

April 21, 2016

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski  
Chair  
Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee  
304 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington D.C. 20510

The Honorable Maria Cantwell  
Ranking Member  
Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee  
304 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Barrasso  
Chair  
Senate Energy and Natural Resources Subcommittee on  
Public Lands, Forests and Mining  
304 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington D.C. 20510

The Honorable Maria Cantwell  
Ranking Member  
Senate Energy and Natural Resources Subcommittee on  
Public Lands, Forests and Mining  
304 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington D.C. 20510

Dear Chair Murkowski and Barrasso and Ranking Member Cantwell and Wyden:

On behalf of our organizations, we write to express support from the Washington climbing community for the Wild Olympics Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers Act as introduced into the U.S. Congress by Senator Patty Murray and Representative Derek Kilmer in June 2015. The bill includes protections for landscapes highly-valued landscape by many of our respective members.

Our organizations represent active climbers who value the wild character of climbing in the Olympic Mountains.

**The Mountaineers**, formed in 1906, seeks to enrich the community by helping people explore, conserve, learn about and enjoy the lands and waters of the Pacific Northwest and beyond. Today, The Mountaineers is 11,500 members strong in seven branches throughout Western Washington. **Washington Climbers Coalition** (WCC) is a non-profit organization of rock climbers who work to promote and preserve access to Washington's crags and climbing areas. Since 2004, WCC has worked to steward and keep climbing areas open by working in partnership with land managers and property owners. The **Washington Alpine Club** was founded in 1916 to encourage the healthful enjoyment of the great outdoors, to preserve its natural beauty and to promote good fellowship among all lovers of nature. They are active hikers, climbers and skiers and offer several educational programs to gain outdoor skills. The **Access Fund** is the national advocacy organization that keeps U.S. climbing areas open and conserves the climbing environment. Founded in 1991, the Access Fund supports and represents over 2.3 million climbers nationwide in all forms of climbing: rock, ice, mountaineering, and bouldering. The **American Alpine Club** is a charitable organization established in 1902 that provides knowledge and inspiration, conservation and advocacy, and logistical support for the climbing community.

The Olympic Mountains have long been prized by climbers for opportunities to achieve glaciated summits and enjoy long alpine traverses. Climbing opportunities in the Olympics were first brought to popular attention with the Fred Beckey's classic *Climbers Guide to the Cascades and Olympics*, published by the American Alpine Club in 1949. While the former is now an out-of-print collectible, the *Climber's Guide to the Olympic Mountains* prepared by Olympic Mountain Rescue, originally published by The Mountaineers in 1972, is in its fourth printing and remains a standard reference.

While most of the prime mountaineering destinations are within the Olympic National Park, several summits and crags of interest lay outside of existing Park and Wilderness boundaries on the Olympic National Forest. The Wild Olympics Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers Act promises to provide lasting protection to some of these places that climbers, locally and around the world, care about.

Proposed additions to the Mount Skokomish Wilderness will protect scrambling and climbing objectives such as Mt. Washington, Mt. Pershing, Jefferson Peak, Mt. Ellinor and the nearby Ellinor Towers. The Skokomish Valley, which would see the South Fork Skokomish River protected as Wild and Scenic is also an important approach route to the Skokomish-Hamma Hamma alpine traverse.

The legislation also touches two of the few traditional and sport rock climbing crags on the Olympics, the Hamma Hamma River Rocks and McCleary Cliffs. By designating the Hamma Hamma River as Wild and Scenic, climbers for generations to come will continue to enjoy views of the free-flowing river from the roadside basalt formations that compose the walls and boulders at the Hamma Hamma River Rocks area. Further, climbers at McCleary Cliffs will appreciate the protected viewshed afforded by wilderness additions above Lake Cushman.

We appreciate Senator Murray and Representative Kilmer's collaborative approach to drafting the Wild Olympics Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. The proposal represents many years of stakeholder outreach and compromise, particularly with respect to preserving and enhancing recreational access. We are hopeful that the Committee will join the hundreds of local stakeholders in supporting this legislation .

Sincerely,

Katherine Hollis, *Conservation and Advocacy Director*  
The Mountaineers

Eddie Espinosa, Western Manager  
American Alpine Club

cc: Senator Patty Murray  
Senator Maria Cantwell  
Representative Derek Kilmer