

## Olympics Bill Introduced in Congress

In January OPA joined conservationists across the Northwest celebrating the introduction of the Wild Olympics Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 2014. The bill, similar to the one introduced by Senator Murray and Representative Dicks in 2012, would permanently protect more than 126,000 acres of new wilderness in Olympic National Forest. In addition, it would also protect 19 Wild and Scenic Rivers in the national forest and the national park, the first ever designated in the Olympics.

Popular roadless areas that would receive wilderness protection in the legislation include: Deer Ridge, Lower Graywolf, Upper Dungeness, Mount Townsend North, Dosewallips and Jupiter Ridges, Mounts Ellinore and Washington, South Fork Skokomish River, Moonlight Dome, South Quinault Ridge, Rugged Ridge, and Gates of the Elwha. OPA and our sister conservation organizations have been working to protect most of these areas for decades.

"Senator Murray and Representative Kilmer deserve tremendous thanks for working to ensure that our beloved Olympic Peninsula will be here for our grandchildren," said Connie Gallant, chair of the Wild Olympics Coalition. "This landmark legislation will protect the Olympic Peninsula's ancient forests, free-flowing rivers and stunning scenery for all time. It will safeguard critical salmon habitat and sources of clean drinking water for our local communities, protecting our unmatched quality of life on the Peninsula."

Also included in the bill as "Potential Wilderness" are 5,346 acres of previously roaded and logged lands. They will become wilderness if the Forest Service completes restoration under current management plans.

Representative Kilmer and Senator Murray and their staffs conducted extensive conversations with a wide spectrum of interests on the Peninsula. And they went to great lengths to insure that lands included in the bill would have minimal effect on the Peninsula's timber sector. Nearly all are off-limits to logging and road building under existing forest rules. Wilderness designation would give these areas permanent, lasting protection.

"I reject the proposition that we must choose between economic growth and environmental protection," said Representative Kilmer upon introducing the bill. "After conversations with the Forest Service and timber industry, I'm convinced that nearly all Forest Service land proposed for wilderness would never be commercially harvested and that these designations won't harm the timber industry ... [The bill] will protect the Peninsula's most sensitive lands and waters for future generations while protecting access to outdoor recreation and private landowners' rights."

"The Olympic Peninsula's wild spaces are among Washington state's crown jewels, and the Wild Olympics proposal supports the foundation of conservation developed over generations," said Senator Patty Murray. "This plan is the result of several years of negotiation and compromise ... [It] is a step in the right direction to protect our most treasured places for our kids and grandkids, and I look forward to working with Representative Kilmer to pass this bill into law."

The bill comes at the peak of Wild Olympics' popularity. The proposal is endorsed by 38 conservation and civic organizations and more than 3,470 local supporters including businesses, farms, faith leaders, local elected officials, hunting, fishing and recreation groups. In addition, more than 50 current and past elected officials on the Peninsula have endorsed the proposal—along with over 10,000 individuals statewide.

The work is far from done, however. As OPA vice president Tim McNulty stated when the bill was introduced, "Today is a day to celebrate, but now we must work to get this important legislation passed by Congress and signed into law. Future generations deserve no less."

Look to future issues of the [Voice](#), [OPA's website](#), and the [Wild Olympics website](#) to keep abreast of this important legislation.

To read the bill, go to Congress.gov, or click [Senate Bill 1949](#) or [House Bill 3922](#).