

**American Rivers * American Whitewater * Audubon Washington * Conservation Northwest
The Mountaineers * Washington Trails Association * Washington Wild * The Wilderness Society**

May 23, 2022

Senator Patty Murray
154 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Senator Maria Cantwell
511 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Murray and Senator Cantwell,

We are writing to express our support for The Nature Conservancy's FY2023 congressionally designated spending request for the **Washington Cascades Yakima River Watershed LWCF project**. This project would protect 12,000 acres of private checkerboard forestlands in the Taneum watershed in Kittitas County and was ranked #2 nationally on the U.S. Forest Service's LWCF project list. The President's FY2023 budget provides \$6.5 million for the project, but that amount falls short of the total funding needed. *We respectfully request your help to secure the remaining \$8 million needed to protect these important lands.*

We are grateful for your many years of leadership on behalf of the Land and Water Conservation Fund which has done so much to protect public lands here in Washington and across the country. We all celebrated joyously when the Great American Outdoors Act passed in 2020 – roughly doubling the amount of funding that LWCF receives each year and guaranteeing that amount through a mandatory allocation. Passage of the Great American Outdoors Act was a huge conservation victory. Unfortunately, since passage of the law, we have not seen a commensurate increase in funding for Washington LWCF projects. In fact, last year Washington state received less than 1% of the total project funding.

The Washington Cascades Yakima River Watershed project is the last major checkerboard project in the I-90 corridor. Protecting these lands will build on the legacy of the I-90 Land Exchange and The Cascades Conservation Partnership that accomplished so much conservation in the early 2000s. Reconnecting these lands and integrating them into the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest will have lasting benefits for recreation and watershed restoration while providing for consistent landscape management. This project is a chance to leverage the power of the Great American Outdoors Act and bring the benefits of this landmark legislation home to Washington.

Thanks in advance for your consideration. Please contact us if you have questions.

Sincerely,

Betsy Robblee
Conservation & Advocacy Director
The Mountaineers

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American Whitewater

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