



October 15, 2020

Recreation and Conservation Office
P.O. Box 40917
Olympia, Washington 98504-0917

**RE: 20-2126: Methow Valley Climbing Rangers 2022-2023;
20-2137: MVRD Wilderness & Backcountry Rangers 2022-2023;
20-2134: MVRD Trail Maintenance 2022-2023; and
20-2133: MVRD Developed Rec Campground Maintenance 2022-23**

Dear evaluation committee members,

Please accept our joint letter of support from the seven undersigned climbing organizations and guide companies for the Methow Valley Ranger District (MVRD)'s proposals for 20-2126: Methow Valley Climbing Rangers 2022-2023, 20-2137: MVRD Wilderness & Backcountry Rangers 2022-2023, 20-2134: MVRD Trail Maintenance 2022-2023, and 20-2133: MVRD Developed Rec Campground Maintenance 2022-23. These proposals promote education of Washington's climbing community, improve the recreational experience, and help protect the climbing environment. We strongly support these projects and the value that they will bring to recreationalists in the Methow Valley.

The MVRD encompasses many rock climbing and mountaineering destinations of local, regional and international significance; a few of which are the Washington Pass Spires such as Liberty Bell, the Wine Spires of Silver Star Peak, Goat Wall, and dozens of crags and bouldering areas in the Mazama area, the North Cascades Scenic Corridor, and the Chewuch River Valley. Climbing history in this district dates back 70 years and, with over 400 published climbing routes, the popularity of climbing continues to grow. Climbers make up over 11,000 visitor use days in a single season on the MVRD.

The Methow Valley Climbing Rangers program has been successfully operating since 2016 and continues its important work of educating climbers on environmentally and socially responsible climbing practices, collecting use and resource data, identifying environmental impacts, building relationships within the community, and enforcing regulations. In 2018 and 2019, the program was a critical component of the collaborative Washington Pass Spires Access Trail Project, which brought together hundreds of community partners, \$130,000 in grassroots fundraising, and thousands of volunteer work hours to establish a sustainable trail system on the western slopes of the Liberty Bell group.

In conjunction with the Climbing Rangers program, the MVRD Wilderness and Backcountry Rangers proposal will fund three seasonal rangers and several volunteers to perform in-field visitor contacts to

promote leave-no-trace techniques and enforce regulations in high-use recreation areas along the North Cascades Scenic Corridor, Hart's Pass, Pasayten Wilderness and Lake Chelan-Sawtooth Wilderness areas.

In addition to the above, our recreational user group frequently use the extensive network of trails and campgrounds outlined in the MVRD Trail Maintenance and Developed Rec Campground Maintenance proposals. Use numbers at trailheads, campsites, and other facilities in the Methow Valley grew exponentially in the summer of 2020 as visitors sought out safe, outdoor activities in the midst of a global pandemic. It is more important than ever to support land managers in the maintenance of these high-use trails and facilities to minimize damage from human waste, litter, camping in environmentally fragile areas, and other unintended impacts.

The climbing and mountaineering community as a group is conscientious of access and environmental issues in the areas that they recreate. When resources are available to educate them, they can be one of the most thoughtful and proactive user groups in terms of preservation and impact minimization. We are excited about the potential of these programs to preserve the quality of outdoor experiences for all future users of the MVRD. We believe that the money granted for these programs would be very well spent preserving and improving the nature of our public lands and the experience one can get from it.

We look forward to supporting MVRD with volunteer, outreach, and educational support and we sincerely thank the MVRD for their collaboration and commitment to maintaining and improving the recreational experience in the Methow Valley.

Sincerely,

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