

Endorsement of the Wild Olympics Campaign

WHEREAS, The Wild Olympics Campaign began in 2008 with the objective of providing important additional protection to the watersheds on the Olympic Peninsula. There are 10 conservation groups working on the campaign and they include the conservation committee of the Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society (OPAS). The Campaign includes three main components: (1) Designation of the upper stretches of the rivers flowing out of the Olympic National Park as Wild and Scenic Rivers; (2) Wilderness Designation for a number of important areas adjacent to the Olympic National Park; and (3) Willing Seller National Park Preserve additions which would only occur if timber companies or other private owners desired to sell their land and the Park was successful in bidding for the lands. All areas identified in the campaign are very important for protecting the long term health of the Olympic Peninsula river systems; and

WHEREAS, OPAS is committed to protecting critical bird habitat and protecting the ecological integrity of watersheds on the Olympic Peninsula. While development has slowed in recent years due to the economic conditions, the economy will improve in the future and the proposed program will provide long term protection for the watersheds on the Olympic Peninsula; and

WHEREAS, The watersheds which will have improved protection are habitats for harlequin ducks, common mergansers, dippers and many species which thrive in the lands adjacent to our Olympic Peninsula rivers. These watersheds are not only important to birds, but are also critical to the salmonid fishes that migrate and reproduce in these rivers. We are spending millions on salmon restoration. It is much more cost effective to provide habitat protection to these watersheds than to work to repair habitat loss in the future. Many of these rivers provide drinking water to communities as well as clean water to down-stream industries such as shell fish production. Protection of the watersheds will help to ensure the ecological diversity of these waters and protect forest areas adjacent to the rivers and thus contribute to reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

THEREFORE, BE IT

RESOLVED, that Washington State Audubon recognizes and supports protection for all components of the Wild Olympics Campaign; Wilderness, Wild and Scenic Rivers, and National Park Preserve additions; and be it further

RESOLVED, that Washington State Audubon endorse the Wild Olympics Campaign and draft letters of support to sponsoring Federal legislators; and be it further

RESOLVED, that if Federal legislation is proposed for the Wild Olympics Campaign that Washington State Audubon supports this legislation.