



10 November 2009

Mary Wagner
Regional Forester, Region 6
333 SW First Ave.
Portland, OR 97204
Support of the Whistler Canyon Trailhead

Dear Ms. Wagner:

The Wilderness Society urges you to support the acquisition of the Whistler Canyon Trailhead in the President's FY 11 budget. The trailhead will provide access to an incredible recreation experience on the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest and will build on the Congressional designation of the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail in the Omnibus Public Lands Management Act (Public Law 111-11) signed by the President on March 30, 2009.

The Wilderness Society envisions the North Cascades as a celebrated national treasure where the values of conservation, recreation, and community are supported and celebrated. The Whistler Canyon trail and trailhead along Hwy 97 is a great example of this. There is strong support among government, business, recreation, and conservation organizations.

- The Back Country Horsemen Okanogan Valley Chapter, the Pacific Northwest Trails Association, and the Okanogan Trails Coalition have been working for years on this trail and have raised funds for it.
- Organizations such as The Wilderness Society and Conservation Northwest have supported the acquisition of the trailhead property by the federal government.
- The NCW Resource Conservation and Development Agency located in Okanogan has brought the combined voice of business, government, and conservation organizations to support of the acquisition.
- Okanogan County and its Board of Commissioners completed the acquisition of the property from its owners late last year.
- There is a Memorandum of Understanding between the Tonasket Ranger District and Okanogan County regarding development of the trailhead and Title II monies for Okanogan County were allocated for that development.

This acquisition provides immediate direct access to the National Forest literally hundreds of feet from Highway 97, a designated scenic byway important to the tourism and recreation economy of North Central Washington. The trail itself traverses Mount Hull to spectacular views into the Pasayten. It has historically been used by hikers, climbers, hunters, horseback riders, and mountain bikers, activities that are important to the residents of the gateway communities nearby but also cherished by those living in

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more urban areas such as Spokane and Seattle. And there are strong conservation values to enjoy such as incredible spring wildflowers and herds of mountain sheep.

In the past, this acquisition by the Forest Service has been ranked highly and was submitted for funding under the Land and Water Conservation Fund program. On behalf of the 500,000 members of The Wilderness Society who have supported increased funding for the Forest Service, I urge you to include funding for the Whistler Canyon Trailhead acquisition in the FY 11 federal budget.

Sincerely,

John Chelminiak
Director, North Cascades Initiative
The Wilderness Society

Cc: Okanogan County Commissioners
Becki Heath, Supervisor, Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest
Mark Morris, Ranger, Tonasket Ranger District
Trygve Culp, Backcountry Horsemen of America, Okanogan Valley Chapter
Jon Knechtel, Pacific Northwest Trails Association
Jay Kehne, Conservation Northwest
Sam Bartling, NCW Resource Conservation and Development Agency
Jaime Shimek, Office of Senator Patty Murray
Mike Paulson, Office of Representative Cathy McMorris-Rodgers

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