

**STATEMENT OF
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BEFORE THE
UNITED STATES SENATE
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON PUBLIC LANDS, FORESTS, AND MINING
CONCERNING**

S. 1510 Wild Olympics Wilderness and Wild and Scenic rivers Act of 2015

APRIL 21, 2016

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today on S. 1510, the Wild Olympics Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 2015.

S. 1510 would designate new and expand existing wilderness areas, would designate potential wilderness areas, and would designate certain rivers in the Olympic National Forest and Olympic National Park as wild and scenic rivers. The Department supports this legislation, but has some technical concerns we would like to work with the committee and the sponsors of this bill to address. My testimony pertains only to the designations proposed on the Olympic National Forest.

The Department supports designation of suitable rivers to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. Of the nineteen rivers proposed for Wild and Scenic River designation in the bill, thirteen are in areas managed by the Forest Service. Three of these rivers were previously recommended for designation through the agency's land management planning process (Dungeness, Dungeness-Gray Wolf, and Duckabush). We support adding these river segments to the System. In addition, the Department would like to work with the Committee and bill

sponsor to identify potential locations of future restoration or habitat improvement work to ensure that the designations appropriately support fisheries and water quality management activities and are properly integrated into the system with reasonable time to develop Comprehensive River Management Plans in cooperation with the National Park Service and the interested public.

While we support the new wilderness areas and additions to existing wilderness in S. 1510, the Department looks forward to working with the Committee and bill sponsor on boundary modifications to ensure that the boundaries are crafted to best support the Agency's ability to manage and preserve wilderness character. As currently drafted, some enforcement actions would need to be executed to bring non-conforming uses into compliance. Specifically, some of the proposed wilderness areas are adjacent to open roads which could complicate compliance efforts.

The Forest Service fully embraces its mission to steward and safeguard wilderness character in wilderness areas and free flowing rivers with their outstandingly remarkable values. We are committed to collaborating openly with Congress, Tribes, and all members of the interested public to identify and propose appropriate parcels of land and segments of river within the National Forest System and the Olympic National Forest for designation as Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers and to manage those parcels responsibly when designated. We look forward to working with the sponsors of this bill to address the concerns outlined above.

I would like to thank the Chairman and committee members for inviting me to testify on this issue, and I welcome any questions you may have for me at this time.