

VOICE of the WILD OLYMPICS

Olympic Park Associates

Founded in 1948

Olympic National Park General Management Plan Needs Your Help

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Summer 2006



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Along the Quinault River. Photo by Bob Kaune.

In June, Olympic National Park released its draft General Management Plan. This is the first comprehensive planning effort undertaken by the park since 1976. When finalized it will determine management directions for the next 15 to 20 years.

The National Park Service has invited public comment on its preferred alternative. Your help is essential to insure the future integrity of one of the earth's outstanding ecological preserves.

This issue of the *Voice* is designed to help you participate in the planning process. Olympic National Park is a wilderness jewel of the National Park System. It is a nearly complete ecosystem with forest and wildlife communities essentially intact. No national park preserves such a magnificent tract of old-growth and temperate rain forest. No park outside Alaska harbors such a rich diversity of wild salmon. And few parks anywhere on earth protect complete wildlife communities from coastal to alpine environments.

Olympic Park Associates and other conservation organizations share a vision of the park's ecological future. *Our*

goal is for Olympic to be a fully restored wilderness ecosystem with its original components and habitat functions intact. Human use will be managed to ensure enjoyment of the park while protecting the healthy functioning of its ecosystems into the future.

Unfortunately, the Park Service's "preferred alternative" (Alternative D) elevates recreational use and motorized access over natural resource protection. Conservation measures in the plan are too often shortsighted and inadequate to protect park resources or restore threatened fish and wildlife species. Developed areas are greatly expanded in low-elevation habitats and floodplains to the detriment of critical habitats and natural stream functions. And overzealous preservation of historic structures threatens the character of the Olympic Wilderness.

What follows is a brief presentation of opportunities offered by the draft plan, along with some of the positive and negative aspects of the park's preferred alternative. This is followed by a short list of points you can make in your letter to the park service. Please take a moment to help shape the future of Olympic National Park.

OPA Board Meetings:

Next: September 30, 2006, special meeting.
Time: Meeting 10:00 am - 2:00 pm. Field trip to Slab Camp, 2 - 4 pm.
Place: Dungeness River Center, Sequim
Please join us. OPA members are always welcome at Board meetings.
The regular OPA Board meetings are in the Kingston Community Center on the 4th Wednesday of odd-numbered months, except for Thanksgiving, and no meeting in July.

How to Reach Your Members of Congress

U.S. Congress Switchboard: (202) 224-3121
From this number you can reach any member of the US Senate or House of Representatives.

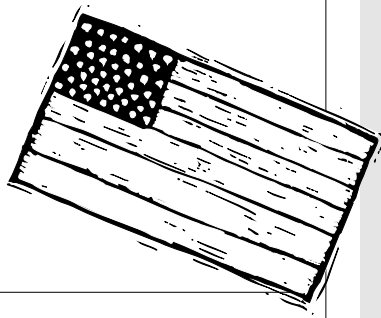
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Olympic National Park General Management Plan Draft EIS

Opportunities for Ecosystem Protection

A number of opportunities are offered by the planning process. All of them can help ensure that Olympic maintains its ecological integrity during a time when lands outside the park are experiencing increased population growth, urbanization and development.

- ◆ Park boundaries could be expanded in five critical areas (Lake Crescent and Ozette Lake, and Hoh, Queets, and Quinault watersheds) in order to help recovering salmon populations and protect critical elk habitat.
- ◆ Intertidal preserves could be established on the park's Wilderness coast to protect biologically rich marine areas.
- ◆ River designations could ensure the natural functions of coastal rivers and aid in the recovery of a wealth of wild salmon populations.
- ◆ Extirpated species like the wolf and fisher could be reintroduced to the park to complete a nearly intact ecosystem.

All of these measures are discussed in the 400-page document. Sadly, only two (intertidal reserves and modest boundary expansions in three areas) are included in the park's preferred alternative (Alternative D).

