

Rep. Derek Kilmer Testimony on H.R. 2642
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands Legislative hearing
July 10, 2019

- Thank you Chair Haaland and Ranking Member Young for holding this hearing.
- I am proud to testify today in support of my bill, H.R. 2642 – The Wild Olympics and Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 2019.
- I was born and raised in Northwest Washington on the Olympic Peninsula – in the District that I am now honored to represent.
- So I know firsthand how special this area is.
- Everyone who visits leaves with a memory they won't soon forget.
- Whether you are spending time hiking through the Hoh Rainforest or paddling down the Elwha River...a trip to our region stays with you.
- There is something special about our woods and waters. You realize it when you are out there with the people you care about.
- For me, Olympic National Park wasn't just a place where my family could pile into the car for some camping – it's part of the fabric of who we are.
- In fact, my grandfather even helped pave a portion of the road up Hurricane Ridge.

- For folks like him and countless others, the great outdoors is a key driver of our local economies.
- It's given opportunities to entrepreneurs who started restaurants in Grays Harbor, or companies in Clallam County offering guided tours, or small business owners who run hotels for visitors to stay near.
- Or even road paving crews.
- Each year, millions of people and families travel to my state and contribute roughly \$22 billion in economic impact and support 200,000 jobs in our outdoor economy.
- So for the region I represent, protecting public lands isn't just about saving these unforgettable places for future generations. It also means protecting high-quality jobs for the next generation as well.
- That's why I am proud to sponsor H.R. 2642 – The Wild Olympics and Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 2019.
- This bill will create a new wilderness area encompassing 126,000 acres of old growth and mature forest habitat in the Olympic National Forest and designate 464 river miles across 19 rivers and major tributaries on the Olympic Peninsula as Wild and Scenic Rivers.
- Since its inception – which began with my predecessor Norm Dicks – this proposal has evolved through extensive public engagement with Tribes, conservation groups, timber communities, business

leaders, shellfish growers, and everyone in-between -- to create a bill that works for our local communities.

- It's because of that extensive public outreach that this bill is now formally supported by more than 800 community leaders – republicans, democrats, business owners, sportsmen, mayors, county commissioners, and tribal leaders – who all agree that this proposal moves our region in the right direction.
- In addition to protecting recreational access and supporting our outdoor economy, this bill will also bolster our region's efforts to protect sources of clean drinking water, support critical salmon and steelhead habitat, and protect key waterways that are vital to the shellfish industry.
- But just as important, are all the things this bill will not do.
- This proposal will not close, decommission, or otherwise restrict access to any existing forest service roads or trailheads.
- It will not impact any harvestable timber base in the Olympic National Forest.
- And it will not affect any private property rights.
- It's truly a win-win for the region I represent.
- While this proposal undoubtedly moves our region forward – both ecologically and economically – I know there are many folks who would also like to see more actions taken to responsibly increase harvest on the Olympic National Forest.

- And I want to state unequivocally that I remain strongly committed to that effort as well.
- That's why I have worked to establish and support the Olympic Forest Collaborative - which has successfully brought stakeholders in our region together to implement novel forest treatments that are increasing harvest levels and improving forest health.
- I know we have more work to do to ensure the timber industry remains a successful part of our region's economy.
- But, as someone who spent a decade working professionally in economic development, I know that our region's future depends on building a strong and diversified economy, because a one-legged economic stool doesn't stand – no matter how hard we try.
- That's why this bill is so important.
- So I again want to thank you Chair Haaland, Ranking Member Young, and all the Subcommittee Members for holding this important hearing.
- I also want to thank my good friend, and constituent, Roy Nott – for traveling all the way from the better Washington to testify in favor of this bill.
- Thank you and I yield back.