

Resolution #18
Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs

MOUNT ST. HELENS CONSERVATION

Submitted by: Susan Saul

Background: Mount St. Helens National Monument is threatened by inadequate funding and increasing development pressures.

Senators Murray and Cantwell and Representatives Baird and Dicks formed the Mount St. Helens Advisory Committee last year to develop a long-term vision for the 110,000-acre Mount St. Helens National Monument. The Committee, which was weighted towards tourism and development interests, held numerous public meetings and developed recommendations for the volcano's future.

Their recommendations included (1) retain U.S. Forest Service control of the monument, but create a new administrative unit with line-item funding in the federal budget, (2) increase recreation, including camping and fishing within the designated research area, (3) refurbish infrastructure, including re-opening the Coldwater Ridge Visitor Center, (4) properly fund maintenance of trails, roads and visitor centers, (5) extend State Route 504 to connect with U.S. Highway 12 near Morton, (6) the designated research area should be protected to allow biological and ecological processes, (7) expand science funding, better emphasize public education and provide a "science experience" for visitors, (8) develop destination resorts, including national park-style lodges, in and around the monument. The internal inconsistency and lack of a vision statement reflect the Committee's inability to reach consensus on questions of conservation vs. development.

Resolution: The FWOC supports a long-term vision for the Mount St. Helens National Monument that will forever protect the unique geologic and ecologic heritage of Mount St. Helens while also serving as a premier international scientific resource and learning laboratory for scientists, educators and visitors. The FWOC believes that Visitor use and enjoyment of the Monument's resources should be compatible with its primary conservation and scientific mission. The FWOC supports proper funding of the Mount St. Helens National Monument to maintain current roads, trails and visitor facilities, but it opposes the construction of any new roads or destination resorts within the monument boundaries.

The FWOC opposes the recommendations to expand high impact recreational development, including campgrounds and motorized use. Recreational fishing should not be allowed in Spirit Lake, which is the place for scientific research into the recovery of aquatic ecosystems.

The FWOC supports sustainable management of low impact, non-motorized recreation, but opposes opening the Monument to off-road vehicles or expanded snowmobiling.

The FWOC supports protecting the Restricted Area for unimpeded recovery, maintaining geological and ecological processes and the integrity of natural features.

The FWOC opposes continuation of the current advisory committee. If any future advisory committee is appointed, it should have a transparent process for committee member selection and it needs to have at least one representative from the conservation community.

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