

# VOICE of the WILD OLYMPICS

Olympic Park Associates

Founded in 1948



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Fall 2012

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Photo by Tim McNulty.

## Olympic National Park Begins Work on Wilderness Plan

by Tim McNulty, OPA Vice President

As we approach the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act and the 25th anniversary of Olympic Wilderness designation in Olympic National Park, the National Park Service has made a major commitment to develop a long-awaited wilderness stewardship plan for Olympic. Acting park superintendent Todd Suess told OPA trustees that he has made wilderness planning a priority and is funding the planning process through park funds. A planning team and wilderness task force are in place at the park, and internal scoping of issues is underway. GIS map

layering of wilderness areas, impacts and uses is being developed, and wilderness user surveys were gathered at trailheads this past summer.

The planning team will begin the public scoping phase of the environmental impact statement (EIS) early next year. That will provide an early opportunity for conservationists to participate in the planning process. Issues ranging from wilderness access and group size to stock use, area quotas, helicopter flights, communication installations, historic

Continued on P. 3, Wilderness Plan

**OPA Meetings:**

Next: 23 January 2013

Time: 6:00 p.m.

Place: Kingston Community Center

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 the 3rd Weds in November to avoid Thanksgiving, and no meeting in July.

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**(202) 224-3121 to reach any member of the U.S. Congress**

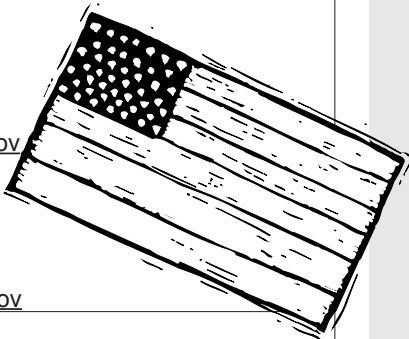
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 Fax: 202-224-0238  
 Seattle: 206-553-5545  
 E-mail: [Senator\\_Murray@murray.senate.gov](mailto:Senator_Murray@murray.senate.gov)

**Senator Maria Cantwell**

Phone (DC): 202-224-3441  
 Fax: 202-228-0514  
 Seattle: 206-220-6400  
 E-Mail: [maria\\_cantwell@cantwell.senate.gov](mailto:maria_cantwell@cantwell.senate.gov)



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## Wilderness Plan

*Continued from P. 1.*

preservation and structures will be addressed among other issues. A range of alternatives will be presented to the public, and a draft EIS will be released. The final plan and EIS are expected in 2014, the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act.

Obviously, this is a singularly important planning effort. Ninety-five percent of Olympic National Park is designated Wilderness. OPA was a principle advocate for the 1988 Washington Parks Wilderness Act, the law

that created the Olympic Wilderness, and we have been intimately involved with wilderness issues for decades. We plan to keep our members and the larger conservation community informed on all aspects of the planning process. And we will alert our members to opportunities for public participation. Look for mailing alerts and articles in future issues of the Voice. Let's help park planners develop a plan worthy of this magnificent wilderness.

For information on the planning process visit our web site [olympicparkassociates.org](http://olympicparkassociates.org)

## OPA VP Tim McNulty Receives Conservation Award

OPA vice president and Olympic Peninsula author and conservation activist Tim McNulty was awarded the Karen M. Fant Award by Washington Wild at its annual dinner in November. Tim has been involved in conservation issues on the Olympic Peninsula and statewide for most of the past 40 years. He helped add Shi Shi Beach and Point of the Arches to Olympic National Park in 1976 and worked for passage of the 1984 Washington Wilderness Act, the 1988 Washington Parks Wilderness Act, and the 1992 Elwha River Restoration Act, among other campaigns. Most recently Tim has worked on behalf of the Wild Olympics bills now in Congress.

Tim has also been an eloquent spokesman for wild nature through several award-winning books and dozens of published articles.

