

## **Fishing Support Rolls In for Wild Olympics**

### **Local News**

Posted by: David Haviland

Posted on : October 22, 2012 at 7:12 am

Quilcene, WA - Local elected officials, hunting and fishing organizations, and area businesses sent a series of letters to Senator Murray and Congressman Dicks this week supporting their legislation to designate additional wilderness and wild and scenic rivers on the Olympic Peninsula. These more than 70 new endorsements for the Wild Olympics Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers Act brings the support list to nearly 250. "Fishing support for protecting the Peninsula's rivers and streams should come as no surprise," said Al Carter, with the Wild Olympics Coalition. "Commercial and sport fishermen know the direct link between healthy free-flowing streams and rivers and healthy salmon and steelhead stocks. And local businesses, like Ocean Gold — one of the largest fish processing companies on the west coast, employing hundreds in Grays Harbor — depend on the same to provide jobs to our community."

Hunting and angling groups that represent thousands of Washington citizens commended the bill sponsors for their leadership to safeguard the area. Signers included the Washington Wildlife Federation, Northwest Guides and Anglers Association, Washington Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, Washington Council of Trout Unlimited and the Northwest Sportfishing Industry Association. "The Wild Olympics legislation would also protect and expand access for sportsmen," they wrote. "New wilderness areas proposed for Olympic National Forest could more than double the amount of territory available for the early season High Buck Hunt. We appreciate your decision to remove any roads from the proposed wilderness boundaries, ensuring your proposal would not close or affect road or trailhead access." For Carter, a former county commissioner in Grays Harbor, who helped lead the local effort to secure funding for the Humptulips Fish Hatchery, keeping the proposed areas on the Olympic Peninsula undisturbed and healthy hits close to home. "Restoration work downstream is useless if watersheds upstream are being developed. Senator Murray and Congressman Dicks get that, and their bill will help protect our clean drinking water and the salmon so many depend on for their livelihoods." BACKGROUND The conservation measure will permanently protect more than 126,000 acres of wilderness in the Olympic National Forest and designate 19 rivers and seven tributaries ---totaling 464 miles — as Wild and Scenic. The Wild Olympics Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (S. 3329/H.R. 5995), was introduced by Senator Patty Murray and Congressman Norm Dicks on June 21, 2012. If passed, the bill would protect the first new wilderness on Olympic National Forest in nearly 30 years and mark the first-ever Wild and Scenic River designations on the Peninsula. The measure has been the subject of three years of discussion and public input, and as a result of this unprecedented community involvement, the sponsors have made numerous and significant changes to the legislation including the removal of the Parks addition component originally included in the campaign's proposal. The final proposal does not include or close any roads, and all road and trailhead access and hunting and fishing access is protected. The compromises ensured the final proposal will not cost any timber jobs — earning the the backing of Port Angeles Timber Company Merrill and Ring. Cosmo Specialty Fibers issued a statement after the park additions were dropped praising the inclusive process and stating that with the proposal reduced, their own fiber interests were not affected. A 2012 bipartisan poll found overwhelming support for the Wild Olympics proposal among likely voters in

Washington's 6th Congressional District. Nearly two out of three (64 percent) likely voters support the Wild Olympics plan proposed by Rep. Dicks and Sen. Murray. Only 15 percent are opposed. On the Peninsula, support was nearly 2-1, with 50% supporting, and only 28% opposed. For a complete supporter list visit <http://www.wildolympics.org/supporters/endorsements>