



VOICE of the WILD OLYMPICS

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Olympic Park Advocates

Fall – Winter 2022

Toward Returning Wolves to ONP:

Elk Monitoring in the Hoh Watershed

By Mary Peck

In August 2023 Olympic National Park biologists will deploy a grid of 35 game cameras in the Hoh River drainage and use a new

method of data analysis to estimate populations of elk and deer; detect other key species such as bear, cougar, and coyote; and determine if wolf colonization is occurring. The last elk survey done by the park was in 2015.

Elk are considered a key indicator of the overall health of the park and, along with deer, play an essential role in the park's ecosystems, from low-elevation forests to subalpine meadows. One aspect of this monitoring will be information on the spread of treponeme-associated hoof disease (TAHD), an ulcerative hoof disease that is emerging as a concern to elk health and affecting some animals within the park. Currently, there is no vaccine to prevent the disease, nor are there



Elk In Hoh Valley by John Gussman

any proven options for treating it in the field. Preliminary results from studies by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife suggest that elk with TAHD enter winter months in poorer condition, have lower survival rates, and have reduced

pregnancy rates.

The spread of TAHD to the Olympic Peninsula is a stark reminder of the many costs of the absence of wolves in the park. Wolf predation would strengthen the Roosevelt elk population in the Olympics and likely redistribute elk browsing patterns, benefiting riparian forest development and aquatic habitats. Wolves would also have a tempering effect on burgeoning coyote populations in Olympic National Park, which have posed a grave threat to the park's endemic marmots.

OPA has donated \$10,000 to the Washington National Park Fund toward this effort.

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Masthead photo by Pat O'Hara

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The Olympic Marten Project

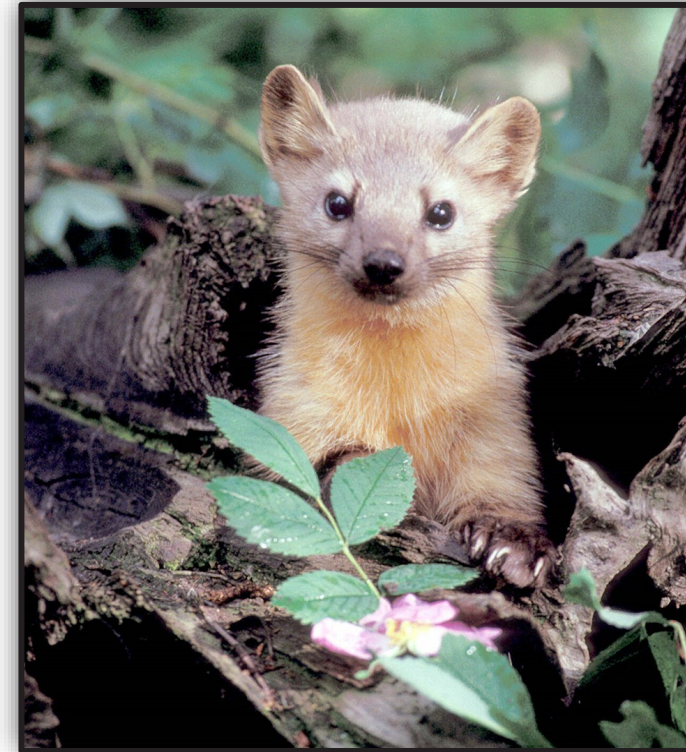
By Dylan Hubl

The Pacific Marten (*Martes caurina*) historically occupied habitats ranging from the coastline to high elevation forests on the Olympic Peninsula.

