

# *Voice of the Wild Olympics*

Vol. 4, No. 1 (June 1996)

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## **Park Proceeding Toward Cushman Land Trade**

*by David Friedman*

In February, Olympic National Park issued a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the exchange of Park lands at the head of Lake Cushman with the City of Tacoma, owner of the Cushman Dams. As authorized by Public Law 102-436, this land exchange would eliminate an approximately 11 acre trespass on Park land flooded by Lake Cushman. The exchange involves swapping ownership of critical elk habitat for some state-owned inholdings in the Soleduck and Quileute areas.

The FONSI concludes the Olympic National Park's consideration of the environmental effects of the exchange.

This FONSI, issued more than a year after the Park's Environmental Assessment was issued, followed quickly upon the release of the Federal

Energy Regulatory Commission's (FERC's) Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the licensing of the Cushman Dams project.

Unfortunately, FERC's DEIS has several serious flaws in presenting and assessing the impacts of the Cushman Dams. A major deficiency is that the DEIS considers current conditions as the baseline from which to measure the environmental effects of the dams. Thus it deliberately omits consideration of past and continuing impacts of dam construction, of inundation of the reservoir lands, and of 70 years of operation.

This draft has drawn strong criticism from several state and federal agencies. The EPA has rated it as KU-3: Environmentally Unsatisfactory - Inadequate.

Neither FERC's assessment nor the Park's seems to give sufficient consideration to the viability of the elk herd. While the FERC DEIS mentions the land exchange in passing, it finds the exchange to have no bearing on the FERC licensing decisions, although those decisions do include choices of land parcels in the area, e.g., those which Tacoma would be required to obtain to improve wildlife habitat. With the FONSI, the Park, too, is divorcing the land exchange from the overall FERC licensing process.

Olympic Park Associates feels that the FONSI was premature: based upon a DEIS that has been judged inadequate, and failing to consider that dam licensing requirements are yet to be determined in a final EIS

which may affect the exchange of lands. A full ONP EIS on the land exchange would clarify the Park resources to be affected on and around this Park land, including native fish and wildlife habitat.

The dams on the Skokomish River have negatively impacted Park resources well beyond the 10-30 acre trespass addressed by this exchange. Loss of the natural anadromous fish populations and the loss of about 4,000 acres of terrestrial habitat inundated by the reservoir have forever altered the health of the Skokomish watershed.

There can be no question that the Cushman Project is the single, major adversity to the well-being -- the survival -- of these elk. (Dept. of Interior comment letter on FERC DEIS of 3129/96)

Of particular concern, the Staircase band of elk in the Park move south to winter on these exchange lands, while another band appears to migrate through the area, via a less protected route, to Lilliwaup Swamp east of the lake. The Raedeke study in the Park's EA reports that the limiting factor for these elk is "the quality and quantity of this winter range." Numbers are already so precarious that the WA Department of Fish and Wildlife has declared a hunting ban on eastside Olympic elk.

OPA is disappointed that the ONP has not been a stronger advocate, e.g. has not insisted that Tacoma provide suitable winter habitat to promote a healthy population of Park elk. The environmental analyses have been too narrowly focused on the land exchange and not on the wider issue that caused the trespass in the first place. This exchange boils down to a convenient bookkeeping deal, where inholdings and trespass are the sole criteria and environmental are consequences of secondary concern.

We urge ONP to take a more active role in the licensing process to ensure that the Park's best interests in the Skokomish watershed are clearly and forcefully articulated. The continuation of wild elk in the Staircase area is surely of enduring value.

Send letters about ONP's FONSI to:

Superintendent David K. Morris  
Olympic National Park  
600 East Park Ave  
Port Angeles, WA  
98362

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## **Elkhorn Dam Rises From the Grave**

*by Tim McNulty*

One of the worst of Tacoma City Light's epic string of bad ideas for Northwest rivers, the proposed Elkhorn Dam on the Dosewallips River just outside the boundary of Olympic National Park, has come lurching back to life. As proposed by Tacoma City Light, the dam, intake structure, mile-long tunnel, penstock, powerhouse, transmission lines, and access road would be a major incursion into the steep, rugged wilderness valley of the Dosewallips River. If constructed, the project could have severe impacts on at least three "at risk" salmon stocks in the river, and would occupy winter and calving range and a major migration corridor used by Olympic's east-side Roosevelt elk -- a population the Washington Department of Wildlife has identified as "at grave risk of extirpation."

