails program can be explored to help fund these improvements.

While we support exploring new recreation opportunities within the Corridor, we believe these opportunities must be developed in a sustainable manner, with consultation with tribal partners, and balanced with environmental conservation priorities. The draft plan can do more to illustrate the conservation values of the Corridor, such as identifying federally listed species, ecosystem values, and contributions to climate resiliency.

As the draft plan outlines extensively, illegal and unsanctioned use of the Corridor is a major concern and a threat to recreation and conservation values. It is a safety concern for our members as well as our property. As climate change intensifies, there will be increased threats of wildfire from uncontrolled campfires and unsanctioned shooting. We support more coordinated enforcement, and when appropriate, advocacy for additional resources for land managers to support enforcement and management.



We are supportive of the elements of the draft plan that aim to address visitor education and information. Please consider equity concerns, such as translation into multiple languages, low English proficiency, and technological limitations. We also encourage you to consult with tribal partners to include their history and culture in the educational resources.

Finally, The Mountaineers encourages you to include representation from the outdoor recreation and conservation communities on the Steering Committee. As the draft plan clearly illustrates, recreation is a major draw of the Corridor and those interests should be represented in the decision-making body. Similarly, conservation of natural values is represented as a major priority of the plan, yet conservation and environmental organizations are not represented in the decision-making body. A more balanced Steering Committee will lead to a stronger plan and better outcomes.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment, and for your diligent work to move this plan forward.

Sincerely,

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