The Karen M. Fant Award was named for the late co-founder and inspirational leader of Washington Wild. The award honors volunteer activists who demonstrate the same love and relentless spirit she showed to protect our wild lands. At the same dinner Congressman Norm Dicks received Washington Wild's Voices in Conservation Award in recognition of his numerous conservation accomplishments during his 36 years of service in the United States Congress.



*Tim McNulty with Connie Gallant, chair of the Wild Olympics Campaign.*

## OPA Needs a Membership Chair

### Laura would like to pass the torch!

For more years than Laura Zalesky and Olympic Park Associates can remember, she has been our volunteer membership chair. Now Laura would like to retire and pass her tasks to another who shares her passion for Olympic National Park and a wild Olympic Peninsula.

### Will YOU take Laura's place?

It is volunteers like Laura who provide OPA members with information about Olympic National Park projects, problems, and possibilities. They help make this park one of the world's finest.

As membership chair you will be making an important contribution to the protection of wild and scenic places. You will enjoy working with folks who care about, love, and enjoy

Olympic National Park and the wild Olympic Peninsula.

If you want to make a difference, have some computer skills, and are willing to spend a few hours a month applying these skills, please contact, Donna Osseward, at [osseward@gmail.com](mailto:osseward@gmail.com) OR 206-353-2318.



*We Need YOU!*

### The membership chairperson's job:

- Once a year send friendly, computer-generated reminders to OPA members asking them to continue their support.
- Deposit membership contribution checks in a local bank.
- Send a "thank you".
- Maintain the membership database using member and US Post Office information.
- Three times per year generate mailing labels for the ***Voice of the Wild Olympics***.

# New Study of Wild Olympics Shows No Impact On Timber Jobs

Read full report: [www.wildolympics.org/docs/report\\_OlympicNationalForest\\_TimberBaseAnalysis.pdf](http://www.wildolympics.org/docs/report_OlympicNationalForest_TimberBaseAnalysis.pdf)

“We welcome this independent analysis by forester Derek Churchill of Stewardship Forestry Consulting, which concludes that the revised wilderness and wild and scenic river designations in Senator Murray’s and Congressman Dicks’ Wild Olympics legislation will not cost timber jobs or have any significant impact on the Olympic National Forest (ONF) timber supply,” said Connie Gallant, Chair of the Wild Olympics Campaign.

The Wild Olympics Campaign commissioned the timber analysis to help inform the public discussion about land management and conservation for parts of the Olympic National Forest.

Stewardship Forestry, an independent forestry consultant, released a study recently on the impact of the Wild Olympics Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (H.R. 5995/S.3329) on the Olympic National Forest (ONF) timber supply. The bills’ possible impact on timber jobs has been the subject of much debate on the peninsula. The new report concludes that “the proposed wilderness within the Wild Olympics legislation will not limit timber supply under the current management policy framework, and thus should not result in reduced harvesting or job losses.”

Stewardship Forestry’s Derek Churchill concluded that less than 1 percent of the proposed 126,000-acre wilderness is harvestable under the current management policies of the Olympic National Forest. The study showed more than 99 percent of the wilderness proposed in the final legislation is already out of the timber base, either because of current Forest Service

administrative protections, riparian areas, distance from roads, or other factors the agency considers when conducting timber sales. The proposed wilderness designation would simply make current administrative protections permanent. In addition, the report confirmed that the Wild and Scenic River designations proposed in the legislation will have no impact on ONF timber production.

The report illustrates that it is the rate of harvest, not available timber, that is the primary factor in determining what impacts, if any, there could be to timber supply or related jobs. It concludes that 190,000 acres of available timber harvest capacity exists on the Olympic National Forest that would be unaffected by the proposed designations in the Murray/Dicks legislation. Because the current rate of harvest averages only 1,350 acres annually, the report concludes that the Olympic National Forest could significantly accelerate its current rate of harvest for 50 years or more.

