

JAIME HERRERA BEUTLER
3RD DISTRICT, SOUTHWEST WASHINGTON

COMMITTEE ON
TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE
VICE CHAIR, SUBCOMMITTEE ON
WATER RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT

COMMITTEE ON
SMALL BUSINESS



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1602

December 4, 2012

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□ GENERAL O.O. HOWARD HOUSE
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Janine Clayton, Forest Supervisor
Gifford Pinchot National Forest
10600 NE 51st Circle
Vancouver, WA 98682

Dear Ms. Clayton,

Please accept my thanks for hosting the second annual Mount St. Helens Community Meeting. I appreciated being able to attend and learn about the many facets of work that are being accomplished at the Monument. As you know, protecting the Monument and expanding access to it for the public is very personal to me. In keeping with this sentiment, there are several points I would like to address now that I have had an opportunity to review the information from the meeting, and additional comments I have received from the people of my district.

To begin, let me reiterate that the work undertaken by the Congressional delegation, the Citizen Advisory Committee, and the public over the course of a year and a half has made clear the desires our community has for the future of Mt. St. Helens. You have been tasked through this process with ensuring that recommendations for fostering recreation, economic development, and conservation are carried out in a manner that most benefits the people who live, work and recreate in the shadow of the Monument. As you have noted, this can only happen with continued public support, and I commend you for the community partnerships that have been developed over the course of the last three years. It is not often that federal agencies respond as quickly as the USFS has since the recommendations were put forth.

I will note that there is much work that remains to be accomplished, and although this list is non-comprehensive, I would like to raise several points that need attention and emphasis:

- Monument Comprehensive Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement (CMP/EIS): it has come to my notice that Class 1 access restrictions are being applied to thousands of acres that were never included in the CMP/EIS. Subsequently, land that was not included in the CMP/EIS is now classified as a restricted area which significantly limits public access. If this information is correct, I would appreciate being informed of

the authority that was used to reclassify this area, and any options available to bring these areas back into compliance with the CMP/EIS.

- Overnight Accommodations/Food Services: addressed by the Advisory Committee, this continues to be a strong need at the Monument.
- Community Partnerships: I commend you for the partnerships that have been formed and I urge you to continue to put this model into effect. I would also encourage you to closely look at the NEPA process in order to begin implementing new exclusions or broad Environmental Assessments for projects that are being carried out by these partners to maintain and repair existing properties and trailheads.
- Additional Permits/Activities: although progress has been made, particularly in this last year, more must be done to expand special use permits and recreational access into the Monument.

Finally, it has been requested that I commission a study to determine if creating a National Park at Mount St. Helens would be our best option to further the goals above. My office has queried many stakeholders and community members, and I have received a resounding response that they wish for continued USFS management of the Monument. The primary concerns that have been received by my office include the denial of access for the hunting community, the Class 1 Air Shed restrictions that would be faced by our timber and business communities, the limitations of access for the recreating community that national park status would bring, and the cost of such a study in this difficult budgetary environment. In light of these concerns, I have determined that I will not support the commission of such a study. It is my intention to continue to work with the USFS to ensure that the Forest Service continues on its trajectory of carrying out the Committee recommendations, and the action points previously discussed, in order to make them reality.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Jaime Herrera Beutler
Member of Congress

cc: Tom Mulder
Monument Manager
MSHNVM