

April 3, 2007

The Honorable Nick J. Rahall II
Chairman, Committee on Natural Resources
US House of Representatives
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Don Young
Ranking Member, Committee on Natural Resources
US House of Representatives
1329 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: HR 1285 Snoqualmie Pass Land Conveyance Act

Dear Chairman Rahall and Ranking Member Young,

We are writing to convey our strong support of HR 1285, the Snoqualmie Pass Land Conveyance Act. This legislation is critical for a new station for Fire District #51 (Snoqualmie Pass Fire and Rescue or SPFR).

There are currently 24 dedicated volunteer fire fighter/EMTs serving the Snoqualmie Pass community of 350 full-time residents and up to 20,000 people during the ski season. SPFR protects Interstate 90 in both directions of Snoqualmie Pass, an area prone to rock slides and avalanches. SPFR currently averages over 300 calls a year with about a 10 percent annual increase in call volume.

Right now, SPFR's fire station sits on land that is leased by the U.S. Forest Service. The current fire station is in desperate need of replacement. It was originally built in the 1930s as a maintenance shed for the Washington State Department of Transportation. The existing building has numerous deficiencies, including a non-compliant electric system, inadequate apparatus bays, no smoke alarm or sprinkler system, no decontamination area, and other shortcomings.

Last year, the Forest Service contacted SPFR to ask if the Fire Department would be interested in purchasing the land. However, SPFR does not have the resources to purchase land for a new fire station, so this legislation would transfer the parcel of land owned by the Forest Service to SPFR.

The parcel of land that would be conveyed under this legislation is more centrally located and allows better access to Interstate 90 and will significantly improve response times. The new location will also provide a dedicated helipad for Airlift Northwest. The Snoqualmie Pass Land Conveyance Act would be a huge jump start to a very important project for an under-funded fire department serving a large population (essentially everyone traveling over Snoqualmie Pass on Interstate-90).

Please let us know if there is anything we can do to see that this legislation is enacted. Thank you for your service.

Sincerely,

Bill Hinkle
WA State Representative
13th Legislative District

Janea' Holmquist
WA State Senator
13th Legislative District

Judy Warnick
WA State Representative
13th Legislative District

Cc: Honorable Patty Murray
Honorable Maria Cantwell
Honorable Doc Hastings
Honorable Dave Reichert
Honorable Cathy McMorris Rogers