## New Web Video!!!

### *Wild Olympics for Our Future!*

Watch the video at <http://vimeo.com/52487703>

#### Spread the word!

- Email the URL to your friends and family.
- Copy the URL and post it on your Facebook status and ask your Facebook friends to "Like" it.
- Copy the URL and send it out as a Tweet via your Twitter account

The Wild Olympics campaign has released their brand-new web video, *Wild Olympics for our Future!* The two-and-a-half-minute video captures the essence of Wild Olympics, describing our shared goal of safeguarding our ancient forests, free-flowing rivers, and stunning scenery for future generations.

The video highlights the broad local support from local businesses, hunting, fishing and recreation groups, conservationists, and individuals like you. It also showcases the spectacular forests and rivers that would be protected under Senator Murray’s and Representative Dicks’ landmark Wilderness and Wild & Scenic Rivers legislation for the Olympic Peninsula.

# Wild Olympics Supporters Outnumber Opponents 5 to 1 at Port Angeles City Council Hearing

On October 2, the Port Angeles City Council took public comment on the Wild Olympics proposal and considered whether to support or oppose Wild Olympics following the testimony.

Thanks to an incredible showing by Clallam County Wild Olympics supporters we are happy to report the Council listened to the voice of reason and chose not to take any action.

Roughly 45-50 Wild Olympics supporters turned out, all wearing 'Wild Olympics supporter' stickers, and roughly 25 of them spoke in support. The opponents didn't seem to have more than a dozen or so in the room, and only about five opponents spoke.

The council made everyone sit through two and a half hours of PowerPoint shows on utility rates, so we lost a few of our people before the testimony, but not many. Graham Taylor of the Sierra Club had the great idea to order pizza to keep everyone fed while we waited, which was a huge hit.

Norm Schaaf, VP of Port Angeles timber company Merrill and Ring, was the first speaker. He reiterated his support for the Wild Olympics compromise. But he also urged the council to work in general toward "policies" for more thinning on Olympic National Forest.

Then came Harry Bell, speaking for the North Olympic Timber Action Committee, who said they opposed Wild Olympics, but they are floating an alternative that would retain the Wild Olympics proposal but designate matrix (logging) land on Olympic National Forest (re-write the Northwest Forest Plan) in some second growth areas. Then Dick Pilling of the Port Angeles Business Association got up to record his opposition.

After that an unbroken chain of twenty five Wild Olympics supporters spoke. Everyone was great. Morgan Colonel, the new owner of Olympic Raft and Kayak in Port Angeles said (paraphrasing), "I moved here 7 months ago, because I bought a business, Olympic Raft and Kayak. I came from Jackson Hole. Nearly all of the public lands and rivers there are protected. It's also the wealthiest county in the entire country. Not per capita, the entire country. This proposal offers us the opportunity for huge economic growth for my business and for the entire peninsula. I don't know why on earth you would consider opposing something like this."

Wild Olympics Chairwoman Connie Gallant and local coalition leaders Bob Lynette and Tim McNulty were each phenomenal. Bob delivered a concise and thoughtful breakdown of what was in the bill and what wasn't, and clear specifics of economic benefits and statistics from the Headwaters economics report. Tim delivered his usual eloquent description of the specific areas and trails that would benefit, and the ecological and clear recreation benefits they provide. Connie gave a great summary about the campaign and the overwhelming support from the business community, sportsmen, elected officials and others who support the bill, and gave the council a copy of our updated supporter list. She also pointed out the three year process and major compromises that went into the legislation, and that any alternative presented by Bell and the timber action committee should go through the same process before the council considers taking any position on it.

All in all,  
it was a great show of democracy in action  
and a great demonstration of  
how much local grassroots support there is  
for Wild Olympics on the North Peninsula.

