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July 7, 2009

The Honorable Raul M. Grijalva
Chairman, Subcommittee on
National Parks, Forests and Public Land
Committee on Natural Resources
1440 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I am pleased to write in favor of H.R. 2806 sponsored by Representative Doc Hastings of the state of Washington. I believe his proposal for reconstruction of the Upper Stehekin road is both desirable and vital for appropriate access to portions of the North Cascade National Park.

Before speaking on the particulars of the road reconstruction let me establish my credentials for testifying on this measure. I served as United States Senator for the state of Washington from 1983 to 1989. During that time I served as a member of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee of the Senate, which has jurisdiction over our National Park system. While on the committee I initiated and became prime sponsor of a bill to create wilderness areas within the three national parks of Washington state, Olympic, Rainier, and North Cascades. It was my intent to ensure that undue development would not occur within those national parks. I also recognized that access to trails and vistas within those parks was vital and carefully excluded those road rights-of-way from wilderness boundaries. Normally, road reconstruction and minor relocation would be accommodated within these 100 foot right of ways but on rare occasions natural catastrophes could require modification of wilderness boundaries to allow road relocations.

For almost 70 years I have hiked and climbed in the National Parks of Washington state and have a strong and continuing desire to maintain their integrity. I am very familiar with the area in question and have ridden the road from Stehekin to trailheads where I have embarked on extensive hiking and

climbing trips. If this road is not rebuilt, access to extraordinary wilderness experiences will be substantially more difficult. Almost a full days hike will be necessary to reach what once were trailheads giving mountain access.

I believe very strongly that continued protection of our wilderness National Parks depends on the active support of visitors, hikers, and climbers who act as champions for our National Parks. If we make access substantially more difficult we reduce the number of visitors and ultimately the numbers of citizens and taxpayers who know enough about these parks to want to protect them.

It was my intent when I sponsored the Park Wilderness Bill of 1988 to protect the unique features of these splendid Parks but not to make access more difficult for those seeking the unusual experience of a wilderness Park. I believe that in this instance an alternative route along the Old Wagon Road would maintain the appropriate access and that portions of the current road could revert to wilderness category with no net loss of wilderness area. I strongly urge the passage of HR 2806 and believe it is compatible with the original bill I sponsored in 1988.

I thank you for your attention to this matter and hope that it can be resolved promptly and successfully.

Sincerely

Daniel J. Evans
US Senator 1983 -- 1989