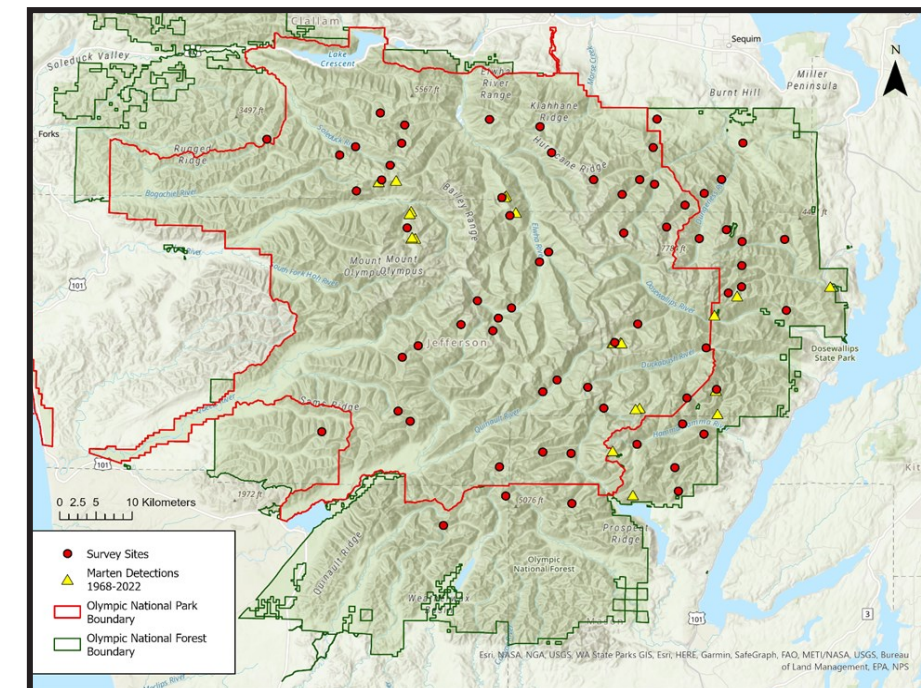
However, through over-harvest, incidental take, and habitat loss, the marten has suffered an extreme range contraction. By the 1960s, martens had become extremely rare with only nine verifiable sightings on the Peninsula between 1968 and 2016.

This lack of sightings was not due to a lack of survey effort. From 2001 to 2017, extensive camera trap surveys were conducted across the Olympic National Park (ONP) and Olympic National Forest (ONF) as part of forest carnivore inventories, monitoring the population of newly reintroduced Pacific fishers (*Pekania pennanti*), and to specifically search for martens. Over the span of nearly two decades, these surveys deployed hundreds of cameras, collectively watching baited sites for tens of thousands of camera-trap

nights, and only produced four marten detections. In 2017, a pilot study was initiated through the partnership of ONP, ONF, Woodland Park Zoo (WPZ), and U.S. Geological Survey to test the efficacy of using over-winter lure dispensers to survey for marten. These scent dispensers, developed by WPZ, Idaho Fish & Game, and Microsoft Research, are programmed to release a small amount of liquid scent lure, a mixture of pure skunk essence, beaver castor, fish oil and anise oil, every other day for an entire year. This is crucial as it allows surveys to be conducted through the winter when marten are much more likely to be detected. Prior surveys paired a camera with a bait, such as a chicken carcass, which required researchers to



Above: Pacific Marten (*Martes caurina*). U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service photo. Below: Locations of the 67 survey sites deployed this summer along with all verifiable detections of marten since 1968.



revisit survey sites regularly to replenish baits and lure. High elevation areas, with extensive snowpack and limited access were therefore not surveyed in the winters due to increased safety hazards. Overall, data collected in 2018 and 2019 showed that over-winter surveys using scent dispensers were effective.

Continued on P10, Marten

Record Drought, Low Flows Force Fishing Closure on Olympic Rivers

By Tom Hammond

Now that the rains, snows, and winds of autumn have returned, it might be easy, or even preferable to forget the record-breaking drought experienced across the Pacific Northwest from early July (July 2 to be exact) to late October. Consistently warm temperatures combined with very little precipitation resulted in rivers running dry and forests aflame across the region — even in the normally wet western portion of the Evergreen State.

Seattle-Tacoma International Airport (SeaTac) saw only 0.48 inches of rain from July to September versus an average 3.16 inches, making it the driest stretch that has been on record, and that doesn't even include the first few weeks of October, which saw the highest ever temperature for October 16, 88 degrees Fahrenheit.

SeaTac is a good benchmark for the region since records have been kept there for 130 years. Other locations, including critical ecosystems at Mount Rainier National Park and the Olympic Peninsula, also experienced a very distressed and distressing situation. As reported by the National Weather Service: "...the high at Paradise on Mt. Rainier 72° tying the record high for today" was only the second time in over 100 years of records that Paradise had a high of 70°+ on October 12.

In October, Olympic National Park fisheries biologist Sam Brenkman reported, "...the rainforest is parched! Quinault is at 110-year low flow for date, Hoh at 62-year low (period of record) and flowing at 184 cfs [cubic feet per second] (mean for date is 1,740 cfs), and upper North Fork Skokomish at 33 cfs, a 98-year low for date. The Sol Duc is



Low flow in Dungeness River. Photo by John Gussman

unrecognizable with low flows although we do have around 600 adult summer coho counted to date in park."