Nearly ten years ago, OPA, along with several other environmental organizations, intervened in the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's (FERC's) licensing proceedings for this misguided project. Opposition continued to mount, and in 1994 it looked as if the proposed dam had met its welcome demise. The U. S.

Supreme Court denied Tacoma City Light's challenge to Washington State's ability to set minimum flows for Washington rivers (an effort to protect salmon and resident fish and wildlife). Tacoma saw the profitability of the Elkhorn project drain away like runoff from a sump. Not long after that, they let their license application lapse.

But late last year, Tacoma's silent local partner in the project, Jefferson County Public Utility District No. 1, began making overtures to FERC about proceeding with the project itself. Since the proposed dam clearly will not pay, and since Jefferson County is a non-power producing PUD, OPA mistakenly assumed FERC would do the sensible thing and deny the request. We should have known better.

FERC gave Jefferson County a year to hold an election to get necessary voters' approval to become a power-producing PUD. As OPA pointed out in a letter to FERC, Jefferson County PUD NO. 1 tried to get voter approval once before. In November of 1984, Jefferson County voters gave a resounding "thumbs down" to the idea by more than a two-to-one majority.

Apparently the PUD believes the citizens of Jefferson County made a mistake, and with a little education might come to see things more clearly. So the PUD is taking the issue to the voters again this November. Should their PR campaign succeed and should they win voter approval, OPA and other intervening groups -- Friends of the Earth, Sierra Club, The Mountaineers, Seattle Audubon, Washington Wilderness Coalition -- will be ready to wade in with everything we've got to drive a final stake through the heart of this beast. In the meantime, letters to Jefferson County PUD No. 1 and to your local newspapers might help save everyone a lot of trouble.

Send letters to:  
Jefferson County  
PUD No. 1  
P.O. Box 929  
Port Hadlock, WA  
98339

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### **Letters Needed Supporting Second DEIS on Elwha River Restoration**

The National Park Service released the second draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) on restoration of fish habitat on the Elwha on April 25. The first EIS (last summer) determined that dam removal is the only way to restore the habitat. This DEIS analyzes two alternative methods, plus a third, "no-action" alternative.

Both action alternatives would remove both dams over a two year period. The preferred alternative would allow sediment to erode away naturally, at an estimated cost of \$111 million, and will generate an estimated \$163 million over the next 100 years, compared with a substantial loss of \$197 million over the same period for the no-action alternative (keep the dams and make some partial attempt to restore the salmon runs). The non-preferred action alternative would suction-dredge the sediments and pipe them into the Straits, at a cost of \$127.5 million. Both action alternatives cost significantly less than the original estimate of \$300 million by the Bureau of Reclamation.

Three public meetings on the DEIS were held in May in Seattle and Port Angeles. Copies of the DEIS are available in many local and regional libraries, and also from the National Park Service at the address below. OPA strongly supports the Park Service's preferred alternative, and urges members to send letters of support to:

Sarah Bransom  
National Park Service, Resources Planning

P.O. Box 25287  
Denver, CO 80225-0287

The public comment period closes on June 26, 1996.

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**A Remarkable Grassroots Effort:  
The Work of the Elwha Citizens' Advisory Committee**

*by Harry Lydiard, Member of OPA Board of Trustees, and Member of the Elwha Citizens' Advisory Committee*

On October 24, 1992, the President of the United States signed the Elwha River Ecosystem and Fisheries Restoration Act, and the forces of conservation won a signal victory.

Or so we thought.

This act authorized the purchase of two dams on the Elwha River together with associated lands and power-producing facilities. In addition it authorized the Secretary of Interior to make recommendations to the Congress regarding the best method for ecosystem restoration.

Thus culminated a decades-long struggle to find a means of restoring the fabulous and renowned fish runs on the formerly free-flowing Elwha River.

