



For Immediate Release
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Contact: Tom Partin
(503) 704-4644

**Olympic Peninsula Forest Products Industry Comments on Reintroduction of
“Wild Olympics” Proposal by Washington Senator Patty Murray and
Congressman Derek Kilmer**

(Portland, Ore.) - Tom Partin, President of the American Forest Resource Council, issued the following statement regarding the reintroduction of the “Wild Olympics” Wilderness legislative proposal. AFRC represents nearly all of the forest products manufacturers on the Olympic Peninsula, which collectively provide thousands of family-wage jobs in rural communities across the area.

“Our industry remains opposed to the Wild Olympics Wilderness legislation because it would put an additional 125,000 acres of the Olympic National Forest off-limits to responsible timber management and other activities. Most importantly it fails to address the pressing social and economic needs of rural, forested communities on the Peninsula. Over 100,000 acres of the Olympic National Forest is already designated as Wilderness and is off-limits to responsible, multiple- use management, as is nearly one million acres within the Olympic National Park.”

“While we will need to review any changes that may have made to the legislation, our industry has had specific concerns about some of the areas proposed for Wilderness designation, likely impacts to future access of the forest, and the additional restrictions on sustainable forest management along some of the 450 miles of rivers being designated as Wild and Scenic. Beyond these concerns, we don’t believe the legislation represents a balanced approach to meeting the social and economic needs of communities on the Olympic Peninsula.”

“Over the past two decades, timber harvests on the Olympic National Forest have fallen over 90 percent due to litigation, analysis paralysis, and broken federal policies. Today, we are harvesting just 3 percent of annual growth on the National Forest and only 13 percent of the timber volume that dies each year. Meanwhile, communities across the Peninsula have been hit by a reduction in timber receipt revenue and are suffering from high levels of unemployment, poverty, and all the resulting social ills.”

“While King County (Seattle) has an unemployment rate of 5 percent, Grays Harbor County leads the state with an unemployment rate of over 11 percent and every other Peninsula county is over 8 percent. Our industry is enjoying strong markets for forest products and would love to create more family-wage jobs and economic activity in these hard-hit communities if we could

5100 S.W. Macadam Avenue, Suite 350
Portland, Oregon 97239
Tel. (503) 222-9505 • Fax (503) 222-3255

access additional raw material. Restoring a sustainable level of harvest to the Olympic National Forest is critical to achieving that goal.”

“We support a balanced approach to meeting the economic, social, and conservation needs of the Olympic Peninsula. We cannot support piecemeal measures that fail to address the challenges facing our rural, forested communities. Notwithstanding these concerns, we are encouraged by the recent efforts of Congressman Derek Kilmer (D-Gig Harbor) to begin developing proposals for increasing timber harvests on the Olympic National Forest. Ultimately, we believe the adoption of timber management reforms should precede or be included with any Wilderness legislation dealing with the future of these federal lands. While we must continue to oppose this stand-alone ‘Wild Olympics’ Wilderness proposal, we would like to continue working with Congressman Kilmer to craft balanced, sustainable approaches for our forests and communities and would also welcome the involvement of Senators Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell in this effort.”

AFRC member companies on the Olympic Peninsula include:

Green Creek Wood Products, Port Angeles

Green Crow, Port Angeles

Interfor, Port Angeles and Beaver

Murphy Company, Elma

Sierra Pacific Industries, Aberdeen

The American Forest Resource Council represents forest product manufacturers and landowners throughout the west and is based in Portland, Oregon. www.amforest.org