The extreme drought and record low flows caused Olympic National Park to issue an emergency recreational fishing closure on coastal river systems in early October. Rivers opened after fall rains brought river levels up, but extreme weather conditions this summer and fall foreshadow future stresses to aquatic systems as global warming tightens its grip.

The City of Port Angeles was forced to declare a Stage III water alert due to low flow in the Elwha River.

All this calls to mind the importance of glaciers to our alpine mountains. Remember the impact of our disappearing glaciers — just when rivers most need a supply of cold, clean water to sustain even minimal flows in September (and apparently now October), dozens of glaciers that used to sustain the Elwha and other major drainages on the Olympic Peninsula are diminished — or they no longer exist.

Welcome to New Olympic Superintendent Sula Jacobs



OPA welcomes Sula Jacobs as the new superintendent of Olympic National Park. Sula came to the park in August.

"I've spent a lot of my time — both during and outside of working hours — getting to know this special place and the people who care for it," she said.

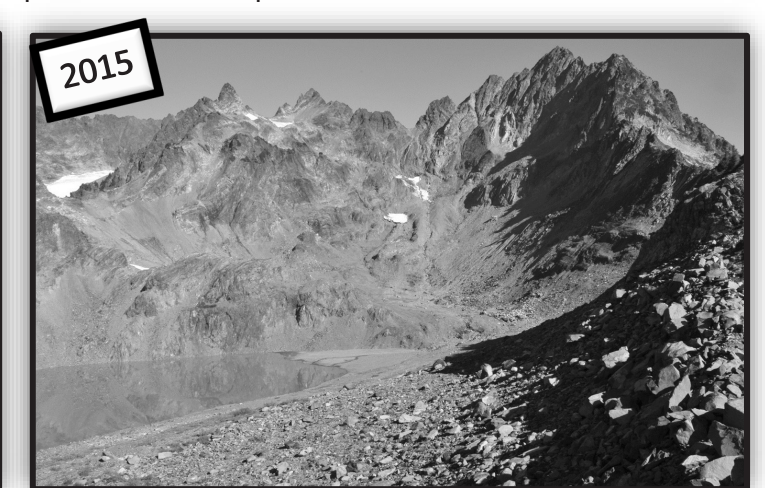
Immediately prior to Olympic, Sula served as superintendent at Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area. She's also been a national park manager at Biscayne, Yosemite, and Cumberland Gap.

"Olympic National Park is a powerful place, a place which can spark our

imaginations, fuel our curiosity, and help us understand the lessons of the natural world," she noted.

Sula graduated from Washington and Lee University with a degree in economics and East Asian studies, received a master's degree in public policy from University of California Berkeley and has a graduate certificate in wilderness management from the University of Montana. She enjoys paddleboarding, hiking and baking.

OPA looks forward to a long and productive working relationship with Superintendent Jacobs.



Paired photos of Anderson Glacier area in Olympic National Park, 1936 and 2015. 2015 photo by Byron Adams

OPA Urges Action on Park's Climate Plan

By Janis Burger

This summer, Olympic Park Advocates joined with the National Parks Conservation Association and Olympic Climate Action to send a letter to the park urging action and offering assistance to make progress on the park's 2009 Climate Action Plan.

In the late 2000s National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) developed a process for parks all over the country to become Climate Friendly Parks. Over 140 parks, including Olympic, completed the steps: carbon emission inventories, public workshops, and developing greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction plans. Olympic's goal was to decrease the park's carbon emissions 30% below a 2006 baseline by 2016. The 2011 National Park Service Green Parks Plan upped that to 35% by 2020, by actions like greening the fleet, making buildings more efficient, prioritizing the use of renewable energy, etc. Our letter noted that the Biden administration has set even higher goals for federal operations.

There have been no followup greenhouse gas

inventories. A recent call to park staff indicated little progress, though there have been gradual efficiency gains as buildings are remodeled and insulation, lighting, and heating systems upgraded. Unfortunately, the only EV charging stations in the park were installed many years ago by the concession lodges. OPA's letter noted that the Biden administration's Zero Emission Vehicle program for federal agencies could help rectify that, especially since transportation is the biggest source of the park's greenhouse gas emissions.