The death knell for the Elwha salmon first sounded in 1913 when the first dam was built less than five miles from the mouth of this more-than-70-mile-long river habitat. A fish hatchery was required, but it never functioned. Then the upper dam was constructed between 1925 and 1927 without any fish enhancement.

By the time the expiring license for the second dam was up for renewal, and the never-licensed lower dam was required to seek a license, the effects of the environmental movement were being seen in regulatory actions. The interested public was now being heard. Not only would fish passage be required, but the mitigation would have to be effective. In addition, Olympic National Park had been created in 1937, and one of the dams was within the park boundary. Could the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) license a darn in a national park?

Enter Earth First!, who focused immediate attention on the dams. At the same time, OPA and other conservation groups intervened in the licensing proceedings, urging removal of the dams. Though most everybody felt (in Sinatra's immortal words) "a ram can't knock down a million kilowatt darn", still those "rams" were determined to try.

And try they did, until the mill owners reevaluated the situation and decided that it would be in their best operational and financial interests to get out of the business of power production. This decision led to the cooperative effort between the environmental community, the dam operators, and the Elwha s'Klallam tribe, which culminated in the passage of the "Elwha Act".

New problems immediately arose, not the least of which was an estimate by the Bureau of Reclamation that removal of the dams would cost well over \$300 million. This ridiculously high figure was just what the latent opposition to dam removal had been waiting for. People in Port Angeles began to find all sorts of reasons why the dams should stay: removal is too expensive; endangered swans nest on the lake; it will be an environmental disaster; the mills will not be able to operate without that power, and will close, and jobs will be lost....

The political climate began to sour as local opposition to dam removal reached the ears of Washington's congressional delegation. When Congressman Norm Dicks lost Clallam County in his 1964 reelection bid, he

blamed the loss of that one county on the dam issue. Senator Slade Gorton, always luke-warm on the issue of dam removal, continued to support federal purchase of the projects, but that was all the support he offered.

Meanwhile, the clock was ticking as the remaining salmon fishery slipped ever closer to extinction. Something had to be done to counteract this misperception that the public was opposed to dam removal. Enter members of OPA, working together with Trout Unlimited. A grassroots process was conceived, by which people in the Port Angeles area could demonstrate to Congress in general, and to Dicks and Gorton in particular, that local popular opinion was more amenable to dam removal than it was being portrayed.

With modest funding, they gathered together four Port Angeles citizens with diverse opinions on dam removal, and asked each of them to select three or four other community leaders with similarly diverse views who would be willing to invest some time and effort in preparing a report that could represent a consensus on the subject.

This rather daring process, whose results could have gone either way, turned into a remarkable example of citizen involvement. Among the 16 people on this voluntary citizens' committee, 15 dutifully participated in six months of almost weekly discussions and presentations by experts on the Elwha dam issues, in sessions lasting from two to six hours.

The result is a document of about 30 pages entitled "The Elwha River and Our Community's Future". Its creation has had a great influence on the opinions of its creators. Within its 30 pages are a plethora of unspoken compromises made through a combination of learning, common sense, and local knowledge and aspirations.

The results fell short of my own original position on the Elwha issues, which I'm sure is a common statement that all of the committee could make. That perhaps is the clearest indication that the committee was successful in achieving a consensus.

The committee's discussion of its recommendations covers some 26 pages, all of which should be read in order to understand the conclusions and recommendations.

Recommendations to the Washington congressional delegation and to the Secretaries of Commerce and Interior are as follows:

1. Pursue immediate acquisition of the dams from James River (Corporation) and place them in federal ownership.
2. Create an Elwha River restoration fund to finance restoration activities. This fund would be fed by power generation revenues from the operations of the dams, fees from Olympic Park visitation, grant revenues from non-federal resources, proceeds from sale of Elwha project lands, and federal appropriations.
3. Begin immediate restoration of Elwha River salmon stocks. The highest priorities are Elwha chinook stocks which are at a critically low level.
4. Implement a restoration strategy for the Elwha ecosystem, with milestones to ensure fiscally responsible solutions and to verify feasibility of dam removal, salmon stock restoration feasibility, and protection of critical waters supplies.
5. Assure no net loss of private property (or property tax base) resulting from project acquisition, by utilizing land exchanges or by disposing of project lands (or equivalent value federal lands elsewhere in Clallam County).
6. Maintain public access to the Elwha River corridor through public lands after project restoration.

