



VOICE of the WILD OLYMPICS

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Olympic marmots in Olympic National Park. Photo by John Gussman

Conservationists Petition U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to Place Olympic Marmots on Endangered Species List

By Tim McNulty

Olympic marmots (*Marmota olympus*) are the undisputed heroes of the alpine zone. They emerge in April to spend the short mountain summer feeding, mating, raising their pups and preparing for long winter hibernations. Their feeding preferences shape the character of subalpine meadows, and their sharp warning whistles alert the entire meadow community to danger.

During the long millennia of the last Ice Age, Olympic marmots were isolated from other marmot populations of the West, the hoary and yellow-belly marmots. They remain isolated today in their island-like range, a distinct species found nowhere else on earth.

Multiyear studies begun in the early 2000s documented sharp declines in Olympic marmot populations. One in three marmot colonies had been abandoned. Among the several known predators of marmots, coyotes were taking inordinately high numbers. Lactating females were particularly vulnerable. Ongoing citizen science surveys indicate that the marmot population is currently stable, but at a much lower number than in the past. Only 2,000 to 4,000 marmots are

thought to be alive today.

This past spring, the Center for Biological Diversity filed a petition with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to protect Olympic marmots under the Endangered Species Act. The Center's Noah Greenwald said, "Climate change and the loss of wolves from the Olympic Peninsula have changed things in the mountains, and our beloved marmots are paying the price." Prior to wolf eradication in the Olympics, coyotes weren't found here.

In its petition, the Center recommended reintroducing wolves to the Olympics, a sensible and long-overdue idea, along with dramatically reducing greenhouse gas emissions to curtail climate change. Both are needed to restore Olympic marmots -- and so much more.

Olympic Park Advocates supports the Center in this effort, and we have written the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service endorsing Endangered Species Act protection. ESA listing would allow the agency to craft strong safeguards as well as a recovery plan to ensure that Olympic marmots survive into the future. The Service must now decide whether protection for the Olympic marmot is warranted. OPA will closely monitor the process.

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Masthead photo by Pat O'Hara

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Elwha Creation Site on Verge of Protection

By Rob Smith

The Lower Elwha Kallam Tribe may finally see the return and protection of their creation site through a bill introduced late in this Congress by retiring Rep. Derek Kilmer (WA-6).

When the first dam on the Elwha River, west of Port Angeles, was built in 1910, the tribe was not consulted, and the resulting reservoir inundated this sacred site and other areas used by the tribal people. A few years later, a dam was built upstream at Glines Canyon, now within Olympic National Park.

In 1992, Congress authorized the removal of both dams to restore fish passage, especially for salmon. All five species of salmon in this region used this watershed, the largest in the park. Following final dam removal in 2014 salmon have quickly returned to their historic ranges up the river and its tributaries, bringing new life to the river, food for a multitude of other animals and essential nutrients to the forests.

The former Glines Canyon reservoir became park land since it had been absorbed within the boundaries of the park when it was established in 1938. But the Aldwell reservoir land downstream of the park boundary and north of Highway 101 and the Elwha Dam site itself was held as "project lands" by the National Park Service pending a final



Former Lake Aldwell reservoir bed and surrounding project lands. Photo by John Gussman

decision on whether federal, state, or tribal entities should own them.

The Kilmer bill reflects a consensus that the approximately 1000 acres of project lands should be returned to the Lower Elwha Klallam as trust land under tribal control. Language within the bill also directs that this stretch of river shall be managed consistent with the federal Wild and Scenic Rivers Act which would prohibit future dams or water diversions.

Some of the cultural sites within the project lands have been dated to 8,000 years old, making these some of the oldest known archeological sites in the Pacific Northwest.

There is a chance that this legislation could be enacted in the final "lame duck" days of Congress following the election. After more than a century, the project lands may return home to their original people for protection into the future.

New ONP Wildlife Lead Returns to Familiar Territory

By Janis Burger

It took a few decades, but Miranda Terwilliger is back in the ecosystem where she had her first seasonal job in 1997. Back then she worked on marbled murrelets for the Washington Department of Natural Resources, based in Forks. Now she has a much larger portfolio as the new Wildlife Branch Lead at Olympic National Park.

