



Conservation Northwest endorsement of the Wild Olympics Wilderness & Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 2019.

As a regional conservation organization working since 1989 to protect, connect and restore wildlands and wildlife from the Washington Coast to the British Columbia Rockies, Conservation Northwest proudly supports efforts by Senator Patty Murray, Representative Derek Kilmer, five Native American nations, hundreds of local businesses, more than 12,000 residents, and the [Wild Olympics Campaign](#) to protect 126,000 acres of mountains and forests on Washington's Olympic Peninsula as wilderness, while also conserving 19 rivers and their tributaries under the federal Wild & Scenic Rivers Act.

From Matheny Creek in the stunning Queets Rainforest, home to fishers, marbled murrelets and Roosevelt elk, to the forests above the Dungeness and Dosewallips rivers with their black-tailed deer and black bear, to the still-bountiful spawning grounds for wild salmon and steelhead in the forks of the Humptulips in the Grays Harbor Basin, the wildlands and waters surrounding Olympic National Park are regional jewels worthy of permanent protection.

Designed through extensive community input to protect ancient forests and clean water, as well as enhance outdoor recreation and support local community vitality, the Wild Olympics Wilderness & Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 2019 would set aside the first new designated wilderness on Olympic National Forest in nearly three decades and the first Wild & Scenic Rivers on the Olympic Peninsula.

The legislation has been carefully crafted through extensive community input to ensure the proposal will support local communities and healthy economies as well as habitat, fish and wildlife, and the Olympic Peninsula's natural heritage. It would permanently protect critical fish and wildlife habitat and sources of clean water for local communities, while also protecting and expanding world-class outdoor recreation opportunities like hiking, camping, boating, wildlife watching, hunting and fishing.

Conservation Northwest has long been a leader on the Olympic Peninsula, including protecting old-growth forests, supporting forest and aquatic restoration projects, and initiating collaborations through our [Forest Field Program](#) to work with the U.S. Forest Service, Department of Natural Resources and others to responsibly manage and conserve national forest and State Trust lands for marbled murrelets, spotted owls and other wildlife, as well as sustainable forestry.

From 2002 to 2012, the organization partnered with Olympic National Park, the Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife, and Olympic National Forest to successfully [reintroduce fishers](#), a mid-sized member of the weasel family, to the Olympic Peninsula after their extirpation from the region in the early 1900's.

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In 2018, Conservation Northwest began its Cascades to Olympics program, focusing on connecting wildlife habitat between Washington's South Cascades, the Willapa Hills, and the forests and mountains of the Olympic Peninsula. This work is increasingly urgent given development trends in the south Puget Sound region, and the needs of species including fishers, elk, western toads, spotted owls and marbled murrelets. There may also be opportunities to promote old forest habitat in these corridors for a variety of fish and wildlife species, including through the Wild Olympics legislation.

With this history, context and conservation need in mind, as well as the support of local Indigenous nations and the growing interest in outdoor recreation and tourism on the Olympic Peninsula, Conservation Northwest endorses the Wild Olympics Wilderness & Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 2019.

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