Continued on P. 4

Public Meetings on Draft GMP

Public open house meetings are scheduled for:

Seattle	Aug. 24, 5:00 to 8:00 PM at REI.
Silverdale	Aug. 22, 5:00 to 8:00 PM at Central Kitsap High School.
Pt Townsend	To be announced.
Pt Angeles	Aug. 18, 2 to 4 PM & 5 to 8 PM at Vern Burton Main Hall.
Sequim	Aug. 21, 5:00 to 8:00 PM at Carrie Blake Park, Cole Hall.
Shelton	Aug. 23, 5:00 to 8:00 PM at Shelton Civic Center.
Seki	Aug. 17, 5:00 to 8:00 PM at Sekiu Community Center.
Forks	Aug. 14, 2 to 4 PM and 5 to 8 PM at the DNR Building.

Locations and directions can be found at:

<parkplanning.nps.gov/olymp>, click on **Meeting Notices**.



Along the Dosewallips. Photo by Jim Scarborough.

Deadline for Comments: September 15

Deadline to comment on the General Management Plan draft environmental impact statement is **September 15, 2006**.

Tell park planners to protect the ecological integrity of one of the world's outstanding natural areas.

ADDRESS comments to:

**Olympic National Park
Draft General Management Plan
National Park Service
Denver Service Center
P.O. Box 25287
Denver, Colorado 80225**

FAX comments to: 303-969-2736

EMAIL comments to <olymp_gmp@nps.gov>

Copies of the 400-page plan:

- In CD or print format are available by calling 360-565-3004.
- On the web at: <parkplanning.nps.gov/olymp>. Click on *Olympic National Park General Management Plan* then *Document List*.

ONP General Management Plan Draft EIS

Highlights of the Park Service's Preferred Alternative (D)

The draft GMP offers a range of management alternatives. Alternative A describes current conditions. Alternative B places an emphasis on resource protection. Alternative C emphasizes visitor services and development. The park's preferred alternative (D) combines elements from each. The preferred alternative may be modified as a result of comments from the public. It will then be embodied in a final plan.

The preferred alternative (D) offers some positive steps toward long-term protection of park resources, but it also contains much that needs to be changed.

On the positive side:

- ◆ Establishes marine intertidal reserves along sensitive areas of the coast.
- ◆ Recommends expanding the park's boundaries in the Ozette basin (12,000 acres), Lake Crescent area (1,640 acres), and the Queets River corridor (2,300 acres).
- ◆ Recommends a wilderness suitability study for Lake Ozette and Pyramid Peak ridge north of Lake Crescent.
- ◆ Recommends Wild and Scenic River designation for the Elwha River.
- ◆ Relocates Kalaloch Lodge, facilities and Highway 101 out of coastal erosion zone and floodplain.
- ◆ Expands educational and interpretive programs.
- ◆ Encourages mass transit in heavily used developed areas, and
- ◆ Proposes development of short, all-accessible loop trails throughout the park's front country.



Three Lakes Trail. Photo by Bob Kaune.

All of these proposed actions respond to recommendations made by conservationists and staff during the five-year preparation of the plan. Unfortunately, few of them go far enough to insure long-term ecosystem protection.

Continued on P. 5.

ONP General Management Plan Draft EIS

More Highlights of the Park Service's Preferred Alternative (D)

Continued from P. 4.

In contrast, several other recommendations in the preferred alternative (D) threaten the park's ecological integrity by emphasizing developed recreation and motorized access over natural resource protection and species restoration.

On the negative side:

- ◆ Denies "river protection zone" status to the park's rivers, many of which provide critical habitat for a number of federally listed threatened and endangered salmon stocks.

Concern: Rebuilding washed-out roads with rock armoring destroys salmon habitat and compounds impacts on fish. The proposed Dosewallips road reconstruction, for example, will harm critical spawning areas for federally threatened Puget Sound chinook.

- ◆ Maintains all road access throughout the park, including floodplains, regardless of impacts to salmon habitat and natural river process. Recommends moving wilderness boundaries on active floodplains to maintain poorly located roads.

