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Washington's National Park Fund to Support More than \$1 Million in Projects throughout Mount Rainier, North Cascades and Olympic National Parks in 2017

Funds allocated help to offset gaps in government support for the national parks service

Seattle - Washington's National Park Fund (WNPF), the official philanthropic partner for Mount Rainier, North Cascades and Olympic National Parks, announced its collection of 2017 priority projects aimed at furthering science and research, visitor experiences, volunteerism and stewardship, and youth and family programs across the state's 1,660,000 acres of national parks. Selected in collaboration with park superintendents, the projects total more than \$1 million and, without the support of WNPF, would likely go unfunded.

Founded in 1993 and supported through a combination of private donors, foundations, events, corporate support, and a statewide license plate program, WNPF empowers supporters with the ability to allocate funds to a specific park, and one of that park's top eight projects. In 2016, WNPF raised more than \$650,000 for projects that included preservation of a search and rescue cabin at Mount Rainier, the citizen-scientist Cascade Butterfly Project at North Cascade, and the youth program "Adventures in your Big Back Yard" at Olympic.

For 2017, "Preservation with a Purpose" is a key theme, with projects ranging from sustainable trail and camping management along the Pacific Crest Trail at North Cascades National Park, investments into equipment for search and rescue staff at Olympic National Park, and work to reduce and eliminate human-wildlife conflicts at Mount Rainier National Park. All efforts aim to support the parks into the next 100 years.

"We in Washington have the wonderful gift of three unique national parks to steward, celebrate and protect," said Laurie Ward, executive director, Washington's National Park Fund. "The national parks system is reporting a \$12 billion backlog of maintenance projects. In Washington alone, the number is more than \$440 million. With an increase in the number of visitors across Mount Rainier, North Cascades and Olympic National Parks, private investment is critical to preserve our national resources."

Being government entities, the national parks are unable to fundraise individually in support of projects, making friends groups like WNPF critical to expanding access and functions of our national parks. Each year superintendents from Mount Rainier, North Cascades and Olympic National Parks submit projects directly to the fund for support.

“The funding given by Washington's National Park Fund is critical for us,” said Randy King, superintendent, Mount Rainier National Park. “Rangers and volunteers are safer, scientific research is being conducted, trails are maintained, volunteer programs are able to manage thousands of participants, and children from around these parks are visiting them for the first time. If not for Washington's National Park Fund, these things wouldn't be possible.”

To learn about all the 2017 funding priorities and for ways to get involved, including the upcoming annual Spring Dinner and Auction, visit www.wnpf.org.

About Washington's National Parks Fund

Washington's National Park Fund (WNPF) is the official philanthropic partner of Mount Rainier, North Cascades, and Olympic National Parks, which span more than 1.6 million acres of the Evergreen state. Annually, WNPF allocates monies to more than 75 otherwise unfunded projects with the goal of deepening the public's love for, understanding of, and experiences in Washington's National Parks. Get involved at <http://wnpf.org>.

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