Then an older gentleman from Port Angeles got up to speak. Most of us did not recognize him, and we assumed he

was an opponent because he was dressed like a logger. He said (paraphrasing) he's lived here his whole life. He's fished here his whole life. He remembers how much fish there used to be in the 1950s. Now there's hardly any. From what he can tell about this Wild Olympics program, it looks like it will protect the rivers where the fish spawn. He said we need that. And that the council ought to support it. We spoke with him afterwards and learned his name is Ed Johnson. Ed, we cannot thank you enough for your support!

At the end of the testimony, councilman Max Mania read some of the supporters list, said the Council had all received e-mails which were about ten to one in favor. He noted there were two dozen businesses on the supporters list, and made a motion to adopt a resolution in support.

This resulted in a bit of a disagreement on the council between the Councilmen and Mayor Kidd. In the end they tabled consideration of any resolution, for or against, saying they needed more information.

All in all, it was a great show of democracy in action and a great demonstration of how much local grassroots support there is for Wild Olympics on the North Peninsula. A huge thank-you to everyone who sent in e-mails and showed up to give testimony and stand in support of Wild Olympics.

Student Essay:

## Go Fish!

# Elwha Salmon Are Able To Strive Once Again

by Stefanie Colliton, Student, North Olympic Peninsula Skills Center



Who would have thought that within just five months of the Elwha River Dam demolition, the century-deprived salmon would still know where to go?

In 1913, 25 years before the Olympic National Park was created by Congress, the Elwha River Dam was built and became operational, blocking off more than 70 miles of river habitat to salmon migration. Salmon and steelhead were restricted to the five miles of the river below the Elwha Dam, just outside of the national park, and west of Port Angeles.

However, even after 99 years, it looks like the fish are picking up exactly where they left off.

Migrating Chinook salmon were observed about two miles upstream from the park's boundary by Phil Kennedy, the lead fisheries technician for the park, who stated, "We knew this was going to happen and as I saw the fish roll, my heart jumped!"

Along with the return of the salmon, the Elwha Dam removal has also uncovered another miracle; a ritual site, thousands of years old, created by the first Klallam people, a piece of history which had been submerged beneath the water for a century. A giant rock with two deep depressions was found amongst over 1,000 acres of land that emerged when the dam was removed. According to the tribe, this was the site where the Creator blessed and bathed the people, and where tribal members went to learn what their future held. Also, the National Park Service reported finding another site nearby that documents human activity to 8,000 years ago, therefore recognizing it as one of the oldest known archaeological sites on the Olympic Peninsula.

Todd Suess, Acting Superintendent of the Olympic National Park, stated, "First we see a renewal of a culture with the uncovering of the creation site of the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe, and now we see the renewal of the legendary Chinook in the Olympic National Park."

The fisheries crew for Olympic National Park has been conducting weekly surveys along the Elwha River since the start of August, in search of more Chinook salmon.

The dam removal was a wonderful event and positive promotion for the environment, as it has allowed the salmon to migrate upstream and spawn, bringing with them marine nutrients to nourish and restore the habitats of the other ecosystems. As well as the returning fish, the splendid discovery of the ancient ritual site may be a heartfelt honor to the ancestral heritage of the first Klallam settlers.

The Elwha River Dam removal has been noted as the most interesting and unique dam removal in U.S. history, because after almost 100 years nature is behaving almost

After a century of waiting,  
the fish have returned,  
have come back to play their part  
in ecosystem restoration.

as if the dam had never  
been there in the first  
place. Scientists believed  
that salmon activity and  
river restoration would  
take as long as 30 years,  
and are baffled to see

plentiful activity in just five months post-removal. In the words of Olympic National Park fisheries biologist Sam Brenkman, "We can now say that restoration of anadromous salmon in Olympic National Park is underway." After a century of waiting, the fish have returned, have come back to play their part in ecosystem restoration, and have allowed nature to once again take its course.

# Protecting our Wild Olympics Makes Sense

by Jim Karr.