Our letter suggested other areas of potential emissions reductions, like ensuring this summer's shuttle to Hurricane Ridge continues. (Earlier this year OPA made a financial contribution to develop a plan for permanent shuttles to Hurricane Ridge.) And rather than plowing the Hurricane Hill and Obstruction Point Roads in April at near peak snowpack and when snow may still fall, waiting until May or June and letting the sun do much of the work, emissions-free, as

Continued on P10, Climate



"Boomer" or Mountain Beaver. Photo by Wayne Lynch, Alamy

Unlikely Beast

By Tom Butler

Beady eyes, yellow teeth, fat and smelly with thin, patchy hair. That's either the opening to a singles ad I could write about myself, or some of the redeeming qualities of one of our most interesting local rodents.

Beady eyes, yellow teeth, fat and smelly with thin, patchy hair. That's either the opening to a singles ad I could write about myself, or some of the redeeming qualities of one of our most interesting local rodents. The only surviving members of their ancient genus, you could look at them as unfortunate beasts left behind by the juggernaut of evolution or the lucky guys that stumbled upon a good genetic plan early on and just stuck with it. They have primitive teeth, a wide, flat skull and host the world's largest species of flea (up to 3/8" long!). I was about to call them slow-witted, but they've been around for about thirty million years and will very likely still be here after the last human is run over by an automated taxi while staring at their cell phone. They appear to be playing the long game.

All of *Aplodontia rufa's* common names are misnomers, really. They're rodents, but only about as related to real beavers as cats are to dogs, which is not very, taxonomically speaking. They tunnel happily in brushy mountain hillsides, but seem to prefer the lowlands, so they're not really a "mountain" anything. Also known as "boomers," but aside from a rare quiet moan, are silent as far as I know. People over there on the West End called them "farmers" a long time ago, and some old timers still call them "sewellels", a native name that actually translates to "sewellel."

Charisma aside, boomers haven't been all that well studied. It seems they can't produce concentrated urine, and so their water needs might be what restricts them to soggy southwestern BC through western Washington and Oregon and a few moist habitats in northern California. They're supposedly nocturnal, but in our Olympics here, as I'm sure you know, it's not all that unusual to run into them on rainy winter trails. They might drop their mouthful of ferns and take off, stand and stare, or walk right over your boot. I had one panic and waddle briskly right between my legs. A few people claim to have had their boots attacked.

Well, there's somebody out there for everyone, and the female gives birth to two or three pups in late winter. They nurse for a couple of months and are then booted out of a burrow that might be five feet underground. Aside from reproductive obligations, mountain beavers apparently prefer their own company.

Despite being antisocial, mountain beaver populations can be pretty packed in good habitat, and if you ever travel off

-trail in the lowlands around here, you just have to train yourself to laugh when you trip and fall, or you'll soon run out of expletives. There's always a ton of brush, sticks and ropey blackberry of course, but the ground is also very often a crazy, ankle-busting mess of shallow, interwoven tunnels, exposed roots, and trippy piles of dirt. Aging clearcuts and damp ravines are ideal, so you can imagine that might be why the reintroduced fishers have done so well here on our peninsula. Boomers work hard and are very important tillers of soil, disseminators of seed and spore. If they survive the weasels, bobcats, coyotes, and owls, they'll spend 5-10 years plowing just a half-acre or so, eating juicy roots, greens, ferns and whatever sapling tops present themselves. These dietary habits make them unpopular with foresters and gardeners alike, but of course they were here first, and a little trimmed greenery is warm evidence that they're still here, going about their old business.

It's not all that unusual to run into them on rainy winter trails. They might drop their mouthful of ferns and take off, stand and stare, or walk right over your boot.

The Olympic Peninsula: Showcase for Climate Change

By Donna Osseward

Carbon dioxide (CO₂) has been building in our atmosphere because of our carbon releasing activities since the industrial revolution. CO₂ in the air chemically reacts with the ocean's water, turning an increasing percentage of sea water into carbonic acid (H₂CO₃).

This is ocean acidification. Each of us can help reverse it.

Reducing carbon dioxide emissions cannot wait. Twenty percent of the world's population gets one-fifth of its total calories from seafood. The sooner reversal starts, the easier it will be to make the earth more livable for ourselves, our children, and grandchildren.

As ocean acidity increases, the ability of shelled species to create and build their shells decreases. Many oyster young (spat) in the Pacific Northwest now

cannot create shell fast enough to survive. The upwellings in this area portends what is starting to happen around the world.