Miranda grew up hiking and camping in the Colorado Rockies, always knowing she liked being outside. "I was one of those kids who knew early on what they wanted to do," she said, smiling. After a double major in wildlife and vegetation at Humboldt State University, she went on to earn her master's degree at the University of Alaska Fairbanks studying Dall's sheep. Like many biologists she then held a variety

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Miranda Terwilliger. NPS photo

Long-time Friend and Trusted OPA Advisor Bruce Moorhead Passes

By Tim McNulty

It is with great sadness that the OPA community bids farewell to our former colleague Bruce Moorhead. He passed away in Port Angeles in October 2024 at the age of 87. Bruce was a lifetime member of OPA and joined the board in 2002, after his retirement from Olympic National Park. He shared his enthusiasm and expertise with us and helped develop informed policies regarding wildlife and habitats, first as a board member for seventeen years, then as a trusted advisor. We send our condolences to his wife Rosemary and his family.

Bruce came to Olympic National Park as its sole wildlife ranger in 1968. He served in that position with distinction, later joined by other professional staff, for more than three decades. At Olympic, Bruce initiated some of the first serious research on Roosevelt elk populations, authoring or coauthoring several scientific papers on elk and other wildlife. He worked with deer, spotted owls, cougars and bears. Bruce wrote the popular book, *The Forest Elk*, which drew on extensive research as well as his considerable field experience.

Bruce directed early studies of non-

native mountain goats in the park and oversaw the initial round of goat removals in the 1980s. With Doug Houston and Ed Schreiner, he co-authored the seminal monograph "Mountain Goats in Olympic National Park: Biology and Management of an Introduced Species," which laid the groundwork for later removal and translocation of non-native goats in Olympic.

As a respected conservationist in the community, Bruce also served on boards and committees for the North Olympic Land Trust, Friends of Ennis Creek, Olympic Audubon Society, and the Sequim Elk Advisory Committee, and was president of the Washington Wildlife Society. OPA trustee Tom Bihn accompanied Bruce on a wildlife safari in Tanzania. "Bruce

was very generous in sharing his vast knowledge of wildlife, making it a truly amazing trip," he recalled. "It will live forever in my memory."

In a written message for friends, Bruce said, "Remember me by going to some green and lovely glade, with large ancient trees not far from a stream with a lovely view through the forest."

Thank you, Bruce. We will.



Bruce Moorhead (right) processing a mountain goat for removal in ONP, 1988. Photo by Janis Burger.

The Harried Lives of Snowshoe Hares

By Tom Butler

Backcountry skiers often see their tracks in the snow, but hardly ever the hide nor hare. Though fast and agile, snowshoe hares rely on good cover and excellent hearing to avoid predators and will freeze until you're about to step on them. They're crepuscular, meaning they prefer dim light and tend to loaf during the day. Home ranges are really small, often just a few acres, and people who hunt them say a dog-chased hare very often circles back, apparently reluctant to leave its home area.

Lepus americanus unwittingly supplies protein to food webs wherever they live, and any predator who can catch them eats them like popcorn. In winter most other prey animals are under ground or snow, and hares are the only thing left in the cupboard. It's estimated 85 percent of snowshoe hares don't survive their first year. Elderly hares are extremely rare and no more than five years old.

Hares make up for these huge losses by reproducing, well, "like rabbits." The female, or "jill," requires a chase to get in the mood, and quality mates are the "bucks" able to catch her. Females can have several litters of 4-6 impossibly cute "leveretes" per year, and the young often just sort of pop out while she goes about her business or wherever she lounges during the day. They come out fully furred and able to hop around and eat as soon as they dry off, kind of like a chicken chick. That's the biggest difference between hares and rabbits. Hares give birth to precocial young, which are pretty much ready to go at birth. Females nurse only casually for a few days or weeks and the young are mostly on their own. Aside from some released pets, we don't have any wild rabbits like cottontails in the Olympics,

but if we did, they'd give birth to altricial young, which are blind and hairless requiring weeks of delicate care and feeding (like you did).

