



CITY OF KIRKLAND
City Manager's Office
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MEMORANDUM

To: David Ramsay, City Manager
From: Erin J. Leonhart, Intergovernmental Relations Manager
Date: April 9, 2009
Subject: LETTER IN SUPPORT OF FEDERAL ALPINE LAKES WILDERNESS BILL

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the City Council sign a letter to the Washington Congressional Delegation endorsing the Alpine Lakes Wilderness Bill.

BACKGROUND DISCUSSION:

In 1976, the Alpine Lakes Wilderness was designated by Congress and has become one of the most visited Wildernesses in the country. Now, over 30 years later, there is an opportunity to permanently protect key additions to the Alpine Lakes that will preserve important wildlife habitat, existing recreational opportunities and local economies that rely on both. Congressionally-designated Wilderness and Wild and Scenic River Designations are the strongest and most durable means to ensure that these special areas are preserved for future generations.

Representative Dave Reichert and Senator Patty Murray are sponsoring a bill that would designate the additional lands in the Pratt, Middle Fork and South Fork Snoqualmie Valleys, providing an opportunity to add rare low elevation old growth and mature forests, which were largely excluded from the existing Alpine Lakes Wilderness in 1976. Statewide, of the roughly 2.5 million acres of designated Wilderness on national forest land, just 6 percent includes low elevation lands (below 3,000 feet). Low elevation lands are snow-free for much of the year and are more biologically productive, supporting many more species than higher elevation habitats. The lands to be protected provide critical winter and spring habitat for wildlife when high country is deep in snow.

The Wilderness designation would make the area off-limits to logging, motorized recreation and commercial uses. It allows hunting, fishing, horse riding, climbing, hiking and other non-mechanical activities.

Kirkland's State Representative Ross Hunter has endorsed the bill. In addition, the Bill has widespread support from recreation groups, religious leaders, local businesses, and conservation organizations. The Washington Wilderness Coalition has requested that the City Council sign on to the attached endorsement letter. In King County, County Councilmember Jane Hague and the mayors of Redmond, Issaquah, Duvall, Kent, Maple Valley, and Snoqualmie have signed on to date. In addition, individual Council Members from Issaquah, Redmond and Lake Forest Park have signed on to the letter.

Attachment (Letter)

April 22, 2009

D R A F T

The Honorable Patty Murray
United States Senate
173 Russell Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Dave Reichert
U.S. House of Representatives
1730 Longworth Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Murray & Congressman Reichert:

As local elected officials, we are writing to support your efforts to protect areas of the Middle Fork and South Fork Snoqualmie River Valleys as well as the Pratt River Valley near Snoqualmie Pass.

We understand the value our constituents place on protecting wilderness and wild, free-flowing rivers. Time and again, we hear Washingtonians with disparate political views share one common goal – protection for our natural heritage. Wild forests and rivers offer priceless natural amenities that make the Northwest such a wonderful place to live, and indeed, give the Evergreen State its name. They provide clean water, scenic beauty, solitude, wildlife habitat, world class outdoor recreation opportunities and an unmatched way of life in the Puget Sound area.

Your proposal resonates with the values of our constituents. It would add critical, low-elevation forests to the Alpine Lakes Wilderness Area, and ensure the Pratt River and Middle Fork Snoqualmie River would remain free-flowing for future generations.

In addition, we note that your efforts to expand the Alpine Lakes Wilderness follow a proud bi-partisan tradition that began in 1976 with the passage of the original Alpine Lakes Wilderness Act. The Middle Fork Valley has long enjoyed a tradition of collaboration between different user groups under the bi-partisan leadership of our state's congressional delegation. We support this new chapter in the long history of bi-partisan wilderness efforts in Washington State.

Your proposal also embraces the current and future economic direction for the Puget Sound region. Expanding the Alpine Lakes wilderness, one of the most frequented of any wilderness area in the country, adds to the long term economic security of our region by protecting a priceless recreation gem for our children and our children's children.

We also appreciate the inclusive process you have undertaken in drafting your proposal. Bringing together diverse stakeholders such as mountain bikers, rafters, hunters and anglers, conservationists, local businesses, and local elected officials is a testament to

how important the protection of this remarkable area is to the quality of life and sustainable future of this region.

Thank you again for your continued leadership to protect this special area.

Sincerely,
KIRKLAND CITY COUNCIL

By James L. Lauinger, Mayor