

Voice of the Wild Olympics

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Shameless Congressional Raid On National Park System Foiled by Conservationists' Efforts

H.R. 260: Parks Closure Bill Withdrawn

by Norm Winn

Earlier this year Representatives James Hansen (R-Utah), Chairman of the Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Lands, introduced a bill, HR 260, captioned the "National Park System Reform Act." This alleged "reform" bill was to set up a Parks Closure Commission to review the entire National Park System and recommend park units for elimination. Representative Hansen stated, "The question is not whether to close some parks, but how to accomplish this end." Representative Don Young (A-Alaska) stated, "I look forward to your support as we attempt to return one of the country's greatest assets, its land, to local control." Although the bill exempted national parks from scrutiny by the Parks Closure Commission, other units, including many in the State of Washington, would have been subject to review and possible elimination from the National Park System. After vigorous debate, the bill was defeated on the House floor. Washington representatives Rick White and Norm Dicks opposed the measure; the remainder of the Washington House of Representative delegation supported the measure.

A mere few hours after this bill was defeated, Representative Hansen attached the measure to the House Budget Reconciliation Act, on the grounds that it was actually a spending measure to reduce federal expenditures. Since the Budget Reconciliation Act is not subject to debate on the floor, the effect would have been to pass HR 260 as part of the budget process, despite the fact that it had just been defeated on its merits on the House floor.

OPA wrote a strongly worded letter to Representatives White and Dicks complaining about this procedure and asking their further support in having the bill deleted from the Budget Reconciliation Act. As a result of letters from OPA and other conservation groups, and other contacts, Representative White signed a letter urging Speaker Gingrich to strip the "Parks Closure Bill" from the Budget Reconciliation Act. Speaker Gingrich agreed with the position taken by Representative White and many other House members, that the procedure used was a violation of the legislative process and subverted the will of the House in attempting to pass legislation that had been overwhelmingly defeated on the House floor. Representative White deserves our thanks for his efforts on this legislative measure.

Clearcutting of Old Growth to Resume on Olympic National Forest

by Alex Bradley, Quilcene Ancient Forest Coalition

Less than a year after the President's Forest Plan established Late Successional Reserves to protect remaining old growth on the Olympic National Forest, the Forest Service will award two timber sales that will clearcut more than 150 acres of old growth in the Quilcene District. The Rocky sale is located in the Dosewallips watershed, and Caraco Cat is in the Dungeness.

This resumption of old growth logging is the result of so-called salvage legislation promoted by Representative Norm Dicks and Senator Slade Gorton. The legislation directs a number of national forests to award old timber sales that, in the past, had been withdrawn for environmental reasons.

Logging of the two sales on the Olympic effectively destroys the credibility of the President's Plan. The 6.6 million board feet of 120 to 200+ year old trees will be clearcut according to out-dated standards, on land designated as Key Watersheds for the protection of salmon and as critical habitat for northern spotted owls and marbled murrelets.

Although the legislation so far has spared old growth used for nesting by marbled murrelets, the Forest Service is not allowed to survey these sales to determine whether they include areas used for nesting. The sale units have been surveyed for owls and are considered valuable owl foraging habitat.

For more information on the Quilcene timber sales, contact: Alex Bradley, Quilcene Ancient Forest Coalition, P.O. Box 1813, Port Townsend, WA 98368.

Elwha Ecosystem Restoration: Marginal Progress

Marginal progress has been made on Elwha restoration, but important issues remain to be resolved.

Park Service Prefers Dam Removal, Supports Low-Cost Alternative

The National Park Service appears to be moving to implement the Secretary's Report for restoration of the Elwha River ecosystem. We understand that the vast majority of the public comments received by the Park Service favor dam removal. For this and other reasons, the National Park Service in July, 1995, released a final environmental impact statement for Elwha restoration that describes the "Preferred Alternative" as a strategy that includes removal of both the Elwha and Glines Canyon dams.