Concern: Continued bulldozing of Finley Creek channel in the Quinault area will continue in the plan, impacting salmon and other wildlife habitats simply to provide year-round access.

- ◆ Proposed boundary expansions do not conform to watershed boundaries and are inadequate to protect downstream fish species from destructive upstream activities like timber harvest and road building.

Concern: Four park salmon stocks, including Ozette Lake sockeye and Puget Sound chinook, are listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. Numerous other fish stocks are at risk.

Concern: Critical spawning areas for unique Beardslee and Crescenti trout remain at risk due to upstream activities.

Concern: Illegal hunting from nearby roads is impacting park elk populations.

Concern: Areas proposed in for addition in the preferred alternative total about 16,000 acres. Ecological sound watershed additions as displayed in Alternative B would increase park area by 87,000 acres.

- ◆ Greatly expands most front country development zones from their current sizes.

Concern: Elwha development zone expands nearly 2 miles along the road north of the ranger station. The number of developed campsites in the Elwha valley could explode from 72 to 250.

Concern: The Sol Duc development zone would more than

double in size; the Sol Duc campground could be expanded from 82 campsites to 250.

- ◆ Allows expansion of commercial concessions within the park.

Concern: Facilities at Hurricane Ridge, Lake Crescent, Sol Duc and Kalaloch could be expanded. Commercial activities should be maintained at their current size or located outside the park.

- ◆ Zones designated wilderness into use levels without providing specific reference or rationale.

Concern: These and other wilderness-related issues should be determined by a wilderness management plan that examines proposed uses with regard to their impacts on wilderness character and suitability under the Wilderness Act. Short-cut wilderness planning such as this is unacceptable.

- ◆ Dictates that 29 to 50 historic structures be maintained and reconstructed in designated wilderness.

Concern: The park's claim that historic structures of all types "enhance wilderness character" was thoroughly refuted in federal court. Yet actions in violation of The Wilderness Act pervade the plan.

Continued on P. 6.



Photo courtesy of Wolf Haven.

Generations have worked to preserve
the richness and beauty of Olympic National
Park.

Millions have been inspired by it.
We owe it to the future to preserve what we have
and
restore what we've let slip away.

ONP General Management Plan Draft EIS

Additional Issues Not Addressed In Draft Plan

In addition, several measures OPA and other organizations requested at the beginning of the planning process have not been included in the draft plan:

- ◆ No ecosystem study was undertaken to provide necessary groundwork for long-term decision making.
- ◆ No recommendation to reintroduce extirpated wolves to the Olympics despite a favorable U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service study of the issue, to support ongoing efforts to reintroduce fishers, or to remove destructive, non-native wildlife.
- ◆ No Wild and Scenic River eligibility study or recommendation for 12 rivers that qualify for designation.
- ◆ No wilderness management plan was completed as part of this planning effort — 18 years after designation of the Olympic Wilderness — yet numerous controversial decisions about wilderness are put forth.
- ◆ An overemphasis on historic preservation at the expense of natural resource and Wilderness protection prevails in spite of the park's founding purpose to preserve the area's forests, wildlife, mountains and coast.

Somehow, in spite of its shortcomings, the park has determined that its preferred alternative (D) is the “environmentally preferred” alternative. We disagree.



Hemlock, spruce, vine maple, and fern in the Queets. Photo by Bob Kaune.

Summary

The draft General Management Plan is timid, overly focused on motorized use and development, and inadequate to preserve the ecological integrity of a world-class park like Olympic. The Park Service's pre-

ferred alternative (D) shortchanges ecosystem restoration and compromises wilderness character. Olympic National Park planners can and should do better.

Deadline is September 15, 2006. Email <olym_gmp@nps.gov>.

