



June 17, 2022

Jon Hoekstra
Executive Director
Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust
2 First Avenue, Suite 240
Seattle, WA 98121

Re: Support for Mountains to Sound Greenway National Heritage Area Management Plan

I am writing on behalf of The Mountaineers to express support for the Mountains to Sound Greenway National Heritage Area Management Plan.

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.

More than 1,200 Mountaineers volunteers lead 3,200 outdoor education trips and courses annually for 15,000 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.

The Mountains to Sound Greenway was designated a National Heritage Area (NHA) by the U.S. Congress because of its natural beauty, diverse landscapes, and rich history and heritage that are a unique and important part of our nation’s story. The NHA includes wilderness areas and urban centers, provides access to nature for people of all ages and abilities, conserves working farms and forests that provide clean water and local products, and protects historic sites in spectacular natural settings.

The Greenway is an incredibly important landscape to The Mountaineers and our community. Every day, many of our members recreate in the Greenway and enjoy the myriad of outdoor recreation activities and scenic natural beauty that the area provides. The opportunities for urban-dwelling people to connect with nature and recreate outdoors in a place like the Greenway are unparalleled.



As described in the plan, early Mountaineers led expeditions into the Greenway and established outdoor recreation opportunities near Snoqualmie Pass, at locations like Meany Lodge and Snoqualmie Lodge. Our members helped establish alpine climbing at Snoqualmie Pass and taught skills and techniques for safe and sustainable climbing. Today, The Mountaineers continues this legacy by leading youth programs and rock climbing trips and courses in the Alpine Lakes Wilderness Area. Our youth and adult programs also teach outdoor skills in locations such as the “Exit 38” rock climbing routes, snowshoeing at Gold Creek, cross-country skiing at Cabin Creek, hiking in the Mount Si Natural Resource Conservation Area, and navigation exercises on Tiger Mountain. Our members also regularly perform stewardship activities in the Greenway, many of which are organized by our Foothills Branch Conservation Committee in partnership with the Greenway Trust.

Thousands of our members signed petitions and wrote letters in support of the National Heritage Designation, and we cheered when it passed Congress and was signed into law. Our staff contributed our perspectives to the Greenway Trust as the management plan was developed, and we are grateful to the planning team for incorporating our suggestions. The Greenway Trust has been a longtime partner of The Mountaineers, and we only expect our partnership to deepen as the NHA management plan is implemented. The Greenway Trust is uniquely suited to convening coalitions of partners representing diverse interests, as required by this plan.

We appreciate the rigorous process of stakeholder engagement that contributed to the management plan. The Greenway Trust made improvements to the plan in response to the feedback they received from tribes, agencies, and nonprofit partners like The Mountaineers. We especially appreciate that the plan more fully describes the history of outdoor recreation in the Greenway and its influence on conservation.

Other elements of the plan that we especially support include its comprehensive inclusion of tribal history and heritage throughout the thematic framework. It emphasizes tribal rights and treaty rights in the Greenway landscape and acknowledges and highlights the impacts that surging levels of outdoor recreation are having on natural resources and tribal treaty rights. We look forward to the Greenway Trust convening a land manager’s forum that includes tribes to discuss and explore coordinated strategies and cooperative approaches that could be supported to address recreation impacts. This discussion and coordination necessary to ensure a sustainable and inclusive future for our natural landscapes.

The Mountaineers looks forward to supporting collaborative approaches that implement the NHA management plan and advance the goals of the Greenway NHA. In particular, we look forward to participating in the Land/Natural Resource Management Forum and projects like promoting



**THE
MOUNTAINEERS**

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responsible and respectful recreation, Trailhead Ambassadors, habitat restoration in urban greenspaces, and recreation development and maintenance. Thank you for your leadership to preserve and steward the Greenway in an integrated and cooperative way.

Sincerely,

Betsy Robblee
Conservation & Advocacy Director
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