Another significant development was for the Park Service to eliminate high-cost alternatives that relied on transporting coarse sediment by truck to a terrestrial site. This means that the most expensive options for dam removal have been dropped.

Meanwhile, the Congressional appropriations committees have approved a Conference Report for the appropriations bill for Fiscal Year 1996 for the Department of Interior and related agencies. The Conference Report includes a provision for the appropriations bill that provides for appropriations for dam acquisition, but no money for dam removal.

Conference Committee Off On Strange Tangent

The Conference Committee report indicates that a crucial player in the debate -- the Conference Committee itself -- remains unconvinced that dam removal is a realistic options for implementation of the Elwha Restoration Act. A disturbing development is the committee's explanation of the dam acquisition funding provision.

"Under the Elwha Act, the Secretary is authorized to study the benefits of the removal of both

dams, and to assess the costs of such a removal to restore fish runs in the Elwha River. The managers continue to be disturbed greatly by the early projections from the Administration of costs that range from \$80-300 million for dam removal. Due to the lack of available funds, the managers strongly discourage the Administration and those parties supporting dam removal from continuing to support such a policy. Instead, the managers encourage interested parties to pursue other, less costly alternatives to achieve fish restoration. The managers urge parties interested in the Elwha Act to work to find, within the next year, a more fiscally responsible and achievable solution to fishery restoration in lieu of dam removal. If no conclusion can be reached on this issue, the appropriations committees, working with the authorizing committees, will be forced to work to find a legislative solution to the problem."

Intervenors' Two-Pronged Strategy

The OPA Board of Trustees take this challenge very seriously, but have not abandoned their efforts to advocate dam removal. Neither have other intervenors. Instead, they have adopted a two-prong strategy: to work with the Park Service and others to shrink the costs, and to reaffirm county and regional support for dam removal.

The next opportunity for public input will follow release of the Phase II Draft EIS. This document, known as the "Implementation EIS", assumes dam removal and considers various alternative to mitigate adverse impacts. The Park Service is expected to release the Implementation EIS late in December, 1995.

Mammals of the Olympic National Park and Vicinity

by Victor B. Scheffer. Society for Northwestern Vertebrate Biology. 133 pages. \$15.

Reviewed by Tim McNulty

At a recent gathering marking the retirement of Olympic National Park wildlife biologist Bruce Moorhead, his colleague Doug Houston praised him for his meticulous record-keeping.

"Unlike your personal or financial records," Houston reminded the audience, "biological records *increase* in value over time."

For those researching the historical distribution of wildlife on the Olympic Peninsula, no record has been more important than *The Mammals of the Olympic National Park*, the unpublished 1949 manuscript of noted wildlife biologist Victor Scheffer.

Beginning in the 1930s, Scheffer carefully documented the mammals of the Olympics. Checking historical game records, interviewing countless trappers and sport hunters, and conducting extensive field research, he compiled comprehensive species accounts for the 71 mammals in the Olympics. His report included records for sea mammals (for which he is best known) as well as introduced species such as the mountain goat.

For years, scientists and others interested in Olympic wildlife had to consult Scheffer's manuscript in the Olympic National Park library. Now, thanks to the Society for Northwestern Vertebrate Biology, it is available as the second book in the Society's Northwest Fauna series. Along with historical population estimates, tables, and an extensive bibliography, the book includes fascinating personal accounts and stories as well as 45 black and white photographs. More importantly, it is as clear and as well written as Scheffer's popular natural history books.

Unfortunately, you won't find this book in bookstores. To order, send \$18 (which covers tax and shipping) to:

Janet Jones, Treasurer
Society for Northwestern Vertebrate Biology

4820 Yelm Highway SE, Suite B-175
Olympia, WA 98503

Long Day's Ridge Song

by Tim McNulty

Dropping down
through burnt September meadows
to the cool shade of hemlocks,
the dry piney side hills
that send me scrambling through the duff.
Loose twigs and needles spindle around
and not a trickle or seep to be found.