Points to make in your comment letter:

*Olympic National Park's highest priorities should be
non-degradation of natural systems
and restoration of critical ecosystem functions.*

- ★ Congratulate the National Park Service for establishing intertidal reserves on the Olympic Coast and recommending wilderness study for Ozette Lake.
- ★ Request that developed areas and development zones be kept at their current size as described in Alternative A. New recreational developments should be located outside the national park.
- ★ Urge the Park Service to expand park boundaries in five areas (Ozette Lake, Lake Crescent, and Hoh, Queets and Quinault watersheds) to protect critical habitats for salmon and wildlife as proposed in Alternative B.
- ★ Urge the Park Service to establish river protection zones to ensure critical salmon habitats and natural river processes are preserved as proposed in Alternative B, and to recommend all 13 eligible rivers for federal Wild and Scenic river designation.
- ★ Urge the Park Service to recommend restoration of extirpated species like the wolf and fisher.
- ★ Request that controversial decisions relating to designated Wilderness be deferred until a comprehensive wilderness management plan is completed.

Write today in support of Olympic Park Associates' and other conservation organizations' vision for an ecologically healthy Olympic National Park:



Cougar tracks along the Bogachiel. Photo by Bob Kaune.

The danger facing Olympic National Park in coming decades is the same danger facing all of the earth's irreplaceable nature preserves. That is: that Olympic's remarkably diverse and intact ecosystem will experience a gradual degradation.

As population and recreational demand on the park increase, and land use patterns change around the park, managers must be diligent in protecting Olympic's outstanding natural qualities.

Your voice can make a difference.

Email park planners at <olym_gmp@nps.gov> . . . today.

The Status and Conservation Biology of the Olympic Marmot (Part I)

Bruce B. Moorhead

The author is an OPA Trustee and retired wildlife biologist in Olympic National Park.

Photos and captions by Suzanne Cox Griffin.

This is the first of two articles on the current status of the Olympic Marmot (*Marmota olympus*), an isolated, endemic species that occurs somewhat erratically throughout the higher elevations of the Olympic Mountains and Olympic National Park. No studies have been conducted on this large, burrowing rodent since David Barash¹ and William Wood² examined its social behavior and habitat selection in the 1960s and 1970s. In 1973, without the aid of remote sensing and GIS, Barash estimated about 2000 animals in the population.³

Since 2002, Suzanne Cox Griffin, a Ph.D. student at the University of Montana (UM), has been more fully investigating the status and conservation biology of this species across its entire range. In 2004, she was joined by Julia Witczuk, another UM graduate student, who is developing a long term monitoring strategy for the species.

In these efforts, modern scientific methods such as remote-sampling, radio-telemetry, and molecular genetics are

being used for the first time to widely assess marmot presence-absence, habitat and landscape relationships, and population trends at various locations across the Olympic Mountains. Results thus far show changes in some parts of the mountains, including marked declines or disappearance of entire colonies at Hurricane Ridge, Deer Park, and some meadow-basins in the southern Olympic Mountains. In many other areas, like La Crosse Basin, where marmots were once abundant, only a few individuals now occur.

This article provides an introduction to marmot biology, and to Olympic marmots in particular, as background for an article to follow on the conservation and management implications of this research, when the final results are available. I'm indebted to Sue Griffin

for making available her unpublished reports and historical summaries, and for allowing me to join her in the field.

Marmots are the largest members of the ground squirrel tribe. The genus *Marmota* originated in periglacial environments of North America and migrated across northern Asia and Europe before the Pleistocene era. Today marmots are found across the northern hemisphere in open or semi-open grass and sedge communities. The Olympic Marmot is one of six species now recognized in North America; another eight occur in Europe and Asia. The closest relatives of the Olympic species are the Hoary Marmot, *M. caligata*, of the North Cascades and Northern Rocky Mountains, and the Vancouver Island Marmot, *M. vancouverensis*, which is endemic to nearby Vancouver Island in Canada. All three of these species live in

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Olympic marmots are born below ground in mid-June and first appear above ground in late-July. Although they remain in their birth colony for two or more years, once they are above ground and weaned, they are no longer reliant on their mothers. This female died shortly after weaning a litter of four. Her four young hibernated with their father and another female and all survived until spring.



