Peninsula Businesses Backing Wild Olympics

Local News

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Posted on : June 22, 2012 at 4:30 am

Westport, WA - Scores of Peninsula business owners are joining local farmers, clergy and elected officials in applauding a measure introduced Thursday in Congress which would designate 126,000 acres of new wilderness in Olympic National Forest.

Supporters say the legislation will protect forests, rivers, salmon, and local water supplies.

The measure would represent the first new wilderness designation in the forest in almost 30 years.

Desiree Dodson, who owns Westport Inn in Grays Harbor County, represents one of the 185 Peninsula businesses supporting the Wild Olympics Bill. Dodson believes it will go a long way towards protecting the forests, rivers and salmon that also attract paying customers.

Our abundant salmon runs and unique ancient forests and clean rivers and our scenery here is just what brings in the tourism, and it's just so important so have that. So, we support the Wild Olympics effort because of that. - Desiree Dodson

Opposition mounted to an earlier version of the bill that would have authorized additions to Olympic National Park. Those provisions were dropped in the measure introduced Thursday by Rep. Norm Dicks and Sen. Patty Murray, both D-Wash.

The bill would protect the Big Quilcene watershed, which Jefferson County Commissioner John Austin says is the main source of drinking water for Port Townsend, which requires about 1 million gallons a day.

"It's a beautiful high Olympic Mountain source of water; and also we have a paper mill, which requires about 10 million gallons of water a day - and this paper mill supports around 300 family-wage jobs."

In addition to being an elected official, Austin also is a grandfather who says he wants his grandchildren to be able to enjoy the same benefits of Washington's wilderness that he can enjoy today. Local farmers and clergy also expressed support for the measure, which would protect 19 local rivers and their tributaries.