*Opinion Editorial, Sequim Gazette, Wednesday, October 3, 2012, with permission.*

Centered right here in some of the nation's most stunning and prized landscapes are two recent federal efforts:

Less than an hour's drive from Sequim, work is under way to restore the Elwha River at the northern edge of Olympic National Park.

Far away in the other Washington, Senator Patty Murray and Representative Norm Dicks have introduced Wild Olympics legislation aimed at protecting 126,000 acres of national forest and 19 of the Olympic Peninsula's most iconic rivers.

Introduced in June this year, the Wild Olympics bill would not only safeguard resources Peninsula residents value now but would also forestall expensive restoration efforts that might otherwise be needed in the future. The bill would protect intact and as yet unprotected upper watersheds, low-elevation forests, and river corridors, such as the Dungeness River and its tributary, Gray Wolf River.

Dropping 7,300 feet in just 35 miles, the Dungeness is one of the steepest rivers in the nation. It supports an impressive diversity of salmon, abundant wildlife, and recreation in the rain shadow of the Olympic Mountains. Under the Wild Olympics bill, the Dungeness would receive official designation as the "wild and scenic river" it is.

In the first new wilderness designations in Olympic National Forest in more than 30 years, the Wild Olympics bill would add more than 20,000 acres of low-elevation forests and salmon streams to the Buckhorn Wilderness, including now vulnerable old growth on Three o'clock Ridge and next to the lower Gray Wolf River, a popular destination for hiking, horseback riding, and other pursuits. Popular trails include the Ned Hill and Lower Gray Wolf trails.

The proposed wilderness would protect headwaters feeding the Dungeness River streams and tributaries that supply the city of Sequim with clean, safe drinking water.

Safeguarding these landscapes today is like washing your hands or getting your annual flu shot to keep from catching the flu tomorrow.

Protection now would maintain the region's natural beauty and prevent the loss of valuable natural resources -- resources that would cost millions of dollars to restore if they were to be lost because we left them vulnerable.

And this assumes that restoring lost resources and their benefits would even be possible. When the Elwha and Glines Canyon dams went up nearly a century ago, few realized how much the region would lose in natural bounty and human livelihoods.

Now, some \$325 million and tremendous effort are being expended to restore the Elwha to its wild and scenic state.

The Wild Olympics bill makes good sense for economic, scientific, and community reasons. It is much easier, more effective, and less costly to protect intact watersheds and centuries-old forests than to restore damaged ones.

By taking the opportunity to protect our last best places today, not only do we avoid high restoration costs later, but we protect the Olympic Peninsula's unparalleled natural

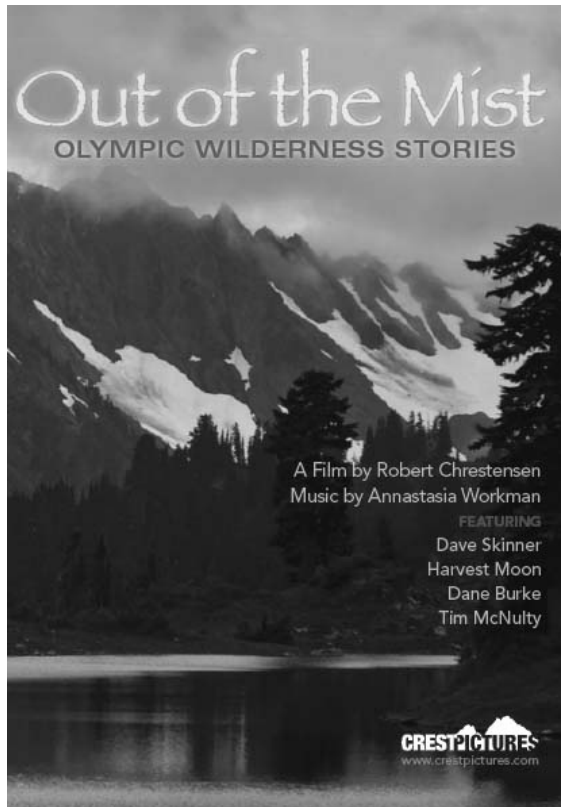
*Jim Karr is a University of Washington professor emeritus of ecology. He specializes in water resources, tropical ecology, ornithology, and environmental policy, and lives in Sequim.*



