

Olympic National Park Plans to Move Enchanted Valley Chalet

ONP has released an expedited environmental assessment (EA) to move the Enchanted Valley Chalet away from the brink of the East Fork Quinault River. Last winter braiding along the East Fork undercut the old chalet in scenic Enchanted Valley by eight feet. Next fall and winter's storms will likely finish the job. Park managers fear the three-story log structure would cause unmitigated environmental damage to the river and surrounding habitats. OPA agrees.

We disagree on the park's proposed solution.

To keep the building from collapsing into the river, the park service proposes to "temporarily" move the 90-ton structure intact up to 100 feet from the river. This will be a massive (and expensive) undertaking involving gas-driven generator, hydraulic pumps, and up to a week of helicopter flights. The chalet is located 13 miles up the E. Fork Quinault trail in the heart of the Olympic Wilderness. Once the chalet is moved to its new location, the park service will develop a second EA to decide what to do with it.

OPA considers this emergency action unnecessary, costly and inappropriate in a designated wilderness. If protecting the river is the goal, as the EA states, the building could more easily and cheaply be disassembled or razed. The wilderness character of the valley would be restored, and funds could be spent on more pressing needs, such as fully staffing visitor centers, restoring interpretive programs, and maintaining park trails, picnic areas and campgrounds—all of which have been drastically reduced due to budget cuts in recent years.

OPA's May 28, 2014, comment letter can be viewed [here](#).

Tim McNulty's op-ed on the chalet in the March 26, 2014, *Peninsula Daily News* can be seen [here](#).