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For Immediate Release:

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Senator Murray's Legislation Boosts Methow Headwaters Campaign

Winthrop, Wash. -- The Methow Headwaters Campaign said today that its efforts to protect the rural character and diverse economy of the Methow Valley has received significant support with the introduction of the *Methow Headwaters Protection Act of 2016* by U.S. Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) and cosponsored by U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell (D-WA).

The act proposes a "mineral withdrawal" to make 340,000 acres of National Forest lands that comprise the Methow Headwaters off-limits to the potential development of a large-scale copper mine. The withdrawal area encompasses the full extent of any copper deposits that might lead to an industrial-scale mine on the lands and protects critical streams and creeks that are at the heart of the Methow River's headwaters.

"The introduction of the Headwaters' legislation is a significant step in ensuring that the waters, working landscapes and recreational economy of the Methow Valley continue to provide for and support the local residents, our diverse business community and the rich fish and wildlife populations in this region. We deeply appreciate Senator Murray's leadership in recognizing the significance of these critical lands to the valley and its future," said Bill Pope, owner of the Mazama Country Inn and member of the Methow Headwaters Campaign.

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The Methow Headwaters Campaign brings together 135 local Methow Valley businesses, and a significant number of area residents, civic leaders and local organizations concerned about the threat an industrial-scale copper mine poses to the region's economy, water resources and rural character. The Methow Headwaters Campaign launched in February with a call for the Department of Interior and the U.S. Forest Service to initiate an administrative mineral withdrawal of the lands. An administrative mineral withdrawal would prevent establishment of new mining claims for up to 20 years.

The campaign is in response to the plans of a Canadian company, Blue River Resources, Ltd., that is presently pursuing approval from the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest to conduct exploratory drilling at sites around Flagg Mountain, near the town of Mazama. The campaign says such drilling could be used to try to validate old mining claims and could open the door to future development of significant mining operations in the headwaters. Permission to move ahead is expected by the Forest Service in June 2016, with exploratory drilling beginning as early as August.

"This legislation is in direct response to broad community opposition to an industrial-scale copper mine being located in the headwaters of the Methow River," said Brian Charlton, general manager of Sun Mountain Lodge, the area's largest employer. "It's gratifying to see the senators' support for the decades of work by civic and business leaders, farmers and ranchers, and Methow residents who have shaped a thoughtful vision that nurtures our lands and waters, sustains our economy and welcomes visitors from far and wide to enjoy the beauty of this special place."

"We grow high-quality food that we sell in the valley and all around the country," said Sam Lucy, co-owner of Bluebird Grain Farms. "The quality of our food depends on this region's lands and the clean air and the clean water that are the heart of this valley. Maintaining the quality of this place is important to my business, the products we grow and the local economy, which is why a successful mineral withdrawal is so important."

Nearly one million visitors come to the Methow Valley annually to enjoy the sun, snow, streams, wildlife and rural community, and they contribute more than \$150 million annually into Okanogan County's economy. The upper Methow is also critical to salmon recovery, and more than \$100 million has been invested in restoration and conservation efforts in the Methow Valley alone.

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The Methow Valley is also known for its world-class, year-round recreational opportunities. These include alpine and rock climbing, backcountry skiing, hunting and fishing, wildlife viewing, mountain biking and more. The valley is home to North America's largest groomed cross-country ski trail system.

"The introduction of this legislation shows there is tremendous momentum and support for the mineral withdrawal of the headwaters," said Maggie Coon, chair of the Methow Valley Citizens Council and campaign supporter. "The legislation supports local residents who believe that landscape protection and recreational values in the Methow are deeply connected and core to the future of our economy, and the quality of life that makes the region attractive to residents and visitors."

More information about the campaign is available at the campaign's website -- <http://www.methowheadwaters.org>.

For information on the Methow Headwaters Protection Act:
<http://www.murray.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2016/5/murray-cantwell-introduce-bill-to-protect-methow-valley-headwaters-from-development>

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About the Methow Valley and Headwaters

The Methow Headwaters are located in the midst of some of the Northwest's most spectacular and iconic lands, including the adjacent North Cascades National Park, Pasayten Wilderness and the North Cascades Scenic Highway. The Methow Valley is recognized by the National Forest Foundation as one of 14 treasured landscapes in which the organization is working with local communities to restore and build ecologically resilient landscapes.