Hares eat a variety of grasses, leaves, forbs, twigs and garden vegetables and in winter browse up and down trees with snow depth. In tough times they'll nibble dead animals.

If you were thinking of being a hare in your next life, please consider the following: Like many lagomorphs (rabbits and hares) and some rodents, hares are also coprophagous, meaning they uh, eat their own uh...poop, uhm, all the time. I'm not one to criticize lifestyles, but hares and rabbits have been around for over thirty

million years! Come on! Couldn't they have come up with a better digestive system by now?! Well, apparently they still need to run their food through twice in order to squeeze out all the nutrients. Often eaten right from the source (bleah!), but for some non-hare members of this group, bacteria that perform some crucial stage of food breakdown must have sunlight to complete their job. Well-



Snowshoe hare. Olympic National Park photo

fed animals that rely on these kinds of digestive bacteria will slowly starve if deprived of their sunlight-ripened poops.

Adults weigh about three or four pounds, females a little bigger. Huge bristly (4-6") hind feet provide the snowshoes. Scats are usually slightly flattened disks a little bigger than an M & M. Also known as varying hares, they live throughout Canada south of the treeline, across northern United States and south along all the major mountain ranges. Over most of their range, they famously exchange brown summer coats for elegant white in winter. The changes are triggered by daylength, not temperature, and years where snow comes early or stays late, they are pretty conspicuous for a few weeks. Here in the Olympics and other southern parts of their range, they stay brown all year.

Lake Ozette and Quinault Forest Lands to be Returned to Area Tribes

Two forest parcels could be returned to peninsula tribes for conservation pending further actions by Congress and the Washington Legislature. Both measures aim to correct historic wrongs. OPA supports both actions.

The Washington Board of Natural Resources requested Trust Land Transfer (TLT) funds from the state Legislature to conserve a 372-acre parcel to be transferred to the Quileute Tribe for conservation and cultural purposes. One of eight parcels requested for TLT funding, the land lies south of Olympic National Park and includes two creeks that flow into Lake Ozette. It provides habitat for the endangered Lake Ozette sockeye salmon run as well as the federally threatened marbled murrelet and northern spotted owl.

In October, OPA joined 115 other conservation organizations in a letter to Governor Inslee requesting he include \$30 million in the capital budget proposal for the eight Trust Land Transfer (TLT) projects, including the Lake Ozette property. Six of the projects will go to federally recognized tribes, a landmark move for the program.

To the south, a bill introduced by Congressman Derek Kilmer (D-WA) would transfer ownership of 72 acres of rich, low-elevation old-growth forest to the Quinault Indian Nation. The forest is located along the Salmon River at the northern end of the Quinault Reservation. It was sold to non-native townspeople during the "allotment" period when tribal lands were auctioned off by the Bureau of Indian Affairs to the highest bidder. It is currently held in federal trust.

"The forced breakup of our reservation erased one of the



Kayakers on Ozette Lake, Olympic National Park. Photo by John Gussman

foundations of our way of life, our view that the land and waters of our homeland were for communal use by all," said Guy Capoeman, president of the Quinault Indian Nation. "This legislation will help right a historic wrong." The tribe will manage the land for conservation, education, hunting, gathering and other cultural uses.

Free Boat Cleaning Stations at ONP Will Combat Aquatic Invasive Species

Olympic National Park is launching a new aquatic invasive species program to protect Lake Crescent and Lake Ozette. Free boat cleaning stations, public outreach, partnerships, and environmental sampling will reduce the spread of existing invasive species and prevent the introduction of new invasive species.

Two aquatic invasive species were detected in Lake Crescent in 2019 and 2022: New Zealand mudsnails (*Potamopyrgus antipodarum*) and Asian clams (*Corbicula fluminea*). Asian clams were identified in Lake Ozette in 2018. Both species reproduce rapidly and spread quickly, with Asian clams sometimes exceeding 20,000 individuals per square meter.