Among the affected is an ocean living snail called a "sea butterfly," or pteropod. It is less than one-half inch in size and swims using a pair of converted feet as wings. It is an important food source from tiny krill to salmon to whales. Without their food, the ocean seafood ecosystems could collapse.

We can make a difference by voting and we can respond to calls for public comment. We can reduce climate change by giving or:

- Giving gifts that reduce climate change – Give a gift labeled "For YOU and YOUR FUTURE"
 - ◆ A bike for young or old that will enhance the recipient's and the planet's good health.

- ◆ Solar powered motion sensing night lights.
- ◆ A pass for riding public transportation.
- ◆ A membership to a group that promotes people-powered activities.
- ◆ Winter weather-proofing supplies and help with installation.
- Lawn mowing services using an electric mower or help with garden planting and weeding.
- Supporting legislation and practices that would protect the sea butterfly's habitat.
- Supporting legislation to save old-growth forests like those in the park. Untouched, they are the best forests for sequestering carbon.
- Supporting, with comments, OPA efforts to stop improper use of National Park lands and the Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary that

- increases carbon emissions.
- Supporting, with comments, efforts by government agencies to decrease their carbon footprint.
- Supporting, with comments, when government agencies propose projects that would harm the environment.
- Supporting increased housing density in urban growth areas.
- Supporting integrated transportation systems and integrate housing with transportation systems.
- Participating in car pooling.

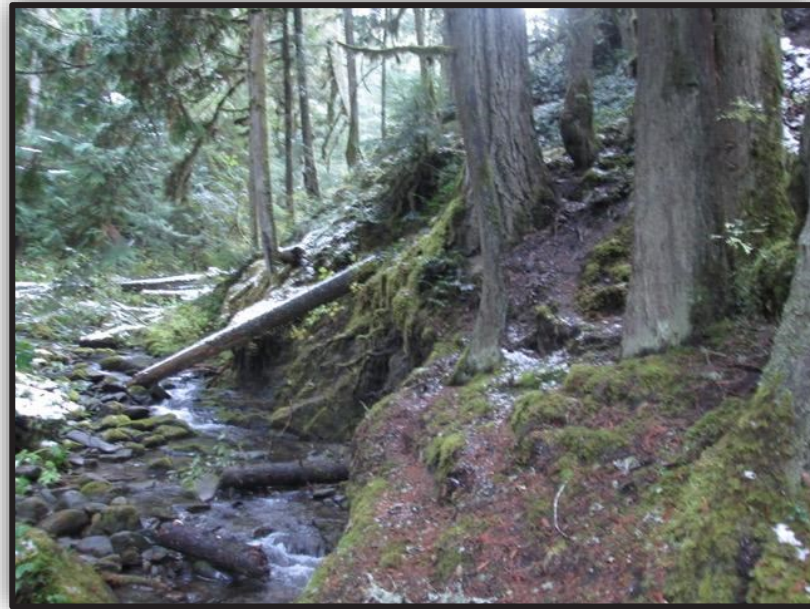
The sea butterfly and our children need your help.

Olympic Forest Announces Major Timber Sale in Dungeness Watershed

Many [areas] are older legacy forests, important carbon sinks that help curb the acceleration of global warming. They do not need "improving."

By Tim McNulty

This past summer, Olympic National Forest announced plans for a major timber action in the northern portion of the Hood Canal Ranger District. The "Canyon Forest Restoration Project" proposes to commercially thin some 2,300 acres of forest in the Dungeness watershed. The scoping document describes the purpose and need for the project: "for increased structural diversity and development of late-successional forest characteristics. A resulting benefit of thinning forests is the generation of wood products and employment of local work crews or contractors for hand felling or other restoration work."



Canyon Creek, Olympic National Forest

This is a massive action for a recovering forest like the Olympic. The areas targeted for thinning are classified as Late Succession and Adaptive Management areas under the Northwest Forest Plan. Close to half the areas being considered (922 acres) are made up of naturally regenerated stands that seeded in after a fire or natural disturbance. As OPA stated in our scoping letter, "These stands generally exhibit a greater diversity of species, age, and habitat structure. They contain an abundance of course woody debris, dead snags, and increasingly larger trees as stands naturally develop. They are evolving at their own pace toward more structurally diverse, late successional

and eventually old-growth forests." Further, many are older legacy forests, important carbon sinks that help curb the acceleration of global warming. They do not need "improving" by cutting trees.

