



December 18, 2020

Recreation and Conservation Office
P.O. Box 40917
Olympia, WA 98504

**RE: NOVA 20-2181E Mt. Baker Backcountry and Climbing Rangers
NOVA 20-2179M Non-Motorized Mt. Baker Ranger District Trail Maintenance
RTP 20-2180 Heather Meadows Recreation Area Trail Maintenance**

Dear evaluation committee members,

Please accept our joint letter of support from the XX undersigned climbing organizations and guide companies for the Mt. Baker Ranger District (MBRD)'s proposals for NOVA 20-2181E Mt. Baker Backcountry and Climbing Rangers, NOVA 20-2179M Non-Motorized Mt. Baker Ranger District Trail Maintenance, and RTP 20-2180 Heather Meadows Recreation Area Trail Maintenance. 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 they will bring to recreationalists in the Mt. Baker area.

The MBRD encompasses many mountaineering, scrambling, and climbing destinations of local, regional, and international significance. Foremost is Mt. Baker (Koma Kulshan), one of the most popular climbing destinations in the Cascades. Decades of beginner climbers have cut their teeth on the Easton and Coleman-Deming routes, and routes like the North Ridge and Park Glacier challenge seasoned alpinists. Other popular destinations include Mt. Shuksan, Ruth Mountain, Colfax Peak, and the Twin Sisters Range.

The Mt. Baker Climbing Rangers program conducts important work educating climbers on environmentally and socially responsible climbing practices, maintaining safe climbing access, collecting use and resource data, identifying environmental impacts, building relationships within the community, and enforcing regulations. In conjunction with the Climbing Rangers program, the MBRD project would allow for 3 summer backcountry rangers, 2 summer interns, and 1 part-time winter backcountry ranger to patrol the district's trails, climbing routes, and winter ski/snowshoe routes, all of which benefit our communities as well.

In addition to the above, our recreational user group frequently use the extensive network of trails outlined in the MBRD Non-Motorized Trail Maintenance and Heather Meadows Recreation Area Trail Maintenance proposals. In 2018, Access Fund provided a grant to help support MBRD's Human Waste Pack-Out Initiative on Mt. Baker. Use numbers at trailheads, campsites, and other facilities in the Mt.

Baker area 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 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 MBRD. 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 sincerely thank the MBRD for their collaboration and commitment to maintaining and improving the recreational experience in the Mt. Baker area.

Sincerely,

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