

STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SENATE ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON PUBLIC LANDS, FORESTS, AND MINING CONCERNING S. 1254, THE WILD OLYMPICS WILDERNESS AND WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS ACT.

JULY 12, 2023

Thank you for the opportunity to present the views of the Department of the Interior on S. 1254, the Wild Olympics Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

The Department supports S. 1254 with amendments. As it pertains to the National Park Service (NPS), the bill amends the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act to designate segments of various rivers within Olympic National Park as wild, scenic, or recreational rivers. We defer to the Department of Agriculture on all other portions of the bill.

Olympic National Park contains 3,500 miles of river that are home to 29 species of native freshwater fish and support 70 unique stocks of Pacific salmon and steelhead, including bull trout, which is Federally listed as threatened. The rivers trace their paths through magnificent stands of old growth forest against the backdrop of the glacier-clad Olympic Mountains. They are accessible by miles of hiking trails and provide recreational enjoyment for legions of visitors each year.

The following rivers addressed in the bill fall fully or partially within the park: Elwha, Dungeness, Dosewallips, Duckabush, Wynoochee, Quinault, Queets, Hoh, Bogachiel, South Fork Calawah, Sol Duc, and Lyre Rivers. S. 1254 is consistent with the park's 2008 General Management Plan, which states that the rivers noted above are eligible for designation as part of the national wild and scenic rivers system and will be managed to prevent any degradation to the resources and values that merit eligibility. The river segments in areas managed by the NPS that are proposed for designation in S. 1254 were previously found eligible for designation through NPS eligibility studies.

The Department would like to highlight the challenge of meeting the requirement in Section 3(d) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, which mandates Comprehensive River Management Plans three-years after designation. The NPS recommends providing an exception to the timing requirement in Section 3(d) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, otherwise, the NPS would be required to develop plans for more than a dozen rivers simultaneously, which could not be done with available resources. Therefore, we recommend amending S. 1254 to provide for plans and boundaries to be developed for these rivers three years after funding is available.

Additionally, we recommend that Sec. 3 of S. 1254 be amended to designate an additional segment of the Elwha River, from Cat Creek to the Olympic National Park boundary, as a "recreational river" under 16 U.S.C. 1274 to enhance outdoor recreation. Sec. 3 designates the Elwha River and its tributaries from the source to Cat Creek as a wild river. The removal of the Elwha and Glines Canyon Dams in 2011 and 2014 respectively, and the significant restoration

work that has been completed on the river segment downstream from Cat Creek to the park boundary has resulted in a free-flowing river that has significant recreational use. The park's 2004 Elwha Wild and Scenic River Eligibility Report determined that if Elwha and Glines Canyon dams were removed, this segment would be eligible for classification as "recreational."

We would be happy to work with the Committee and the sponsor to develop these amendments.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this statement for the record.