Keep in mind that this report and its conclusions come from a diverse group of Port Angeles area residents, most of whom hold or have held elective offices in the community. I believe it is reasonable to state that, of the 15 active committee members, at least six had openly opposed removal of the dams while only three had openly supported such action.

I was gratified by the results. I found this committee's work to be one of the most exciting and satisfying activities I have participated in, in over 40 years of public service.

It remains to be seen whether the committee's recommendations will impel congressional action toward the goal of restoration of the Elwha River fisheries and ecosystem. OPA and other conservation groups continue to work to secure funding for dam removal.

It seems hopeful that in the not-too-distant future we may be able to say, "Whoops, there goes another million kilowatt dam."

### **Resolution of Olympic Park Associates *regarding* Recommendations of The Elwha Citizens' Advisory Committee**

**Whereas**, Olympic Park Associates (OPA) is an intervenor in the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission proceeding regarding relicensing of the Glines Canyon and Elwha dams; and

**Whereas**, OPA remains strongly supportive of removal of the Elwha River dams to restore the Elwha ecosystem and Olympic National Park resources; and

**Whereas**, OPA is aware of the efforts of an ad hoc committee in Clallam County known as the Elwha Citizens Advisory Committee to find ways to address community concerns about Elwha River restoration.

**Therefore be it resolved that** OPA congratulates the Elwha Citizens Advisory Committee on its efforts in reaching consensus on the removal of the Elwha River dams;

**and that**

OPA urges the National Park Service to evaluate the environmental impacts of their recommendations.

Adopted unanimously, 5/23/96

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### **Olympic National Park: A Natural History Guide**

by Tim McNulty. Published by Houghton Mifflin, 1996.

*(This book, written by Tim McNulty, the vice president of Olympic Park Associates, was just released by Houghton Mifflin Company. Houghton Mifflin has been publishing a series of natural history boo! on our national parks. The book is so recent that we did not have time to review it fully, but will continue our review in future issues of Voice of the Wild Olympics. However, let it be said that this is book of deep scientific insight written by a poet. Many consider Tim to be the poet laureate of Northwest conservation. The following is an excerpt that gives meaning to that title.)*

"The text of that process -- the awesome forces that crumple up mountains and build continents -- is written indelibly into bedrock of the Olympic Mountains, scraped clean by glaciers and readily accessible. As we've seen, the Olympics have been a thorny text to decipher, and geologists are just beginning to glean the range's deeper secrets. What they find will not only provide us with a more accurate picture of how the Olympics came to be, we may be given a clear snapshot of that eternal dynamic by which the earth's youthful seafloors and the ancient bones of continents give birth to rough new lands.

"Past the Hurricane Ridge fault, the rocks become increasingly more deformed -- and confusing -- as you venture into the core. But once the road swings around Hurricane Ridge and the interior Olympics sweep into perspective, the problems of geology give way to the grand view. A chiseled sea of mountains, crest after

ragged crest, leaps into view, a more splendid confusion of ridges, canyons, and peaks than a pilgrim could ask for. To the south, the deep timbered valley of the Elwha River carries the eye into the heart of the mountains where the snow-capped peaks of the Bailey Range stretch away like a high broken wall. Behind them, a slight bit hazy with distance, the summit of Mount Olympus breaks through its perpetual snowfields and glaciers, distant blue, and implacable.

"The mountains seem poised at the crest of a wave. And in a larger sense they are: cast in from the sea, lifted briefly to their wintry heights, and brought down inevitably by the agents of gravity. The Olympic Mountains make up a small corner of earth, battered by winds and washed with ocean rain. Yet this small, rugged range encloses the beauty of a newly born earth, and like the brushstrokes in a painting by Sesshu or van Gogh, traces the magic by which it was brought to life."