These invasive species harm native ecosystems. They disrupt ecological processes and outcompete native species. Prevention and public education are the key. Once these species are established, they are exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to remove. Recreational boaters are encouraged to use free cleaning stations at Lake Ozette and the Fairholme, Storm King, and Log Cabin Resort boat launch stations on Lake Crescent.

Asian clams and New Zealand mudsnails were likely introduced into Lake Crescent by "hitchhiking" on recreational boats. Cleaning boats will also prevent the introduction species such as zebra mussels, quagga mussels, and Eurasian watermilfoil (present in Lake Sutherland).

Prevention is the best way to stop aquatic invasive species. The National Park Service emphasizes that cleaning stations should be used before and after boating. All watercraft, including boats, kayaks, rafts, stand-up paddleboards, and other flotation devices should be cleaned. To learn more about how to prevent invasive species, visit: [go.nps.gov/protect-our-waters](https://www.nps.gov/protect-our-waters).



Forests around "Alley Cat" timber sale in the Elwha Watershed. Photo by John Gussman.

Board of Natural Resources Cancels Elwha Timber Sale

At its November 5 meeting, the Washington Board of Natural Resources cancelled the 139-acre "Alley Cat" timber sale, but it approved two other legacy forest sales in the Elwha watershed, "Tree Well" and "Parched," totaling 586 acres.

Legacy forests are mature, naturally generated forests with exceptional biodiversity, habitat, watershed and carbon-storage benefits. For these reasons, it's critical that the remaining legacy forests on Washington Department of Natural Resources lands be left standing.

Elwha Legacy Forests, the Center for Responsible Forestry, the Port Angeles City Council, Elwha tribal members and more than 6,000 letter signers opposed all three legacy forest sales in the Elwha Valley. Dave Upthegrove, Washington's newly elected Commissioner of Public Lands, pledged to place a hold on all legacy forest logging on DNR lands. Newly elected state Senator Mike Chapman, who represents the area, also opposed the sales, as did two of the six-member Board of Natural Resources.

Yet outgoing Public Lands Commissioner Hillary Franz refused to delay the Tree Well and Parched sales. Franz told the Peninsula Daily News she withdrew the Alley Cat sale due to a conversation with Elwha Klallam Tribe chairperson Frances Charles.

More legacy forests, including stands in the Dungeness watershed, are on the chopping block for the December Board of Natural Resources meeting.

The Earth Law Center has promised to challenge the Elwha timber sales in court. Clallam County Democrats and others are opposing the sales. For more information, visit earthlawcenter.org/elwha-legacy-forests

Tourism to Olympic National Park Brings Nearly \$400 million to Peninsula Economy

A National Park Service report shows that 2,947,503 visitors to Olympic National Park in 2023 spent \$279.2 million in neighboring communities.

That spending supported 2,990 jobs in the local area and had a cumulative benefit to the local economy of \$393.2 million.

Nationwide, 2023 visitation to all national parks reached more than 325 million visitors a year. The numbers don't lie. That many visitors spent \$26.4 billion in

