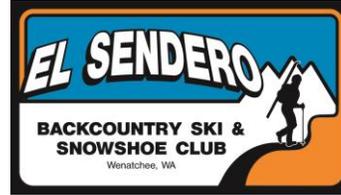




Protect America's Climbing



June 26, 2015

Hans Dunshee, Chair
Richard DeBolt, Ranking Member
House Capital Budget Committee
257A John L. O'Brien
P.O. Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

Andy Hill, Chair
Jim Hargrove, Ranking Member
Senate Ways and Means Committee
311 J.A. Cherberg Bldg.
P.O. Box 40482
Olympia, WA 98504-0482

Re: Budget provisions to study the takeover of federal public lands

Dear Chairs and Ranking Members:

The Access Fund, American Alpine Club, American Whitewater, El Sendero Backcountry Ski and Snowshoe Club and The Mountaineers, as representatives of the Washington outdoor recreation community, write to express our opposition to budget provisions to fund the study of a potential state takeover of federal public lands. While we believe there is always room for improvement in public lands management, keeping these lands public, accessible, and well maintained is essential for outdoor recreation in our state. We are concerned that a state takeover of federal lands would be impractical, expensive - especially considering our state lands are already severely underfunded, and that studying this issue further would be wasteful.

Our public lands are unquestionably an essential part of what makes Washington a great place to live. From climbing along Icicle Creek, kayaking on the rivers that flow into the Columbia Gorge, mountain biking in the Mountains to Sound Greenway, backcountry skiing in the North Cascades, or hiking on hundreds of miles in the Alpine Lakes region, Washington's public lands provide world-class and immeasurably valuable opportunities for outdoor recreation. These places create an amazing and unique quality of life in our state. They also make Washington a draw for employers and high-skill workers and support a thriving outdoor recreation economy that 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. All of these benefits depend on access to and maintenance of our public lands.

Given the substantial costs of public lands management, we are deeply concerned that state ownership would create pressure for the sale, privatization, or inappropriate development of lands that belong to all

of us. Additionally, while federal agencies' multiple-use mandates may not always generate perfect results, management decisions are made through well-developed public processes intended to balance sometimes-competing uses in an open and considered way. Federal lands in Washington benefit our state in terms of federal funding as well. For example, across all federal lands, wildfire suppression costs alone last year were more than \$1.5 billion, with Washington responsible for no small part of that as a result of an historic fire season.

In short, we believe that a state takeover of federal public lands would be a radical change that would heavily impact funding and management. Continuing to pursue this idea, even as a study, would be a wasteful and divisive expenditure that the legislature should not pursue.

Thank you for your consideration of our perspectives on this critically important issue.

Best regards,

Joe Sambataro, *Northwest Regional Director, Access Fund*
Eddie Espinosa, *Northwest Regional Manager, American Alpine Club*
Thomas O'Keefe, *Pacific Northwest Stewardship Director, American Whitewater*
Gus Bekker, *President, El Sendero Backcountry Ski and Snowshoe Club*
Martinique Grigg, *Executive Director, The Mountaineers*