



November 13, 2018

Bureau of Land Management
Oregon State Office,
P.O. Box 2965
Portland, OR 97208-2965
Attention: Methow Headwaters Mineral Withdrawal

Re: Support the 20-year Methow Headwaters Mineral Withdrawal

Dear BLM Leadership and Secretary Zinke,

The Wild Steelhead Coalition (WSC) is writing in strong support of the recommendation of the U.S. Forest Service for a 20-year mineral withdrawal of 340,079 acres of U.S. Forest Service land in the Methow Headwaters of Washington State. We urge the agency to move quickly to approve the 20-year withdrawal so that these lands are declared off-limits to any new mining activities while Congress works on a permanent solution for protecting the valley's ecological and recreational resources.

Support for the withdrawal is significant and bipartisan. That so many interests have unified in support of the withdrawal signals the importance of protecting the unique values of the Methow Valley, locally and state-wide.

The area attracts more than one million visitors a year, contributing more than \$150 million to the local economy and helping support 1,800 recreation-related jobs in the county. This includes outdoor enthusiasts who visit the Methow to experience exceptional hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing, hiking, mountain biking, snowmobiling, skiing, and climbing, among other active pursuits. Significant investment has been made in the valley that benefits the local economy, including more than \$225 million in public funding for infrastructure supporting water, fish and recreation.

The Wild Steelhead Coalition is a nonprofit organization dedicated to increasing the return of wild steelhead to the waters of the West Coast. Wild steelhead, the Washington state fish, are an important cultural and economic legacy in the Pacific Northwest and have been reduced to a fraction of their historic abundance. Over-harvest, habitat loss, human-constructed barriers to migration, and misguided management strategies have all contributed to the decline—and in some cases extinction—of wild steelhead runs. The Wild Steelhead Coalition believes that, without meaningful changes to policies and the protection of critical habitat such as the Methow Valley, these same factors will continue to reduce wild steelhead populations to the point where they will no longer be sustainable.



We endorse the 20-year withdrawal because wild steelhead populations in the Methow Valley are struggling and are listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. With these iconic fish on the brink of extinction, the protection of their habitat and the purity of their water are paramount. As a result, large-scale mining on Flagg Mountain and in the headwaters of the Methow watershed poses a significant threat to these imperiled fish and will undermine their chance of recovery. Much work is being done by private landowners, tribes, conservation organizations, as well as state and federal agencies to save these fish from the brink of extinction, and it is critical that this work not be undone by large-scale mining in the wild and wonderful Methow Valley.

Without the protection of a mineral withdrawal, the fragile populations of these upper Columbia summer steelhead of the region are gravely threatened by the development of a large-scale mining. A mineral withdrawal of the Methow Headwaters is essential to the valley and the greater region as it safeguards the resources and values that underpin the local economy and allow this rural community to thrive.

We appreciate the work of the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management and Department of Interior in forwarding the Methow Headwaters withdrawal. Thank you for hearing our voices, and supporting the local jobs and economy that are dependent on the protection of this special place. We fully support approving the proposed withdrawal by December 30, 2018, when the current two-year segregation period ends. The withdrawal will ensure these important lands and waters continue to support the people and economy of the Methow Valley for current and future generations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "RICHARD K. SIMMS". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Rich Simms
Founder/Board Member
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