

[Chelan, Okanogan, Skagit, Whatcom, Snohomish logos]

March 13, 2023

Mr. Don Striker, Superintendent
North Cascades National Park Service Complex
810 State Route 20
Sedro-Woolley, WA 98284

RE: Cooperating Agency Status for 2022 North Cascades Ecosystem Grizzly Bear Restoration Plan/Environmental Impact Statement

Dear Mr. Striker:

[Chelan County] or [The undersigned Counties] request Cooperating Agency status as you prepare the 2022 North Cascades Ecosystem Grizzly Bear Restoration Plan/Environmental Impact Statement. We ask for Cooperating Agency status as quickly as possible given the accelerated timeline for EIS development outlined in the Notice of Intent (NOI). As Counties, we have special expertise, as outlined in NEPA, with respect to potential impacts analyzed in an EIS.

NEPA, in its implementing regulations, requires that a Federal agency “cooperate with State and local agencies to the fullest extent possible to reduce duplication between NEPA and State and local requirements” by engaging in joint planning processes, environmental research and studies, public hearings, and joint environmental assessments. More broadly, NEPA provides that it is the “continuing policy of the Federal Government, in cooperation with State and local governments, and other concerned public and private organizations...to create and maintain conditions under which man and nature can exist in productive harmony, and fulfill the social, economic, and other requirements of present and future generations of Americans.”

The NOI identified several areas of investigation where Counties are particularly suited to provide special expertise, as follows:

- *Expected impacts from implementation of grizzly bear restoration actions include potential environmental impacts on wildlife and fish (including grizzly bears), wilderness, visitor*

use and recreational experience, public and employee safety, socioeconomics, and ethnographic resources.

- *Potential effects that the alternatives could have on other aspects of the human environment, including ecological, aesthetic, historic, cultural, economic, social, environmental justice, or health effects;*
- *Other information relevant to grizzly bear restoration and its impacts on the human environment.*

We understand that it may be necessary to develop an MOU or Statement of Principles to memorialize the parameters of our engagement as Cooperating Agencies, and we will provide staff and resources towards that effort.

We look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

[County/ies signatures]

CC: USFWS
USFS