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## **Skykomish Valley Economic Development, Recreation and Natural Resource Conservation Initiative King County, Washington 2014**

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**Objective:** *To revitalize the local community economy, increase recreation opportunities, and conserve the natural resources in the Skykomish Valley.*

**Geography:** The Skykomish Valley is a key part of the Highway 2 Corridor which connects the urban areas of Everett on Puget Sound to the agriculture center of Wenatchee on the Columbia River. Its scenic and recreational values have been recognized and enhanced by the designation of the Stevens Pass National Scenic Byway. A large portion of the valley is part of the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest. The King County portion of the valley includes Stevens Pass and the communities of Skykomish, Baring, Grotto and Scenic, which lie along this historic travel corridor.

### **King County Council Motion**

King County Council Members Kathy Lambert and Rod Dembowski have introduced a motion to highlight the vision for the valley and the town of Skykomish, reaffirm the County's commitment to the vitality of the valley, its residents and natural resources, and collaborate with numerous partners who share that vision. The motion focuses on three interconnected activities.

#### **1. Economic Development**

Re-energize the valley's economy by capitalizing on its historic character and connection to the Great Northern Railroad, proximity to U.S. Highway 2, and as a gateway to wild and spectacular recreational lands. Maintain working forests to retain timber related jobs and avoid conversion of forest lands to non-forest uses.

- **Historic Preservation & Community Revitalization**

The town of Skykomish has served as a hub of railroad activity for over 120 years. The community is working to revitalize the town center, solidify its historic character as the Great Northern Town, and encourage new business growth. The motion incorporates the town's vision. An example of this work is the restoration of the historic Skykomish Hotel. This could include relocating some Forest Service public contact functions to this historic location.

#### **2. Recreation**

Enhance the recreation-based economy with a focus on hiking, mountain climbing, bicycling, fishing, hunting, river rafting, skiing, environmental and historic education, and similar activities related to the natural and historic resources of the valley.

- **New Recreation Development**

We can increase outdoor recreation opportunities for hiking, bicycle and cross-country ski trails, boating access and other activities, and to provide interpretive sites on suitable national

forest lands. We are working with our partners to develop and implement a King County-Forest Service Cooperative Agreement to enable improved collaboration. Examples of potential projects include developing an interpretive overlook on Maloney Rock, building trails from the town center to Maloney Rock and Sobieski Mountain for mountain bikers and hikers. Other projects could include reopening the Deception Falls picnic area and developing river access points such as at Foss River and at the town center.

### 3. Natural Resource Conservation

Through partnership, protect key lands in the Skykomish valley, including public acquisition and protection of old-growth forest and river frontage; fish and wildlife habitat, especially for endangered species; existing roadless areas; scenic vistas; and outdoor recreation opportunities.

- **Land Conservation**

King County focus would be on conserving selected parcels on key reaches of the rivers near the town of Skykomish to protect water quality, salmon spawning habitat and riparian zone vegetation, while providing public access to rivers for high quality recreation activities. This could include acquisitions on the Foss, South Fork Skykomish, Beckler, and Miller Rivers. King County will support preservation of the remaining old growth forest in the Skykomish Valley.

The Forest Service focus would be on acquiring selected inholdings in the valley to conserve important scenic views, watersheds, wildlife habitat, existing roadless areas, and rivers. Key pieces of threatened mature and old growth forest include Maloney Creek which overlooks the town of Skykomish, Windy Ridge, a pristine section of land adjacent to the H.M. Jackson Wilderness near Stevens Pass, and rugged Grotto Mountain.

### Opportunities for Collaboration

Forterra and King County have fostered collaboration to achieve the objectives of the Skykomish Valley Initiative. In addition to the Town of Skykomish, partners include the Stevens Pass Greenway, Washington Trails Association, Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance, Skykomish Environmental Institute, and Alpine Lakes Protection Society.

