



December 10, 2024

Recreation and Conservation Office
P.O. Box 40917
Olympia, Washington 98504-0917

RE: **24-2392 MNT, MBS Darrington Trail Crew**
24-2393 MNT, USDA FS Mountain Loop Scenic Byway Recreation
24-2671 EDU, Darrington RD Education & Wilderness Patrols

Dear Members of the Recreation Conservation Office,

I am writing on behalf of The Mountaineers to express our support for the Darrington Ranger District's various NOVA grant applications through the Recreation Conservation Office (RCO) of Washington State:

- **24-2392 MNT, MBS Darrington Trail Crew**
- **24-2393 MNT, USDA FS Mountain Loop Scenic Byway Recreation**
- **24-2671 EDU, Darrington RD Education & Wilderness Patrols**

These proposals promote education of Washington's recreation community, improve the recreational experience, and help protect the environment for future generations. We strongly support these projects and the value that they will bring to recreationalists in the Darrington Ranger District.

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." 1,200 skilled volunteers lead 3,200 outdoor education trips and courses annually for over 16,000 members. Our youth programs provide over 15,000 opportunities each year for children to get outside.

The Mountaineers operates widely in the Darrington Ranger District and currently holds a priority use guiding permit with the district. Our community of skilled volunteers lead courses and trips to areas including Exfoliation Dome, Glacier Peak, Goat Lake, Heather Lake, and Monte Cristo. We operate here because the district offers unparalleled opportunities to teach mountaineering skills, and the area has some of the best backpacking and hiking trails in the state.



The Mountaineers rely on roads, trails, and campgrounds across the district to lead our permitted trips. We support efforts to maintain these recreational amenities, including efforts to address deferred maintenance. Clean and maintained facilities are critical in managing sustainable recreation areas in the district. Additionally, we believe that the inclusion of wilderness patrols will have a net positive impact on the user experience through stewardship and education.

The Mountaineers community is conscientious of access and environmental issues in the areas that they recreate. When resources are available, we can be one of the most thoughtful and proactive user groups in terms of preservation and impact minimization. We are excited about the potential of these programs to preserve the quality of outdoor experiences for all future users of the DRD. We believe that the money granted for these programs would be very well spent preserving and improving the nature of our public lands and the experience one can get from it. Please consider fully funding these programs.

Sincerely,

Betsy Robblee
Conservation & Advocacy Director
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