## New Film From Crest Pictures:

### *Out of the Mist ~ Olympic Wilderness Stories,*

... as reflected in the life experiences of four Olympic residents with intimate knowledge of the Olympic Wilderness: Dave Skinner, Harvest Moon, Dane Burke, and OPA's Tim McNulty.



Northwest filmmaker Robert Chrestensen created this, his third feature-length film, to promote wilderness preservation by fostering respect and appreciation for the natural world. He utilizes the inspiring stories of four unique individuals who know Washington's Olympics intimately and share a deep kinship with them.

Out of the Mist captures the breathtaking beauty and diversity of the Olympics, one of North America's crown jewels. It was filmed over several years of hiking and backpacking in some of the Peninsula's most remote wilderness areas: from the secluded North Coast beaches to the towering heights of Mount Olympus; through old-growth forests and primeval rainforests; along wild rivers... past tumbling cascades and icy headwaters; through subalpine meadows painted with wildflowers, and rolling basins dotted with sparkling lakes and tarns; up steep rocky slopes and seemingly impenetrable terrain ... to the tops of awe-inspiring summits.

The original score for Out of the Mist was written, performed and produced by acclaimed Seattle composer Anastasia Workman.

The film was co-produced and co-directed by Chrestensen and his wife Kathy Chrestensen. This is their fifth collaborative film since establishing Crest Pictures in 2006. Both are ardent hikers and backpackers.

For a sneak peek watch the Out of the Mist trailer:

[www.crestpictures.com/mist](http://www.crestpictures.com/mist)



### **Out of the Mist Premieres:**

Dec 6 at 7:00 PM

Little Theater (in the Pirate Union Bldg)  
Peninsula College campus in Port Angeles  
1502 East Lauridsen Blvd.

Cosponsored by Friends of Olympic National Park and WWU's Huxley College of the Environment.

Dec 10 at 7:00 PM

Kitsap Unitarian Fellowship Church  
4418 Perry Ave NE, Bremerton.

The public is welcome.

Sponsored by the Peninsula Wilderness Club.



# Marbled Murrelet Flies to Court

*John Woolley, OPA Board*

Olympic Forest Coalition (OFCO) and Seattle Audubon have sued the State of Washington's Department of Natural Resources (DNR) for moving 12,000 acres of previously-protected Marbled Murrelet habitat into the timber base in southwest Washington, making it available for logging. This decision by DNR apparently determines that such an action would not have any significant environmental impacts.

Initially, OFCO and the Washington State Chapter of Sierra Club sued the federal U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for approving the change in classification of public land. This is because DNR has not ensured that implementation of its Trust Land Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) complies with the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

The Washington Forest and Law Center (WFLC) is representing the plaintiffs in both lawsuits.

A key issue in both cases is how to provide promised revenue endowments from timber sales in Pacific and Wahkiakum counties. This year State Land Commissioner Peter Goldmark has allocated reserve funds to the counties in order to make up for not logging county revenue lands that are managed by DNR.

A more permanent revenue source for these counties must be determined. One possibility is to establish a pro-active \$10 million funding category in the next budget that enables the State to buy replacement land to enable compliance with the federal requirements for Marbled Murrelet in the affected southwest Washington counties.

Attendance by Seattle Audubon and other plaintiff members at the King County court is encouraged to show public support for the litigation and needed protection for Marbled Murrelet and their habitat. Stay tuned for date and time.



