



August 15, 2025

Camden Bruner, District Ranger
Darrington Ranger District
1405 Emens Ave N
Darrington, WA 98241

Dear District Ranger Bruner,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the South Fork Canyon Creek Bridge Removal and Footbridge Installation project. Our 17,000+ members regularly engage in outdoor recreation in the Darrington Ranger District 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. 1,200 skilled volunteers lead 3,200 outdoor education trips and courses annually for 17,000+ members. Our youth programs provide over 15,000 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 South Fork Canyon Creek Bridge accesses popular recreational destinations like the Meadow Mountain area, Goat Flat area, and Three Fingers lookout. Constructed in 1930, the Three Fingers lookout is on the National Register of Historic Places. FSR 41 and the South Fork Canyon Creek Bridge is the only access point to the western half of the Boulder River Wilderness, designated by Congress in 1984. Maintaining public access to this area is important to our community of outdoor recreationists and stewards.

The Everett Mountaineers Lookout and Trail Maintenance (LOTM) Committee has a long history of working with the U.S. Forest Service to restore and maintain the Three Fingers lookout. In the mid-1980s, The Everett Mountaineers restored the lookout and subsequently formed the LOTM Committee to take over routine maintenance. After a period of inactivity, LOTM reestablished connections in 2023 with the Friends of Three Fingers and the Forest Service. Since 2023, Mountaineers members have conducted 823 hours of stewardship maintaining the lookout, FSR 41, and the Meadow Mountain and Tupso Pass trails.

The Mountaineers commends the Darrington Ranger District on initiating the South Fork Canyon Creek Bridge Removal and Footbridge Installation project. We agree with the purpose and need for the project, and believe that it will improve conditions for hydrologic and fish resources while maintaining



safe public access. The bridge is in danger of collapse and cannot be repaired in its current condition. Removing the bridge will restore the natural floodplain and improve aquatic species habitat. We also agree with the Forest Service that “[t]here is a need to provide safe and environmentally responsible public access to this area.” If the bridge is removed, users will attempt to ford Canyon Creek, which is unsafe and inhibits trail and lookout maintenance efforts. The Mountaineers strongly supports constructing a replacement footbridge at a suitable location. We are particularly supportive of making the new access trail and footbridge accessible to pedestrian, equestrian, and mountain bike users. A multi-use trail and footbridge will make it easier to transport lookout materials and trail maintenance tools.

We appreciate your collaboration with The Everett Mountaineers LOTM Committee on this project and appreciate that this proposal includes their feedback. We encourage you to continue collaborating with the LOTM Committee as the project progresses. The Committee stands ready to partner with the Forest Service to survey and build the new access trail to and from the creek crossing.

We deeply appreciate the Darrington Ranger District’s diligent work to develop this project, and your ongoing stewardship of the landscape. Thank you for the opportunity to comment, and we look forward to being informed of future developments.

Sincerely,

Betsy Robblee
Conservation & Advocacy Director
betsyr@mountaineers.org