



Washington State Senate

Senator Linda Evans Parlette

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July 23, 2012

The Honorable Senator Maria Cantwell
511 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

RE: North Cascades National Park—Stehekin Valley Road to Cottonwood Camp

Dear Senator Cantwell,

For the second time, the House of Representatives recently passed legislation addressing the restoration of vehicular access into the North Cascades National Park from Stehekin, Washington—known locally as the “Road to Cottonwood.” It has been nearly nine years since a historic flooding event in the Stehekin River washed out two sections of the primitive road eliminating this recreational access corridor to North Cascades National Park from Eastern Washington.

Former US Senator and Washington State Governor Dan Evans, who sponsored the 1998 Washington Wilderness Act, has clearly stated on the record that the legislative intent of the Act was to not only preserve, but also to guarantee access to, this pristine part of our state. It was never intended to be a barrier to the upper reaches of the North Cascade National Park from the Stehekin area. Allowing the National Park Service to rebuild and relocate the upper Stehekin Valley Road on higher ground on the old settler's road clearly enhances this access that Governor Evans wanted to guarantee.

Senator Cantwell, I was so pleased that in July 2010, you were willing to put hiking boots on to view first hand, that under current conditions, only the most intrepid hikers with a backpack and tent, can now access “Cascade Pass” from the Stehekin Valley. I implore you to please help get the relocation of the upper Stehekin Valley Road issue out of the “political quicksand” and into physical reality. Your leadership and commitment is desperately needed.

How much longer do those living in Eastern Washington need to wait for Congress to restore their access to this national park? The time to act is now. The closure of this primitive road has restricted access for the old and young alike to witness the grandeur of this special place. Nine years is long enough; I, and many others, would like to do an 18-mile day hike from Cottonwood Camp to Cascade Pass and back. As Governor Evans said, if we want people to appreciate the wilderness, they have to be able to access it—that means all ages.

I appreciate your continued leadership on this important issue to my district. As always, I stand ready to help.

Respectfully,

LINDA EVANS PARLETTE
Washington State Senator
12th Legislative District

CC: U.S. Senator Patty Murray
U.S. Senator Lisa Murkowski
Congressman Doc Hastings
Congressman Dave Reichert
Congressman Norm Dicks
Governor Dan Evans
Chelan County Commissioners
Jim Wickwire