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For Immediate Release:

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House Passage of Public Lands Bill Provides Methow Headwaters Protection
Mineral Withdrawal Protects Methow Economy, Wildlife, Waters and Communities

Winthrop, Wash. – Today’s passage of an historic package of public lands bills by Congress will help ensure the lasting protection of the waters, fish, wildlife, and spectacular landscape that drive the economy of the Methow Valley, one of Washington State’s most iconic natural landscapes.

The House’s passage of “*The Natural Resources Management Act*,” known as the “Public Lands Package” approves more than 100 public land, natural resource and water bills, including the permanent withdrawal of 340,079 acres in the Methow Headwaters from new mineral exploration and mine development. The area is located in the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest and is surrounded by lands that include North Cascades National Park, the Pasayten Wilderness and the North Cascades Scenic Highway. The headwaters are the source of water that sustain the fish, farms and communities of the Methow Valley, provide critical habitat for the state’s largest mule deer population, and offer an unparalleled landscape for world-class outdoor recreation.

The public lands package passed the U.S. Senate Feb. 12 on a 92-8 vote, and passed today in the House. It is the most significant and comprehensive collection of public lands bills passed by Congress in a decade.

The Methow Headwaters Campaign, a community-led effort to protect the area, lauded the bill's passage and applauded the bipartisan support of Congress in finalizing and passing the comprehensive bill and the Methow Headwaters protections it includes.

"Rep. Dan Newhouse (R-Wash.) and Sens. Maria Cantwell and Patty Murray (D-Wash.) and their staffs played crucial roles in supporting the public lands package and protection of the headwaters," said Maggie Coon of the Methow Headwaters Campaign. "They recognize that the lands and waters of the Methow Valley are irreplaceable. While there are places where mining is appropriate, such industrial activity in the Methow Valley would upend the very qualities that support our economy. These leaders have worked extremely hard on behalf of our community, for which we are deeply grateful. We look forward to quick action by the President to finalize this exceptional demonstration of bipartisan cooperation."

A 2014 proposal by a Canadian company to explore developing a copper mine in the headwaters raised significant community concerns and led to the launch of the Methow Headwaters Campaign in 2016. The withdrawal covers the full extent of potential copper deposits in the headwaters and the habitat and migration corridors that would be affected by industrial-scale mining in the area. The headwaters provide migration and stopover areas that support Washington State's largest mule deer herd, about 80% of which migrate through or reside on the lands. A broad array of fish, birds and other important wildlife also reside in the headwaters.

"Our business is in an historic building that serves as much as a community center as a store. The Methow River runs down the valley near the store, as does the region's huge cross-country ski trail network, and all of this is beneath the area that was slated for potential mine development," said Rick LeDuc, owner of the Mazama Store. "Industrial activity here would have been devastating for our business, our local community and the many guests who come from across the state and country to experience this unique place. The headwaters withdrawal will help ensure the future of a business that we have poured our lives into over the past several years. That's why we joined more than 150 area businesses in supporting this protection effort."

Local support for the mineral withdrawal is overwhelming. In addition to strong business support, the effort to protect the headwaters is backed by town councils, the chamber of commerce, angling organizations, hunters, backcountry horsemen, farmers, outdoor recreation enthusiasts, tribal nations, civic leaders, and local organizations and individuals. The depth of support was illustrated at a public meeting hosted by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in Winthrop last November at which more than 400 community members packed a local hall to express support for the withdrawal.

"The passage of the headwaters withdrawal is cause for our community to celebrate," said Soo Ing-Moody, mayor of Twisp. "This issue has unified us in safeguarding the rural character of the valley, maintaining the foundation of our local jobs and economy, and protecting our critical water resources. Through the hard work of Rep. Newhouse and Sens. Cantwell and Murray, we are ensuring the long-term success and sustainability of our valley and communities. They listened to our concerns and acted to support this special place. We cannot thank them enough for their tremendous efforts on our behalf."

About the Methow Headwaters

The Methow Valley and its headwaters are known for 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 also is home to North America's largest groomed cross-country ski trail system.

The economic contribution of all recreational lands to Okanogan County is more than \$150 million and recreation contributes more than 1,800 jobs. Recreation spending benefits food and beverage, lodging, retail, and other service sectors.

The headwaters also supply critical water to the Methow Valley and the Methow River, which is part of the Upper Columbia River Basin. The river supports general recreation, fish habitat, and water for farms, orchards, ranching and residents. The valley's groundwater is recharged from the headwaters, which makes protecting the quality of the local water supply a vital need. 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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Methow Headwaters Campaign: <https://www.methowheadwaters.org>