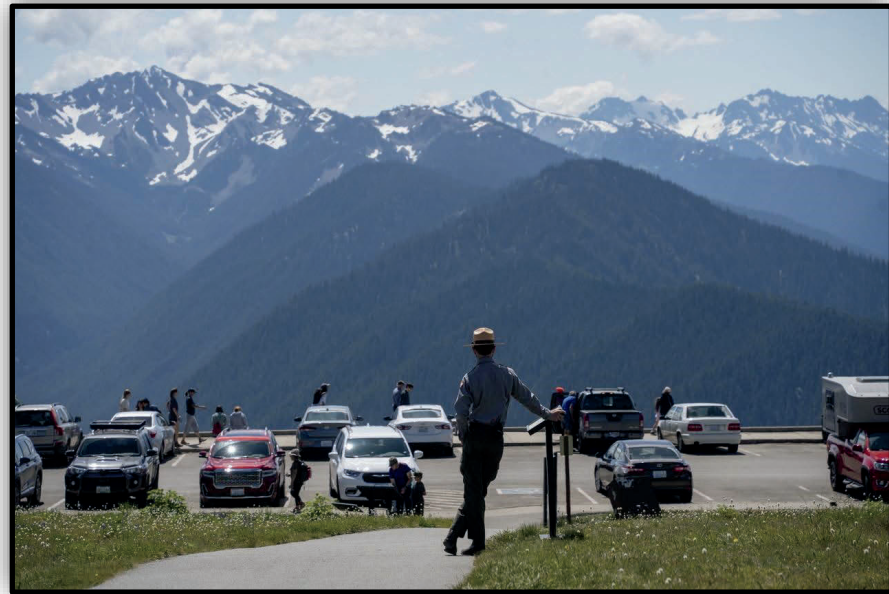


Photo: Visitors at Olympic National Park. Photo by John Gussman

communities near national parks. This spending supported 415,400 jobs, provided \$19.4 billion in labor income and \$55.6 billion in economic output to the U.S. economy. The lodging sector did best, with \$9.9 billion and 89,200 jobs.

Restaurants received the next greatest benefit, with \$5.2 billion and 68,600 jobs. Benefits to rural communities is noteworthy, but Olympic and other parks will need take heroic measures to protect natural resources amidst the current explosion of visitor use.

Terwilliger *Continued from P. 3*

of different seasonal positions with a variety of organizations.

In the early 2000s she got her first permanent job with the National Park Service as the ecologist at Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve where she met her future husband, a park interpreter. When they relocated to Grand Canyon, she switched to studying and managing the growing herd of bison on the North Rim, Mexican spotted owls, California condors and a host of other species. That work required a lot of interagency cooperation and relationship building with local tribes, the state and the U.S. Forest Service, particularly in regard to managing the cross-boundary wild bison herd, she explained.

When she took the position at Olympic, she and her family moved north. Having more opportunities for their 11-year-old daughter was one of the reasons they moved to Olympic. "I'm excited that this was a great fit for the whole family," she said.

When asked what she likes best about her wildlife work, she quickly replied, "Being out in the field with wildlife." But she added that she also enjoys mentoring people.

Her least favorite? Having to document the deaths of animals or put them down after humans

have interfered somehow, whether by illegally feeding, mistakenly "rescuing" animals that don't need help, or by car strikes. This year alone she documented the deaths of a fledgling bald eagle, a marbled murrelet nestling, and a sea otter pup, and had to put down a fawn with broken legs.

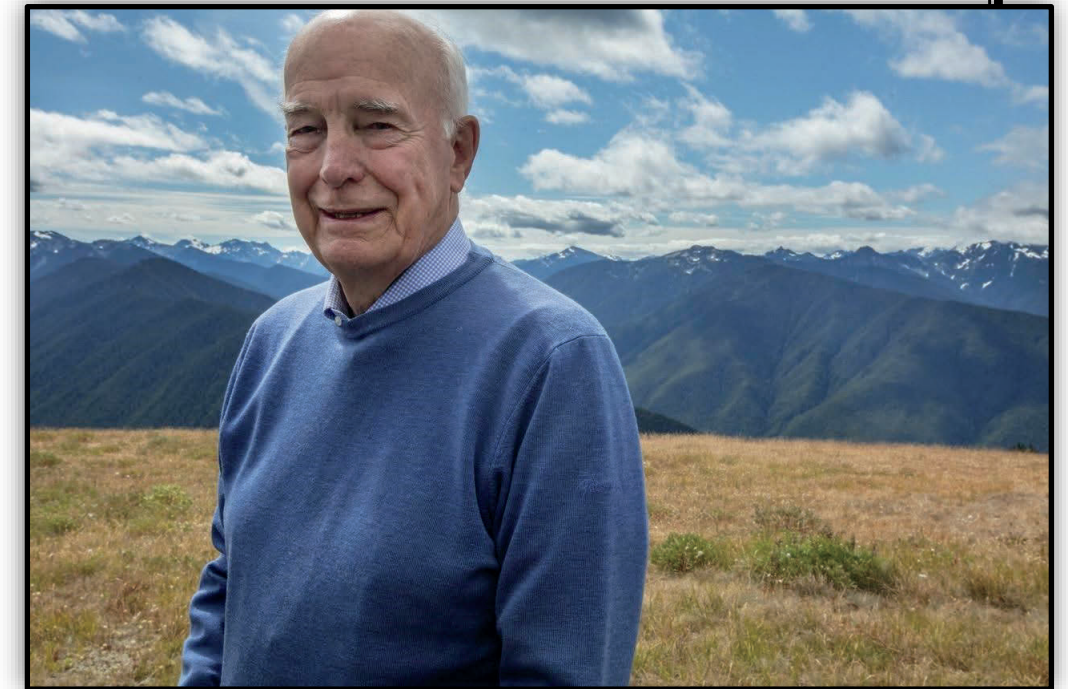
What lies ahead? She said she's expecting to hear any time whether the USFWS will begin the process to list the endemic Olympic marmot as a candidate species under the Endangered Species Act. She said there's currently no movement on the possible reintroduction of wolves to Olympic National Park, something Olympic Park Advocates has pushed for. But she is in a multi-agency landscape connectivity workgroup with a focus on highway overpasses. Such overpasses could facilitate the colonization of areas west of Interstate 5, including the Olympic Peninsula. "I expect it to happen sooner rather than later," she said.