Strange mushrooms like
little headless hats poking up.
Bears got all the huckleberries;
salal hasn't bloomed.
Last night's rice
from the bottom of the pot,
clear down from the top of Mount Scott--

two or three hours and more ...
the Elwha still far below.
Thinking of drinking,
and drinking, and drinking,
and how I miss the water so.

The Mountaineers' Environmental Issues Course

The Mountaineers is offering a Northwest Environmental Issues Course to educate citizens about current conflicts in conservation. Topics include wildlife, forestry, and salmon fisheries, and other subjects. The nine session course will begin Monday, January 22, 1996.

The Mountaineers is a non-profit organization promoting outdoor recreation and conservation.

For course information, contact The Mountaineers at 284-8484. Student rates are available.

Managing Olympic's Wilderness

by Tim McNulty

In 1988, Congress designated as wilderness more than 95 percent of Olympic National Park, some 876,699 acres of mountains, forests, rivers, and coast. Since then, the National Park Service has been developing a plan for managing this area to insure that its pristine wilderness character is retained. At long last the park's Wilderness Management Plan is now nearing its final phase. The Park Service will be seeking public comment sometime next year (1996). Anyone committed to the protection of Olympic's pristine wilderness character should become involved with this planning process.

The absence of a wilderness management plan in the years since passage of the Washington Parks Wilderness Act has resulted in human-caused impacts affecting Olympic's wilderness. Organized horsemen's groups have

opened primitive way trails to stock use, in some instances cutting green trees to widen trail corridors; and inappropriately located horse camps have caused considerable damage to fragile subalpine meadows. This past summer alone, volunteer horse groups opened the Aurora Ridge and South Dodger Point trails to stock use even though both were classed as primitive trails.

As population surrounding the park increases, additional pressures will be placed on Olympic's wilderness by a number of user groups. It's time for park managers to determine which activities are appropriate for specific backcountry areas, and to give area managers clear guidance in the form of a wilderness management plan.

Simply stated, the wilderness management plan will describe the desired conditions of the wilderness and will propose management guidelines for meeting those conditions. Five management zones have been proposed, from day use areas, which will receive the greatest use (and consequently have the most development: trails, handrails, and such), to pristine trailless areas where evidence of human use is absent. Conflicts are most likely to arise over designation of the intervening zones: the transition, semi-primitive, and primitive areas along trail corridors. The plan will regulate levels of trail use, camping, stock use, and management activities appropriate for each of these areas. Naturally, a valley forest can handle greater levels of use than a subalpine lake or an alpine ridge. Developing appropriate standards of use for these zones -- and monitoring impacts to insure objectives are being met -- are central to the success of the plan.

Mountain Goat EIS Update

by Randall Payne

The National Park Service is targeting the first quarter of 1996 for the release of the Final EIS on the management of mountain goats in Olympic National Park. The review of the comment letters received on the Draft EIS was recently completed. The next phase, of modifying the EIS to address any substantive issues raised by the comments, is in progress.

The preferred alternative released by the Park earlier this year in its long awaited EIS called for the elimination of the mountain goat by shooting them from helicopters. OPA, along with leading environmental organizations, supports this regrettable but scientifically justified position.

We wish to thank all of you who wrote letters supporting the Park Service in making this difficult but necessary proposal.

OPA Enters Cyberspace

by Randall Payne

Olympic Park Associates now has a presence on the Internet. A "home page" on the World Wide Web has been created that will allow us to inform you, and non-members who are "surfing" the Information Superhighway, about issues affecting Olympic National Park. Besides membership information, our page has action alerts, current events, and NPS news releases, which we aim to update regularly. Our hope is to increase advocacy for protecting the park and its environs by using the power of the Internet to reach a larger audience and to deliver vital information in a more timely manner.

To access our new page, use this URL:

<http://www.halcyon.com/rdpayne/opa.html>

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