The amount of new road building required to access these unmanaged stands, unspecified in scoping documents, is also a concern. OPA pointed out that "All roads, even temporary roads, can deposit sediments into salmon streams and tributaries, provide vectors for non-native and invasive species, open stands to avian predators, and invite illicit quad and dirt bike incursions, all of which degrade fish and wildlife habitat."

OPA asked the Forest Service to consider thinning only previously logged second-growth stands and monitor treatments for desired habitat results before committing nearly 1,000 acres of older, naturally regenerated forest to restoration thinning.

The Forest Service will release an environmental assessment (EA) this winter or spring. OPA will continue to monitor this project and work with other organizations to reduce its scale. Check our website, olympicparkadvocates.com, for updates. For details on the proposal, view the Forest Service's project webpage at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=62260>. To read OPA's scoping letter, go to <https://olympicparkadvocates.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/082122-CanyonThinScoping.pdf>.

First Nationwide Inventory of Older Forests Released

By Shelley Spalding

Mature and old-growth forests are receiving increased attention nationally and internationally as natural climate solutions. This includes recognition from policy makers and conservation non-governmental organizations (NGOs). As noted in the Spring-Summer 2022 VOICE of the Wild Olympics, protecting those forests is the best and cheapest way to combat climate change.

When President Biden signed an executive order meant to protect old-growth forests on all federal lands last April, the first task was to determine where those forests occur.



Old-growth Forest by John Gussman

While some of those forests had been identified during previous land use designations such as the Northwest Forest Plan, it became obvious that there was need for comprehensive information on the location of all mature and old growth forests on all lands.

In September 2022, an international team of scientists released the first ever coast-to-coast, map-based assessment of mature and old-growth forests (i.e., collectively referred to as older forests) in the continental United States, in a new peer-reviewed study published by *Frontiers in Forests and Global Change*. Using processed satellite images to identify three structural measures relevant to forest maturity — canopy height, canopy cover, and above ground living biomass (amount of live vegetation) — scientists found that older forests make up approximately 167 million acres, or 36%, of all forests in the contiguous 48 states. While 35% of these forests are on federal lands managed by the U.S. Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and National Park Service, the rest exist on lands owned by non-federal entities. While older forests in National Parks are fully protected from logging, only 24% of national forests and BLM lands — which

Continued on P10, Inventory



Old-growth Forest by John Gussman

Wild Olympics Bill Passes House, Completes Senate Committee Process

In July, the Wild Olympics Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers Act passed the U.S. House on a bipartisan vote. The bill, which is sponsored by Senator Patty Murray and Representative Derek Kilmer (WA D-6), passed with several other public land bills as an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). Thanks in large to Representative Kilmer's diligence, this is the third time the bill has passed the House.

The legislation also had a hearing and mark-up in the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee but received only a tied vote along party lines.

Climate *Continued from p.5*

was done in the past.

Finally, it mentioned how all our members care about climate change's impact on park resources "...the marine ecosystems suffering from ocean acidification and warming; the forests under attack from non-native pests and other stressors exacerbated by climate change; the disappearing iconic glaciers whose meltwater nurtures cold-water loving fish; the decreasing snowpack and summer water supply..." We three organizations offered our help and urged the park to take more aggressive action and be a clear climate leader internally and in partnership with Olympic Peninsula

Inventory *Continued from p.9*

make up the majority of federally managed forests — have similar protections. The study identified some 50 million acres of older federal forests as at-risk from logging. These valuable forests, if logged over the next decade, would result in a significant uptick in U.S. carbon emissions.

Ahead of two leading international conferences on climate change -- COP 27 and the UN Biodiversity conference -- hundreds of individuals representing dozens of organizations recently gathered at the USFS office in Portland. They sent a strong message to President Biden that these conferences provide him with an opportunity to act as a global climate leader and reiterate US commitments to fight both biodiversity loss and a rapidly warming planet. The large turnout at these rallies demonstrated to politicians, diplomats, and federal agencies that there is widespread support for letting trees grow!

If passed by the full Senate, the Wild Olympics legislation would permanently protect more than 126,500 acres of Olympic National Forest as wilderness, and 19 rivers and their major tributaries – a total of 464 river miles – as Wild and Scenic Rivers. Designed through extensive community input to protect ancient forests and clean water and enhance outdoor recreation, Wild Olympics would designate the first new wilderness in the Olympic National Forest in nearly four decades and the first-ever protected wild and scenic rivers on the Olympic Peninsula.

