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For Immediate Release:

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Efforts to Protect Methow Headwaters Applauded

Methow Headwaters Protection Act of 2017 Introduced in 115th Congress

Winthrop, Wash. – The Methow Headwaters Campaign applauded the introduction today of the *Methow Headwaters Protection Act of 2017* by U.S. Senators Maria Cantwell (D-WA) and Patty Murray (D-WA). The bill calls for permanent protection of the Methow Valley’s headwaters in north central Washington State from new industrial-scale mine development.

The bill withdraws about 340,000 acres of Methow Headwaters lands in the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest from new mineral exploration and development. The senators originally introduced the legislation in 2016, and the bill was heard in September before the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, of which Senator Cantwell is the ranking member. The re-introduction in the new congress continues the senators’ commitment to ensuring that the waters, working landscapes and recreational economy of the Methow Valley are protected from the impacts of industrial-scale mining.

In December, the Bureau of Land Management published notice in the Federal Register of an [administrative mineral withdrawal](#) for the Methow Headwaters. The notice begins a two-year planning process in which the land management agencies conduct an evaluation of extending the temporary withdrawal for 20 years. The withdrawal allows congress to consider legislation, and protects the value of ecological and recreational resources in the Methow Valley. Public

comments are being accepted until March 30. Comments can be sent to the BLM Oregon/Washington State Director, P.O. Box 2965, Portland, OR 97208-2965, and electronically to BLM_OR_WA_WITHDRAWALS@blm.gov.

The Methow Headwaters Campaign brings together 135 diverse businesses, organizations and community groups, civic leaders, tribes, local town councils, and more 2,000 individuals who have signed on in support of the campaign. Last month more than 400 community members, business owners and other supporters packed a rally in Winthrop in support of the campaign.

“Large-scale mine development in the Methow Headwaters is in direct conflict with the qualities that underpin the valley’s successful and sustainable economy,” said Winthrop Chamber of Commerce President David Gottula. “The mineral withdrawal helps protect the qualities that make this area special and successful while a permanent solution to protect this landscape can be pursued.”

The Winthrop Chamber of Commerce recently passed a resolution in support of the mineral withdrawal. The chamber’s action is similar to resolutions supporting the withdrawal passed last year by the Towns of Twisp and Winthrop.

“I came to the Methow Valley 28 years ago and have watched this community craft a vision that embraces and nurtures outdoor recreation, honors our agricultural heritage, and treasures our unparalleled natural lands and waters, said Brian Charlton, general manager at Sun Mountain Lodge. “The senators’ legislation offers a way to ensure the community and region continues to thrive and offer the most spectacular outdoor experiences in the Northwest.”

The Methow Headwaters Campaign launched in February 2016, in response to plans by a Canadian company, Blue River Resources, Ltd., to conduct exploratory drilling directly above the town of Mazama, Wash.

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.

The area 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.

“Senators Cantwell and Murray have been tremendous champions for this effort,” said Maggie Coon, one of the leaders of the Methow Headwaters Campaign.

“From the beginning they have understood what’s at risk if large-scale mining were to occur in the Methow Headwaters. They fully realize the devastation it would bring to our economy, our way of life and the water that sustains the entire valley. We cannot thank them enough for their commitment.”

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.

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For More Information

For information on the Methow Headwaters Protection Act of 2017:
<https://www.energy.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2017/3/cantwell-murray-re-introduce-bill-to-protect-methow-valley-headwaters-from-mining>

Federal Register Notice: <https://federalregister.gov/d/2016-31746>

Methow Headwaters Campaign: methowheadwaters.org

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