



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Congress Designates Mountains to Sound Greenway as National Heritage Area**  
*National recognition conserves the Greenway for future generations*

SEATTLE, WA – Today, a coordinated eight-year effort from local nonprofits, citizens, businesses, politicians and government agencies came to fruition when the Mountains to Sound Greenway was designated as a National Heritage Area (NHA) by Congress. This legislation was backed by bipartisan political support from Senators Maria Cantwell and Patty Murray, U.S. Representatives Adam Smith, Suzan DelBene, Pramila Jayapal, Kim Schrier, and former U.S. Representative Dave Reichert.

The Mountains to Sound Greenway is supported by The Greenway Trust, a Washington state-based nonprofit, and encompasses a dynamic 1.5-million-acre landscape that stretches from Ellensburg to Seattle. It connects urban centers, vast forests, meadow-strewn mountain peaks, small farms and rural communities. Abundant trails, parks and public lands make the Greenway a place everyone can experience.

“NHA designation is an opportunity for communities of the Greenway to preserve what is most important amid the ongoing growth and development in our region,” said Jon Hoekstra, executive director of Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust. “The Greenway’s complex history and cultural diversity tell important stories that current and future generations can learn from and embrace together.”

The NHA designation encourages public-private partnerships to continue its work protecting lands and adding recreational trails in the Greenway. The designation also encourages interagency collaboration on trails for maintenance and signage and ecological restoration across multiple jurisdictions and watersheds. The designation will highlight the people and stories of this region through interpretation plans and promote opportunities for residents and visitors to enjoy and support the Greenway.

“Washington state’s recreation economy generates \$26 billion in annual spending and supports more than 200,000 direct jobs,” Senator Cantwell said. “Continuing to protect our most scenic and historic landscapes, like the Mountains to Sound Greenway, will help boost tourism and preserve our natural landscape for future generations.”

The Mountains to Sound Greenway is the newest NHA to be named by Congress. It is the first NHA designated in the Pacific Northwest, along with the new Maritime Washington NHA. Through public-private partnerships, NHAs support historic preservation, natural resource conservation, recreation, heritage tourism and educational projects. Leveraging funds and long-term support for projects, these partnerships foster pride of place and an enduring stewardship ethic.

“The Mountains to Sound Greenway is a national treasure,” former Rep. Reichert said. “With its vibrant mix of small towns, working farms, lush forests and rugged mountains, it’s a great representation of the diverse geography of our region. Preserving this balance for our region’s future is at the heart of this bill that I introduced in 2013 with Congressman Adam Smith. I have believed in this legislation from the very beginning and was pleased to see it pass the House in May of 2018. I am proud that it has now passed both chambers and with the President’s signature marking this historic designation for the Greenway’s future. We want people from across the state to enjoy all that the Greenway has to offer. It’s our collective outdoor space where we can work, live and play.”

“With this legislation, the Mountains to Sound Greenway will become the first National Heritage Area designated in the Pacific Northwest,” said Rep. Adam Smith. “The Greenway plays a vital role in preserving our natural resources and supporting economic development through opportunities for outdoor recreation. I thank Senator Cantwell for her leadership in the Senate, the Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust for their advocacy, and the countless community members that made it possible for us to join together in preserving our wilderness and history for future generations.”

An NHA is a place where natural, historical and cultural resources are interconnected in a cohesive landscape that promotes community-led conservation and development. NHAs do not increase federal regulation over lands. Instead, the designation provides a framework for local citizens to preserve, share and promote their heritage, with full local control. Designation will not affect water, hunting, fishing or tribal treaty rights.

### **About Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust**

The Mountains to Sound Greenway is the 1.5-million-acre landscape connecting Puget Sound and central Washington. The Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust leads and inspires action to conserve and enhance the Greenway, ensuring a long-term balance between people and nature. Founded in 1991, the Greenway Trust works to promote public land acquisitions, connect a continuous regional trail system, preserve rural lifestyles, teach people of all ages about forests and wildlife, and mobilize thousands of volunteers to care for the landscape.

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### **Quotes from Our Political Leaders About National Heritage Area Designation**

“This designation will not only protect one of Washington state’s iconic stretches and ensure its preservation for years to come, but will also support local tourism and economic development that will help communities from Seattle to Ellensburg continue to thrive—a win-win for our state’s economy and environment. I’m glad to see this effort finally cross the finish line and will continue working to protect even more of our state’s public lands and natural resources.” – Sen. Patty Murray

“Designating the Mountains to Sound Greenway as a National Heritage Area is an exciting step towards preserving and maintaining one of Washington’s most treasured sites. Anyone who has ever visited the Greenway has experienced its breathtaking beauty and recreational activities. As someone who knows firsthand all that the Greenway offers, including hiking, skiing and biking, I couldn’t be more thrilled by this important milestone for one of our region’s most vital landscapes.” – Rep. Suzan DelBene

“Our community is healthier and our local environment is stronger because of the Mountains to Sound (MTS) Greenway. The MTS Greenway not only creates opportunities for families like mine to get outside. It is also an important preservation of vital green space and wildlife corridors within our region. An NHA designation means that local residents and visitors will be able to enjoy the MTS Greenway for years to come. I wish every state had an MTS Greenway!” – Rep. Kim Schrier