To date, over 800 local businesses, hunting & fishing organizations, Tribes, and elected officials endorse the Wild Olympics Wilderness and Wild & Scenic Rivers Act. Supporters are hopeful that the legislation will be picked up by the close of this session of Congress.

Marten *Continued from p.3*

Marten were detected at 13 of the 33 scent dispenser stations deployed over the two winters. After the success of these pilot studies, Olympic National Park Marten *Continued from p.3* partnered with the University of Washington to fund a Master's student to expand over-winter surveys across the Park and surrounding National Forest. I was very fortunate to be selected. This research is also partnered with the Olympic National Forest and the Woodland Park Zoo. In the spring of 2022, Olympic Park Advocates very generously provided financial support which allowed me to hire an extra field technician. The ability to hire this technician was truly crucial to the success of my first field season.

Work began in July and continued through mid-October. Over the course of the summer, we deployed 67 scent dispensers and accompanying cameras. With the hypothesis that remnant populations of martens would be confined to high elevation forests, we targeted areas above 2000 feet in elevation. Reaching all these surveys sites was not an easy task and I was fortunate to have volunteers aid my crew in carrying equipment through the mountains and assisting at deployment sites.

Next summer, we will revisit each of these sites to retrieve camera cards and find out if any martens investigated our scent dispensers. A portion of the dispensers will be moved to new areas while the others will be replenished to survey the same sites for another year. This study aims to determine the marten's distribution and population viability and could help managers decide if interventions such as translocations may be necessary to augment the current population.

Commercial Air Tours to Remain Over Olympic

By Rob Smith

Low-level commercial air tours will be allowed to continue over the heart of Olympic National Park, despite the National Park Service receiving more than 4,000 comments, almost all of which opposed.

A limit of 64 tour flights, which stay between 2,000 and 3,000 feet above ground level, will be allowed annually, similar to current levels.

The approved tour route is from Port Angeles, entering the park up the Sol Duc valley to circle Mount Olympus and then departing south of Hurricane Ridge and across Obstruction Point trailhead to return. That brings noisy air tours across some of the most visited backcountry sites and popular overlooks in the park, almost all of which is within the Daniel J. Evans Wilderness.

It's an opportunity missed by the NPS to significantly reduce or eliminate this unneeded intrusion into Olympic's world-class natural experience. The NPS could have done more. For instance, a similar review at Glacier National Park produced a plan to phase out low-level air tours by 2029.

To encourage the park to protect the natural sounds and quiet at Olympic, whether from commercial tour flights or Navy training jets, contact Superintendent Sula Jacobs at olym_superintendent@nps.gov.



Elwha Valley in ONP, by John Gussman

Judge Rejects Navy Review of Growler Jet Expansion

By Rob Smith

The Navy did not do sufficient impact or alternative analysis when they increased EA-18G "Growler" jet training at or near their Whidbey Island airbase, according to a federal court. The judge affirmed the findings made a few months ago by a judge magistrate.

Washington Attorney General Bob Ferguson and Citizens for Ebey's Reserve each brought suit against the Navy following the completion of an environmental impact statement for their greatly expanding use of the local airspace for jet training as they build up Growler numbers there.

The judge agreed with a couple of key challenges: that the noise impact on people has not been considered enough, especially on children in nearby communities, and that reasonable alternatives to reduce noise by training elsewhere should have been more seriously considered.

On the negative side, the judge did not find a distinction between real time noise monitoring and the Navy's preferred method of modelling the noise

footprint without actually using instruments to measure it. National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) and OPA raised this concern over the Olympics not because modelling is inherently bad, but because the results depend on inherent assumptions built into the calculations that can skew the outcomes. For instance, the Navy's models generalize and average noise impacts over a landscape which varies greatly in elevation, and the Navy also averages their noise impacts for long periods of time, so any single dramatic noise spike is largely lost over an average day. It's the underlying assumptions in the models which make all the difference between capturing reality or not seeing what's really happening.

NPCA is taking a close look at whether some of the weaknesses of the Navy's Whidbey Island analysis are similar to the more recently completed Northwest Training and Testing environmental impact statement which the Navy did for expanded Growler training over the West side of the Olympics, including over the Hoh Rain Forest at Olympic National Park.



Voice of the Wild Olympics

Amy Youngblood, Editor

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