In the meantime, she's enjoying being in the biggest metropolitan area she and her husband have lived in in decades, Port Angeles, population 20,000. "We met in a place the size of Ohio with a community of only 200 people," she said, smiling again.

Gov. Dan Evans: An Appreciation

By Tim McNulty

A giant in Olympic conservation has passed. Governor Daniel J. Evans died in September. He was 98. A lifelong champion of the Olympics and friend and life member of Olympic Park Advocates, Governor, then Senator Evans left a stunning legacy of wildland protection in the Olympics and throughout all of Washington that will endure for generations. We at OPA owe him our profound thanks.



Dan Evans at the 2017 Dedication of the Daniel J. Evans Wilderness.

Photo by Steve Ringman, Seattle Times

When I first became involved in wilderness protection in the early 1970s, Dan Evans was a giant. He maintained that stature for the next half century. Dan worked out the agreement with timber companies that led to the 1976 legislation adding Shi Shi Beach, Point of the Arches, and the east shore of Lake Ozette to Olympic National Park. Eight years later, as U.S. Senator, Dan was instrumental in passing the million-acre Washington Wilderness Bill. Wilderness designations in the Gray Wolf, Dosewallips, lower Duckabush and Skokomish watersheds were enhanced greatly by Dan's advocacy. His personal intimacy with these areas, gained through a lifetime of hiking, made him a powerful advocate.

Dan guided a 1986 ONP boundary bill through Congress. The act realigned the boundaries of the park and forest to conform with watershed and ridge-top divides and expanded the Park by 6,286 acres. It added the waters and submerged lands of Lake Ozette to the park (they were previously managed by the State of Washington). It also added the entire coastal intertidal area to the park.

In 1988, Dan was the guiding sponsor of a bill that established a vast sweep of wilderness in Washington's three national parks. The Olympic Wilderness, later renamed the Daniel J. Evans Wilderness in his honor, protects 95 percent of the park's magnificent wildlands. It was a breathtaking accomplishment, culminating a lifetime of conservation leadership.

Olympic Park Advocates is proud to have worked closely with Senator Evans on all these campaigns. Our past president Polly Dyer's longtime friendship and working relationship with Dan was an important factor in each of these successes. But without leadership in elective office, the best conservation campaigns can founder on the rocks. Having Dan in public office, with his lifelong passion for the Olympics, legislative expertise, and a bold vision for the future, was a rare piece of good fortune.

Visitors to the Olympics for generations to come will benefit from one man's passion for a special place on earth -- and his steadfast drive to protect it.

Lessons from the River: Ten Years after Dam Removal on the Elwha

By Tim McNulty

Even before the last rubble was blasted away from Glines Canyon Dam on the Elwha River, two bull trout flashed past the dam site and headed upstream. They were followed a few days later by the first Chinook salmon. Then coho salmon appeared, then steelhead.