*Marbled Murrelet*



*Marbled Murrelet on nest.*



*Marbled Murrelet habitat.*

## “What the Heck Is a Marbled Murrelet?”

- A football-sized streak across the sky.
- Heading towards a large tree, perhaps 15 miles inland.
- After perhaps flying for an additional 15 miles a sea.
- Only to fumble the candlestick fish at delivery...
- To the forest floor, like I witnessed on Aurora Ridge in Olympic National Park.

Murrelet have been a very successful species, so they tend to reproduce only every two years:

- Murrelet live about 12 years.
- Now their big nesting trees on ridges are scarce,
- And much more exposed to predators.
- And climate change has made their food supply less reliable.

Glad I'm not a Marbled Murrelet.

*Photos by Thomas Hamer, Hamer Environmental LP, courtesy of the US Fish and Wildlife Service.*

## ONP Ends Weekday Winter Plowing of Hurricane Ridge



After a two-year trial effort to keep the Hurricane Ridge Road open on weekdays during winter, the National Park Service has decided to pull the plug. Poor weekday visitation and the high cost of keeping the road plowed were cited as reasons for dropping the program.

“Unfortunately, given the fiscal realities of today, we cannot justify the use of over \$325,000 in community donation and taxpayer money to maintain weekday winter access to Hurricane Ridge for a relatively small number of people,” said Acting Superintendent Todd Suess.

How small?

- For the 2011 winter season, 4,900 weekday cars, and
- 5,700 cars in 2012.

According to the park, this amounted to only 19 percent of the five-year average for winter visits on weekends. The park set a modest benchmark of 45 percent to continue the program.

In 2010, following a concerted lobbying effort by the city of Port Angeles, the Hurricane Ridge Winter Sports Club, and the local business community, and with the help of Congressman Norm Dicks, the National Park Service allocated a half-million dollars, \$250,000 per year, to keep the Ridge Road open weekdays in winter. Local governments contributed another \$55,000 per year, and private fundraising brought the total up to about \$325,000 annually.

With government-provided funds alone, that amounted to a public subsidy of \$50 to \$60 per vehicle for the privilege of weekday skiing. An earlier report from the park indicated that weekday users were predominantly local. The hoped-for economic boost to local businesses obviously failed to materialize. With the park’s annual budget being cut by five percent per year for the past three years, this expenditure could be rightly seen as an extravagance that taxpayers can ill-afford.

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## Elwha Restoration Volunteer Opportunities

From November to March, and for the next several years, the Elwha Revegetation Crews will put 47,000 native plants into ground in (former) Lake Mills and former Lake Aldwell. Volunteer groups of 4 to 5 may join Olympic National Park staff, Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe staff, and two Washington Conservation Corps crews, tromping around and revegetating the dewatered reservoirs - rain or shine!

- Dates: Thursdays in November through March.
- Meet: In Port Angeles around 8:45am and depart from the reservoir at 3pm.



To volunteer, or for more information, contact:

Jill Zarzeczny  
Elwha Revegetation Project  
Olympic National Park  
Jill\_Zarzeczny@nps.gov  
Tel: 360.565.3047

- Gear: Tools, planting gloves provided. Volunteers should come prepared with water, lunch, sun protection, rain gear, warm layers (non-cotton is best), sturdy boots (muck or hiking), and a readiness to get dirty!
- Transportation: between Port Angeles to the reservoir will be provided.
- Age and fitness: Minimum age is 14. Volunteers must be able to travel over uneven and slippery terrain, kneel for extended periods of time, wield hand tools (shovels, hand hoes, etc) and work in the rain.
- Skills: The work party will always begin with a project and site orientation, a safety talk, and a planting demonstration.

There are also ongoing opportunities to help at our native plant nursery. Mondays and Wednesdays from 9am-4pm are drop-in days--come help us pack and prep the plants for their return to the Elwha!

At the beginning of each month, I will announce work party opportunities and register volunteers on a first-come basis.