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## **Let's Get the Rascals Out**

*by Hazel Wolf*

How did the rascals get in control of the 104th Congress and the state legislatures? Here is how: only 38.7% of eligible voters went to the polls. Of those who voted the ratio was 51% Republican and 49% Democratic. This was no mandate for this slim majority who came to power with their slogan: Contract with America. This contract, as great sections of our population are becoming increasingly aware, involves wiping out the gains of: President Roosevelt's New Deal social reforms -- social security pensions, unemployment and injured workers' insurance, children's protective laws, and welfare for the needy -- plus more recent measures such as Medicare and Medicaid. Roosevelt was elected during the Great Depression of the '30s with an unprecedented majority of the huge voter turnout. He had a true mandate.

The Contract's hidden agenda aims to wipe out these reforms.

The Contract also aims to wipe out all the environmental protective laws enacted during the last twenty years: the Clean Air and Water Acts, Endangered Species Act, laws protecting our wetlands and national forests, and many other environmental laws.

How do we get the rascals out? By reversing the process that got them in: increase voter registration, and then get out the vote in November. It is that simple.

The Election Commission of King County advises that registration forms are available at all libraries, schools and fire stations. Pick up a handful and hand them around. One does not have to be old enough to vote to become part of this strategic plan. This is labor's declared plan, as well as that of other affected sectors: senior citizens, educators, women's groups, and many church groups.

The environmental movement has a stake in this struggle against The Contract.

The first test of this get-out-the-vote strategy came in the election of a friend of the environment and humanities who, backed by labor's campaign to get out the voters, defeated one of the Oregon rascals.

If they can do it in Oregon, we can do it in Washington and in every other state in the Union.

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## **Olympic National Park to Release Management Plan for Lake Crescent Area**

Olympic National Park will release a draft management plan for the Lake Crescent area in June, and hold public information meetings in July. The plan will outline future uses for developed areas around the lake, such as Barnes Point, the Log Cabin Resort area, and Fairholm, as well as for more natural sites such as La Poel, East Beach, and the Spruce Railroad trail.

One issue that concerns conservationists is the use of "jet skis" on Lake Crescent. These high-speed, one-person speed boats are as noisy and intrusive as snowmobiles, and possess the adolescent charm of dirt bikes. They make their presence known throughout the summer, destroying the peace and tranquillity of the lake for many park visitors for the thrills and chills of a few.

We know of no other national park that allows these pesky little machines on park waters. The State of Oregon has found that trying to regulate "jet ski" use has proven to be a nightmare. San Juan County in Washington has prohibited them from county waters. But, like any burgeoning industry, "jet skis" (or "personal water craft" as they are euphemistically called) come fully equipped with their own corporate sponsored lobby.

If park visitors want to preserve the peace, quiet, and tranquillity of this stunning lowland lake, we will have to make our wishes known at public information workshops and in letters responding to the draft management plan.

Public informational workshops are scheduled for:

Seattle July 10, Fed. Building Meeting Room  
Port Angeles July 11, Vern Burton Center

Times to be announced.

Copies of the Draft Lake Crescent Management Plan will be available for review at Park Service offices and public libraries. To obtain a copy or to send your comments, write:

Superintendent David K. Morris, Olympic National Park  
600 E. Park Avenue  
Port Angeles, WA 98362  
or call the Park at 360-452-4501.

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## **OPA Opposes "Jet Skis" On Lake Crescent**

The Board of Trustees of Olympic Park Associates adopted the following resolution on May 23, 1996.

### **Resolved:**

That Olympic Park Associates opposes any plan by Olympic National Park to permit or justify personal water craft, a.k.a. "jetskis", on pristine Lake Crescent, since personal water craft are recreational craft whose sole use does not include a legitimate or appropriate park purpose. While other Coast Guard defined Class I water craft activities may be incidental to National Park accepted recreational uses, personal water craft are not incidental to other legitimate recreational uses, and no National Park precedent should now be established here.

### **And further resolved:**

That there should be no personal water craft, a.k.a. "jetskis", rental facility on Lake Crescent.

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