As part of ongoing research, Olympic marmots such as this young-of-the-year are measured, sexed and fit with numbered ear tags to facilitate monitoring of survival, dispersal and reproductive rates.



Continued from P. 8.

cool, mountainous habitats, with climate and terrain characteristics quite similar to those along the edges of the great ice sheets where they evolved.

One of the more important and obvious features of the high-elevation environment of the Olympic marmot, and its sister species, is long, snowy winters. To survive in such circumstances, they hibernate for up to eight months and lose 20-50% of their weight each year. Their larger body mass and brief period of activity also slows their ability to sexually mature, which in turn leads to a very low reproductive rate for a rodent. Females do not mature until age three and only produce a litter of 2-5 pups every second or third year thereafter. Such limited reproductive potential means that the population can require a long time to recover from declines.

Another less obvious, but no less important, feature of their mountainous habitat is its fragmentation. Suitable meadow patches for digging and foraging by Olympic marmots are often rather small and irregularly dispersed across a rugged, high-elevation landscape. While some meadow patches are relatively extensive, others can sustain only a few individuals at best. In such unpredictable and limited circumstances, local extinctions can be expected to occur by chance alone, along with a tendency for localized groups to be rather highly inbred. Periodic movement by some individual marmots among these scattered patches is likely to be critical to any long term persistence of the population. An underlying theme of Griffin's research, therefore, is to obtain a more useful understanding of these dispersed habitats and their "connectivity" across the landscape, as it affects longer term survival prospects for the species.

In recent decades, the similarly isolated Vancouver Island marmot has experienced significant habitat changes due to surrounding timber harvest and associated changes in the abundance of local predators. From about 300 individuals in the 1980s, the population has declined to only 30 animals remaining in the wild. Prospects for survival are now dependent upon a captive breeding program and newly initiated reintroduction attempts.

Until recently Olympic marmots have seemed to be protected adequately in Olympic National Park. Human activity and its conse-

quences, however, are steadily encircling and affecting the park. Global warming is reducing the winter snowpack and glaciers in the Olympic Mountains. Extirpation of the Gray Wolf (*Canis lupus*) in the early 1900s through trapping and poisoning activity, and colonization of the Peninsula thereafter by a growing Coyote (*Canis latrans*) population has changed the local predator community.⁴ People in greater numbers are also moving ever closer to the park boundaries and visiting the park interior more, which increases the potential and likelihood of widening and deepening disturbance to some wildlife and habitats. In a sequel article, we'll examine how such changes may already be affecting the Olympic marmot population.

References:

- 1 Barash, D. P. 1973. The Social Biology of the Olympic Marmot. *Animal Behavior Monographs* 6: 141-275.
- 2 Wood, W. A. 1973. *Habitat selection and energetics of the Olympic marmot*. M. Sc. Thesis. Western Washington University, Bellingham, WA.
- 3 Barash has also written a good general reference on marmots: *Marmots Social Behavior and Ecology*, Stanford University Press, 1989.
- 4 Populations of two mustelids — the Marten (*Martes americana*) and Fisher (*Martes pennanti*) — are known, respectively, to have declined or disappeared on the Olympic Peninsula. In terms of scientific data, the status of most other native carnivore populations in Olympic National Park is largely unknown.

Two yearling Olympic marmots.





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Sally W. Soest, Editor

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2433 Del Campo Drive, Everett, WA 98208

In color! OPA Membership Brochure

Olympic Park Associates' new, self-mailing membership brochure features stunning color photos of Olympic National Park by OPA member Bob Kaune, a summary of OPA's 58 years of conservation accomplishments, and a view of future goals and objectives.

The brochure is a beautiful and handy way to introduce your friends to this venerable grassroots organization while building strength for OPA's future.



To order up to 10 copies of OPA's new membership brochure, contact:

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