



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

September 21, 2018

Contact:

Maggie Coon
Methow Headwaters Campaign
509.997.2669 (primary)
509.341.9124 (mobile)

**Forest Service Recommends Methow Headwaters Withdrawal
Community Campaign Praises Action by Agencies**

Winthrop, Wash. – The Methow Headwaters Campaign applauded the Forest Service for its release of an environmental assessment and recommendation in support of the Methow Headwaters mineral withdrawal. The campaign called the agency’s endorsement a vital step forward in finalizing the proposed 20-year withdrawal to protect the area’s ecological and recreational resources.

“This is an important and greatly appreciated step forward in protecting the rural character, spectacular landscapes, and clean water that support local prosperity and jobs,” said Maggie Coon of the Methow Headwaters Campaign. “This recommendation recognizes that tourism, outdoor recreation, farming, ranching, real estate and the local service economy all depend on maintaining our rural character and the vital clean water that supports the valley and beyond.”

Coon specifically praised the Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management and strong bipartisan support for ensuring that the withdrawal moved forward during the two-year study period that began in late 2016. Bipartisan involvement includes the active support and leadership of Congressman Dan Newhouse, and the efforts of both U.S. Senators, Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell.

The Methow Headwaters Campaign is a locally lead effort that has brought together community voices to protect the waters, communities and economy of the Methow Valley through the mineral withdrawal. This includes the endorsement of more than 150 local businesses, and the support of the town councils of Twisp and Winthrop and the Winthrop Chamber of Commerce. Others backing the withdrawal include: angling organizations, hunters, backcountry horsemen, farmers, outdoor recreational enthusiasts, tribal nations, civic leaders, and local organizations and individuals.

“This is an incredibly important issue for our valley and its citizens, and it is gratifying that the agencies and our congressional supporters have worked diligently to move this process forward,” said Twisp Mayor, Soo Ing-Moody. “We appreciate that they have listened to and engaged with the Methow community, and we are looking forward to working with the Department of Interior on a positive conclusion.”

The withdrawal covers 340,000 acres of Methow Headwaters lands on the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest. Mineral withdrawals protect selected lands and waters from large-scale mining while continuing to allow existing uses. The 20-year withdrawal allows time to consider legislation that provides permanent protection to the headwaters. Such legislation is currently pending in congress.

The Forest Service’s recommendation and assessment now goes to the Bureau of Land Management and Department of Interior, which will review and make a final decision on the withdrawal. The BLM is also expected to schedule a public meeting in the Methow Valley this fall to share the proposal with the community and gather further public comment on the action.

Nearly one million visitors come to the Methow Valley annually to enjoy the sun, snow, streams, wildlife and rural community, and they bring 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. Additionally, valley’s network of interconnected streams support recreation, agriculture, ranching and wildlife throughout Okanogan County.

####

Methow Headwaters Campaign: <https://www.methowheadwaters.org>