

MARIA CANTWELL
WASHINGTON



United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4705

September 21, 2021

Randy Moore
Chief
U.S. Forest Service
1400 Independent Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250-1111

RE: FY2022 Washington Cascades Yakima River Watershed Project

Dear Chief Moore,

I am writing in support of the Nature Conservancy's FY2023 Washington Cascades Yakima River Watershed Project Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) application. The project is a key strategy in the pursuit of healthier forests, safer communities, and more vibrant regional economies in central Washington.

Throughout Washington's Cascade Range, checkerboard land ownership poses a significant challenge to Forest Service land managers. The Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest (OWNF) encompasses the headwaters of the Yakima River basin, one of the most productive agricultural regions in the American West and once one of the nation's most productive fisheries. However, disjointed land management created by alternating sections of public and private lands throughout the OWNF hinders the implementation of critical watershed restoration and recreation projects that help address drought, fires and environmental degradation in the Yakima River Basin. Timely action is needed to preserve this unique natural resource.

The Washington Cascades Yakima River Watershed Project will acquire 12,177 acres of private checkerboard inholdings within the boundary of the Okanogan Wenatchee National Forest. The acquisition of these inholdings will protect recreational access and facilitate landscape-scale watershed restoration and fire risk reduction projects. The project will also complement aquatic and salmon restoration efforts that are underway in this critical watershed. This LWCF request is supported by a wide range of partners including the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, City of Roslyn, City of Cle Elum, Kittitas Chamber of Commerce, Mountains to Sound Greenway, Tapash Sustainable Forest Collaborative, and the Washington Off Highway Vehicle Association.

The lands included in the proposal are in the heart of the Mountains to Sound Greenway, one of the most accessible recreational destinations for residents of the Central Puget Sound Area. Consolidation of these fragmented inholdings is imperative to improving the ecological health of the forest and headwaters while maintaining the economic and cultural interests of the many communities tied to the land.

I proudly support the Washington Cascades Yakima River Watershed Project. Thank you for your full and fair consideration of the Nature Conservancy's proposal to the U.S. Forest Service fiscal year 2023 LWCF.

Sincerely,

Maria Cantwell
United States Senator

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4704

COMMITTEES:
APPROPRIATIONS
BUDGET
HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR,
AND PENSIONS
VETERANS' AFFAIRS

October 22, 2021

Mr. Randy Moore
Chief
U.S. Forest Service
Sidney R. Yates Building
201 14th Street SW
Washington, D.C. 20250


Dear Chief Moore:

I write in support of an application submitted by the Okanogan Wenatchee National Forest for the U.S. Forest Service's *FY 2023 Land and Water Conservation Fund Project Nomination* for the FY 2023 Washington Cascades Yakima River Watershed Project.

The Okanogan Wenatchee National Forest seeks to acquire 12,177 acres of private inholdings located within the boundaries of the forest at the headwaters of the Yakima River Basin as part of a larger conservation project. Divided into a checkerboard of ownership since the nineteenth century, the consolidation of this landscape would protect recreational access and facilitate landscape-scale watershed restoration and fire risk reduction projects. The project would also complement critical aquatic and salmon restoration efforts that are underway in the watershed. If funded, these acquisitions would go great lengths toward providing clean, reliable watersheds in the region and protecting habitats for several endangered or threatened species, including northern spotted owls, grey wolves, Canadian lynx, steelhead, and bull trout. The reunion of this landscape would make it work better for land managers and recreationists alike.

Thank you for your consideration of the Okanogan Wenatchee National Forest's application. Please contact Bree Rabourn in my Seattle office at 206-553-0724 with any questions.

Sincerely,



Patty Murray
United States Senator

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

September 17, 2021

Chief Randy Moore
United States Forest Service
1400 Independence Ave SW
Washington, DC 20250

RE: **FY2023 Washington Cascades Yakima River Watershed Project**

Dear Chief Moore:

I am writing to ask for your consideration of the Washington Cascades Yakima River Watershed project in the Land and Water Conservation Fund FY2023 grant process. This project will acquire 12,177 acres of private checkerboard inholdings within the boundary of the Okanogan Wenatchee National Forest and support USFS land management efforts to improve forest health and recreational opportunities.

The mountains, forests, and waterways in this area are important natural and economic resources in my District. The existing checkerboard land ownership patterns throughout the Washington Cascades pose significant obstacles to public land managers by hindering implementation of large scale critical watershed and habitat restoration.

Acquisition of these inholdings will protect recreational access and facilitate landscape-scale watershed restoration and fire risk reduction projects. The project will also complement aquatic and salmon restoration efforts that are underway in this critical watershed. This LWCF request is supported by a wide range of partners including the Yakama Nation, City of Roslyn, City of Cle Elum, Kittitas Chamber of Commerce, Mountains to Sound Greenway, Tapash Sustainable Forest Collaborative, the Washington Off Highway Vehicle Association, and others.

Investing LWCF funds in this landscape will leverage several other ongoing investments by local, state, tribal, and federal partners. I urge your full and fair consideration of this application.

Sincerely,



Kim Schrier, M.D.
Member of Congress – WA08