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**For Immediate Release:**

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**Senate Passes Public Lands Package; Methow Headwaters Protection**  
*House Approval Urged on Critical Bill for Methow Community*

**Winthrop, Wash.** – The Methow Headwaters Campaign praised the U.S. Senate for its passage of a public lands package that includes more than 100 public land, natural resource and water bills, including a mineral withdrawal of the Methow Headwaters.

Sen. Lisa Murkowski, (R-Alaska), chair of the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, and former ranking member, Sen. Maria Cantwell, (D-Wash), reintroduced the public lands package in the new Congress. *S. 47, The Natural Resources Management Act*, includes permanent withdrawal of 340,079 acres in the Methow Headwaters from new mineral exploration and mine development. The area is located in the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest and is surrounded by lands that include North Cascades National Park, the Pasayten Wilderness and the North Cascades Scenic Highway.

“We are very appreciative of the Senate’s action in support of our community and all that makes the Methow Valley a special place. There are many areas where mining is appropriate, but the Methow Headwaters is not such a place,” said Maggie Coon of the Methow Headwaters Campaign. “We are grateful for the continued leadership of Washington’s Sens. Maria Cantwell and Patty Murray in championing this effort to protect the economy, local jobs, wildlife, and the quality of life in the Methow Valley.”

The withdrawal covers the full extent of potential copper deposits in the headwaters and the habitat and migration corridors that would be affected by industrial-scale mining in the area. The headwaters provide migration and stopover areas that support Washington State's largest mule deer herd, about 80% of which migrate through or reside on the lands. Hunting is an important activity in the Methow Valley and makes a significant contribution to local economies across Eastern Washington. A broad array of fish, birds and other important wildlife also reside in the headwaters.

"It's exciting and gratifying to our communities that the Methow Headwaters is protected in this bill," said Soo Ing-Moody, mayor of Twisp. "The community support for withdrawing the headwaters has been overwhelming. In November more than 400 residents turned out for a community meeting with the Bureau of Land Management to endorse making these critical lands off-limits to industrial mining. The Senate's inclusion of the Methow Headwaters in the public lands package moves us closer to ensuring the future success of our communities."

A 2014 proposal to explore developing a copper mine in the headwaters raised significant community concerns, resulting in the launch of the Methow Headwaters Campaign in 2016. The campaign brought the community together to advocate for two approaches to protecting the headwaters: legislation providing permanent protection, and a temporary 20-year administrative withdrawal requiring approval of the Secretary of Interior.

The *Methow Headwaters Protection Act* was introduced by Cantwell and Murray in 2016 and again in 2017, and also included as one of the bills in the public lands package. Additionally, a "segregation" period ordered by the Department of Interior in December of 2016 halted new mineral exploration and development for two-years to allow an assessment of a 20-year withdrawal. The segregation closed at the end of 2018, and Interior has not taken final action on the 20-year withdrawal.

The withdrawal enjoys the endorsement of more than 150 local businesses, and the support of the town councils of Twisp and Winthrop and the Winthrop Chamber of Commerce. Others backing the withdrawal include: angling organizations, hunters, backcountry horsemen, farmers, outdoor recreational groups and enthusiasts, tribal nations, civic leaders, and local organizations and individuals.

"Sens. Cantwell and Murray have been tremendous champions in support of our communities," said Coon. "The senators and their staffs took the time to visit the headwaters and immediately understood the risks if large-scale mining were to occur in the area. They quickly realized the impacts it would bring to our economy, our way of life and the water that sustains the entire valley. We cannot thank them enough for their ongoing commitment and leadership in ensuring a strong and sustainable future for our communities. We also appreciate Congressman Dan Newhouse's engagement in the Methow Headwaters and our

community, and we look forward to working with him to ensure swift passage in the House of this important bipartisan bill.”

### **About the Methow Headwaters**

The Methow Valley and its headwaters are known for world-class, year-round recreational opportunities. These include alpine and rock climbing, backcountry skiing, hunting and fishing, wildlife viewing, mountain biking and more. The valley also is home to North America’s largest groomed cross-country ski trail system.

The economic contribution of all recreational lands to Okanogan County is more than \$150 million and recreation contributes more than 1,800 jobs. Recreation spending benefits food and beverage, lodging, retail, and other service sectors.

The headwaters also supply critical water to the Methow Valley and the Methow River, which is part of the Upper Columbia River Basin. The river supports general recreation, fish habitat, and water for farms, orchards, ranching and residents. The valley's groundwater is recharged from the headwaters, which makes protecting the quality of the local water supply a vital need. The upper Methow is also critical to salmon recovery, and more than \$100 million has been invested in restoration and conservation efforts in the Methow Valley alone.

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Methow Headwaters Campaign: <https://www.methowheadwaters.org>