



Kilmer's Wild Olympics Bill to Protect the Environment and Grow Jobs Passes House

Washington, DC – Today, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the Wild Olympics Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers Act ([H.R. 2642](#)). The bill, which was introduced by Representative Derek Kilmer (WA-06) and passed the House with bipartisan support as part of a package of bills called the [Protecting America's Wilderness Act](#), would permanently protect more than 126,000 acres of public land as wilderness and 19 rivers and their major tributaries as Wild and Scenic Rivers. U.S. Senator Patty Murray has introduced a companion bill in the Senate.

“As someone who grew up on the Olympic Peninsula, I learned first-hand that economic growth and environmental protection go hand-in-hand,” **said Representative Kilmer**. “I’m proud to see the House pass this practical, balanced strategy, that will protect the wildest and most pristine places on the Peninsula while ensuring we can keep and grow jobs in our natural resource industries and other sectors. I am grateful for the years-long collaboration to create a proposal that works for folks across the community – including Tribes, sportsmen, conservation groups, timber communities, business leaders, shellfish growers, and everyone in-between.”

“I’m thrilled to see the Wild Olympics Wilderness and Wild Scenic Rivers pass the House this week—an important step in ensuring that future generations can continue to enjoy the Olympic Peninsula’s vital resources and beauty,” **Senator Murray said**. “I applaud Representative Kilmer, local tribes, community leaders, sportsmen, and countless Olympic Peninsula residents for their tireless efforts to get to this point, and I am committed to keeping up the fight in the Senate to ensure this critical legislation becomes law and our prized and pristine wilderness is protected.”

This carefully balanced legislation – which would permanently protect the last remaining acres of ancient and mature forests on the Olympic Peninsula – was developed through years of extensive input from local communities, business, and other stakeholders. In addition to protecting these old growth forests, the bill would provide critical protections for salmon and steelhead habitat, and clean drinking water for local communities, while enhancing opportunities for the outdoor recreation community.

The [proposal](#) also reflects feedback provided by local and regional timber interests to ensure the legislation would have no impact on the harvestable timber base. Furthermore, this legislation will not close, decommission, or otherwise restrict access to any existing forest service roads or trailheads, it will not affect any private property rights, and it will not impact how the Washington Department of Natural Resources’ manages state-owned lands.

“I am proud to support Representative Kilmer’s Wild Olympics Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. This landmark legislation protects rare wilderness that has been treasured for centuries, while ensuring that natural resource jobs will continue to support Washington’s rural communities,” **said Washington Commissioner of Public Lands Hilary Franz** in a [letter](#) to Rep. Kilmer last week.

[More than 800](#) local area-businesses, farms, faith leaders, sportsmen groups, elected officials, conservation, outdoor recreation, and civic groups have [endorsed](#) Wild Olympics, and more than more than 12,000 Peninsula residents have written letters or signed a petition in support.

“It is easy to see and understand the ecological value of the Wild Olympics idea, conserving clean and free flowing rivers, but what is sometimes missed is the economic value that maintaining places like Wild Olympics brings by attracting people to the special outdoors of the Olympic region,” **said State Representative Steve Tharinger, 24th Legislative District**. “I want to thank REI and Patagonia for engaging local community leaders like myself to help design the map, and for recognizing that encouraging people to get out and enjoy the special places in the Wild Olympics proposal brings economic benefits to the communities I represent.”

“My own experience as a CEO and Entrepreneur is that our area’s natural treasures- which provide world-class outdoor recreation, clean water and our area’s high quality of living- are what give us a competitive edge over other regions in attracting and retaining the talented people new companies require,” **said Aberdeen Forest Products Consultant & Former Timber CEO Roy Nott**. “Wilderness and wild and scenic river protections would help protect and grow the local jobs that depend on our ability to compete for talent against other regions, and they would enhance our recruitment efforts as we work to grow new businesses in the future. And as a former Timber Industry Executive, I appreciate that Senator Murray and Rep Kilmer’s final compromise proposal was scaled-back to ensure it would not impact current timber jobs.”

“Senator Murray and Representative Kilmer’s Wild Olympics legislation will help protect our state’s shellfish industry, including hundreds of shell fishing jobs in Hood Canal alone – and many more in related industries like processing, shipping and sales,” **said Bill Taylor, President of Taylor Shellfish Farms**. “It protects the rivers and streams vital to the health of our hatcheries and to the health and restoration of Puget Sound. Our oyster beds depend on the clean, cold, silt-free water that drains off Olympic National Forest into Hood Canal. Protecting these watersheds allows our industry to grow, expand and continue to benefit the economy and ecology of Washington State. We are grateful for their leadership.”

“Conservation for me on the Olympic Peninsula means that the next generation and generations to come can come out here and experience the way that I experience it and the way my grandpa experienced it when he fished out here and that forever we always have this – what is wild and what is the Olympic Peninsula and our culture today,” **said Ashley Nichole Lewis, Bad Ash Fishing Guide Service in Tahola**.

A native of the Olympic Peninsula, Rep. Kilmer has also worked to protect the health of the forests and responsibly increase harvest levels. He helped create the Olympic Forest Collaborative in an effort to bring together members of the timber industry and the

environmental community to ensure that the region's forests are managed in a way that improves economic and environmental health. In 2019, he secured a \$50 million increase for the U.S. Forest Service's non-firefighting activities, including a \$5 million increase for Forest Products. In addition, he authored a provision in the FY2020 appropriations package highlighting the value of collaborative forest management and directing the U.S. Forest Service to prioritize resources to better leverage support from existing Forest Collaboratives to expedite project development and approval of forest treatments developed by Collaboratives.