# Park Plans to Pave Spruce Railroad Trail

by Dan Lieberman, OPA Board

Construction of the Spruce Railroad started during World War I with the goal of bringing spruce logs from the rainforests of the western Olympic Peninsula to be used in airplanes for the war effort. Though the railroad was not completed until after Armistice Day, the Spruce Railroad operated as a logging railroad for a few decades. In what is arguably the most scenic section of the entire route, the Spruce Railroad hugged the north shore of Lake Crescent. After the railroad was decommissioned, Olympic National Park converted part of the Lake Crescent section into a hiking, cycling and equestrian trail.

The historic Spruce Railroad trail, which is the ~4 mile trail along the north side of Lake Crescent in Olympic National Park, is slated to be part of the Olympic Discovery Trail (ODT). The ODT is the non-motorized trail planned to extend from Port Townsend to La Push. The ODT is wildly popular on the North Olympic Peninsula among walkers, joggers, cyclists, equestrians, and others. This county-run trail is planned to stretch 140 miles from Port Townsend to La Push. Over the past 10 years, I have watched happily as many of those miles have been secured by the county, paved and put to major use. Just this year, I biked over brand new pavement between Port Angeles and the Elwha River.

During the past two years, Olympic National Park has gone through a long and contentious environmental assessment (EA) process for expansion of the Spruce Railroad trail as part of the ODT. There have been two separate EA's, hundreds of public comments, and many articles, letters and opinions printed in local press.

After the original EA was released, OPA responded by supporting Olympic National Park and making a handful of recommendations, including reducing the acreage of forest that would be cleared to accommodate a handicapped-accessible eastern end of the trail.

In May, 2012, Olympic National Park released a revised EA for expanding the Spruce Railroad trail as part of the ODT. In this revised EA, fewer trees were proposed to be felled, as recommended by OPA. The preferred alternative in the revised EA called for a 10.5-foot wide crushed gravel trail surface, provided handicapped access through a new eastern end of the trail, and opened the two currently-closed tunnels. OPA supported Olympic National Park in this preferred alternative and wrote a response complimenting the park's choice of a gravel surface. We reiterated recommendations to mitigate bank armoring with wood structures and plantings, to construct the eastern parking lot with gravel or another permeable surface, and to reserve the tunnel bypass trails for hikers only.

In September, 2012, instead of selecting the preferred alternative, Olympic National Park selected alternative five, which calls for an 11-foot wide trail, with 8 feet of asphalt plus 3 feet of gravel. Alternative five was strongly supported by Clallam County, who administers the ODT. Unfortunately, none OPA's recommendations are included in alternative five.

With such vehement opposition to their preferred alternative and such use and support of the ODT, Olympic National Park was in a difficult spot. While OPA would have preferred a permeable, narrower

## Get It While You Can

The Olympic Discovery Trail (ODT) is a very good thing for the North Olympic Peninsula communities. The ODT will improve health, accommodate recreation, and connect countless residents and visitors with nature.

The Spruce Railroad Trail is also a very good thing. But while it will remain a good thing after expansion to accommodate the ODT, it will be very different. When the Peninsula Daily News reported on September 12th that the "popular Spruce Railroad Trail at Lake Crescent is getting a face-lift," they nailed it. They might have added that the asphalt procedure would include Botox armoring and double bypass surgery.

I highly recommend getting out to hike the Spruce Railroad trail in near-solitude this fall as the big leaf maple leaves are floating downward, this winter as the snowline creeps down Aurora Ridge, next spring as the bright green buds burst, and every other season until Clallam County secures funding to make the approved modifications. After that, strap on your helmet or saddle and ride the ODT down the historic but newly paved Spruce Railroad trail in Olympic National Park.



surface to this trail and the recommendations listed above, we have to accept and move on from this...and enjoy a great hike on a narrow, dirt, hardly-utilized Spruce Railroad trail, while we still can (see sidebar).



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Sally W. Soest, Editor

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