

Local Support Rolls in for Wild Olympics

Ocean Gold Seafoods, NW Sportsfishing Association, Local Mayors, Sportsmen Groups and Businesses Now Among Nearly 250 Backers of Wild Olympics

QUILCENE, WA - Dozens of Olympic Peninsula and South Puget Sound mayors, city council members, county commissioners, state legislators, businesses and sportsmen groups are the latest to endorse the Wild Olympics Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers Act introduced by Senator Murray and Congressman Dicks. The more than 70 new endorsements for the Wild Olympics Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers Act bring the support list of local businesses, farms, faith leaders, elected officials, and hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation groups to nearly 250.

New Local Elected Official Support

Dozens of local elected officials including Kitsap County Commissioners, state legislators and the mayors of Sequim, Bremerton, Port Townsend and Poulsbo, sent a joint letter to the bill sponsors today supporting their legislation to safeguard new wilderness and wild and scenic rivers on the Olympic Peninsula. The letter stated, "Your proposal would help protect the economic future for the Olympic Peninsula and the South Sound region. Our streams and waterways support a vibrant fishing and shellfish industry, attract millions of dollars in tourism annually, and provide clean drinking water to our residents. They provide the stunning scenery and a high "quality of life" that attract entrepreneurs, new residents and investment in our communities." The letter brought the total number of local elected official Wild Olympics endorsements to 48.

New Sportsmen and Business Support

Hunting and angling groups that represent thousands of Washingtonians sent a letter to the bill sponsors thanking them for their leadership to safeguard the area. Signers included the Washington Wildlife Federation, Northwest Guides and Anglers Association, Washington Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, Washington Council of Trout Unlimited, and the Northwest Sportfishing Industry Association. "The Wild Olympics legislation would also protect and expand access for sportsmen," they wrote. "New wilderness areas proposed for Olympic National Forest could more than double the amount of territory available for the early season High Buck Hunt. We appreciate your decision to remove any roads from the proposed wilderness boundaries, ensuring your proposal would not close or affect road or trailhead access." The new sportsmen group endorsements now join a long list of diverse outdoor recreation supporters including the International Mountain Bicycling Association, Olympic Raft and Kayak, and The Mountaineers.

"Fishing support for protecting the Peninsula's rivers and streams should come as no surprise," said Al Carter, Grays Harbor representative for the Wild Olympics Coalition. "Commercial and sport fishermen know the direct link between healthy free-flowing streams and rivers and healthy salmon and steelhead stocks. And local businesses, like Ocean Gold Seafoods—one of the largest fish processing companies on the West Coast, employing hundreds in Grays Harbor County—depend on the same to provide jobs to our community."

Local business owners have supported Wild Olympics in large numbers as well. An additional 20 local businesses signed on to letters endorsing the proposal from around the Olympic and Kitsap Peninsulas. The new business endorsers join a long list of prominent local business endorsements, including business leaders such as Taylor Shellfish, which supports the proposal because it will protect hundreds of shellfishing jobs in Hood Canal and Puget Sound. The letter brings the total local business endorsements to more than 120—not including farms, fishing guides or outfitters.

For Carter, a former county commissioner in Grays Harbor, who helped lead the local effort to secure funding for the Humptulips Fish Hatchery, keeping the proposed areas on the Olympic Peninsula undisturbed and healthy hits close to home. "Restoration work downstream is useless if watersheds

upstream are being developed. Senator Murray and Congressman Dicks get that, and their bill will help protect our clean drinking water and the salmon so many depend on for their livelihoods."

BACKGROUND:

The conservation measure will permanently protect more than 126,000 acres of wilderness in the Olympic National Forest and designate 19 rivers and seven tributaries—totaling 464 miles—as Wild and Scenic.

The Wild Olympics Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (S. 3329/H.R. 5995) was introduced by Senator Patty Murray and Congressman Norm Dicks on June 21, 2012. If passed the bill would protect the first new wilderness on Olympic National Forest in nearly 30 years and mark the first-ever Wild and Scenic River designations on the Peninsula.

The measure has been the subject of three years of discussion and public input and, as a result of this unprecedented community involvement, the sponsors have made numerous and significant changes to the legislation, including the removal of the Parks addition component originally included in the campaign's proposal. The final legislation does not include or close any roads and preserves all access to trailheads.

The compromises ensured that the final proposal will not cost any timber jobs—earning the backing of Port Angeles timber company Merrill & Ring. Cosmo Specialty Fibers, owners of the Cosmopolis pulp mill in Grays Harbor County, issued a statement after the park additions were dropped, praising the inclusive process and stating that, with the proposal reduced, their own fiber interests were not affected.

A 2012 bipartisan poll found overwhelming support for the Wild Olympics proposal among likely voters in Washington's 6th Congressional District. Nearly two out of three (64 percent) likely voters support the Wild Olympics plan proposed by Rep. Dicks and Sen. Murray. Only 15 percent are opposed. On the Peninsula, support was nearly 2 to 1, with 50% supporting and only 28% opposed.

For a complete list of endorsements, visit <http://www.wildolympics.org/supporters/endorsements>.