Once the two obsolete and illegal dams were erased from Olympic National Park's largest watershed, the river's gates opened. Pacific salmon

flooded through to spawn and die in their ancestral waters. With them came a pulse of renewal that reverberated through the ecosystem and revitalized the river from headwaters to estuary.

Ten years after the largest salmon restoration to date, the rebirth of the wild and dynamic Elwha River ecosystem surges forward. Rainbow trout, descendants of steelhead isolated for nearly a century behind the dams, have "rediscovered" anadromy. Following some deep genetic memory, they migrated out to the Salish Sea and returned, fueling a resurgence of steelhead trout in the river. Bull trout ascended the river's canyons to its headwaters, seeking the coldest waters in which to spawn. Chinook salmon, kings of the anadromous hierarchy, are spawning heartily in the middle reaches of the watershed, but most have yet to make it through the river's upper canyons. As their numbers increase, they too will reclaim upriver spawning grounds.

At ten years, salmon recovery is still in its infancy; only a few generations of salmon have returned to the river. But their effects are cascading through the ecosystem, from increased productivity in dippers, and some 22 other animals known to feed on spawned salmon, to

ocean-derived nutrients fueling the growth of streamside trees.

Other aspects of the restoration are churning forward. Bottled up in reservoirs behind the dams, 24 million cubic yards of river stones, cobble, gravel, sand and silt were let loose on the lower river, filling and reconfiguring channels, opening new habitats, and reclaiming historic floodways. Dead trees and woody debris trapped in the reservoirs hurtled

downstream on winter floods and stacked up into log jams, forming pools and riffles, creating spawning areas for fish and sanctuaries for young salmon.

At the river's mouth, a starved and eroded cobble beach has transformed into a lush estuary where sandy beaches, intertidal areas and pools host schools of forage fish. Herring, sand lance, sardines, anchovies and surf smelt attract a cacophony of predators, including bald eagles, terns, ducks, river otters, seals and sea lions.

The Elwha Klallam people, who suffered the most devastating effects of dam construction -- and who worked for generations to see the dams removed -- began a limited ceremonial and subsistence fishery on the river in 2023. The youngest generation of Elwha people are now growing up with a productive salmon stream, and like countless generations before them, welcome the return of salmon with prayers and celebrations.

When I look back nearly four decades to the early days of the campaign to "Free the Elwha," it seemed the longest of long shots. Elwha Klallam elders and leaders, tribal members from sister tribes, a small cadre of environmentalists including OPA, and a

Continued on P. 11, Lessons



Chinook salmon returning up the Elwha River in the vicinity of the former Glines Canyon Dam.

Photo by John Gussman.

The Future of Water in the West

A Book Review by Shelley Spalding

"Down River," by Heather Hansman (University of Chicago Press, 2022), is part travelogue, part geology lesson, and part memoir. This trifecta is accomplished by Hansman as she describes her mostly solo 2016 pack-raft trip from the headwaters of the Green River in Wyoming to its confluence with the Colorado River in Utah. Although the book is well researched and meticulously investigates current threats, it reads more like an adventure yarn than a scientific study.

Hansman decides to undertake this journey not just because she loves the Green River but also because she feels the best way to understand the complexity of the ways in which it is used is to get back on the river. "I had to be gone, to be in it, to see the good and the bad," she writes. "I wanted to understand vulnerability and risk, my own and other peoples, as increasing demands are put on the river." Fellow river runner and conservationist George Wendt reminds Hansman that "we save what we love and we love what we know."

As she seeks to understand the demands on the river, she explores the complexity and contradictions found in western water law. The Law of the River is guided by a "use it or lose it" paradigm. Thus there is little incentive to conserve water. She follows her curiosity and learns about where the water goes — and who's fighting over what. She travels through Wyoming ranches, natural-gas fields, cities and national parks, and finds that seemingly everyone wants a piece of its pie.

The Green River is the largest tributary of the over-worked and over-allocated Colorado River. It supplies water to 33 million people, and it holds a precious and increasingly scarce commodity: unallocated acre-feet of water. Lessons learned in this book about the Green not only provide an insight into threats facing the Green, but also provide a powerful illustration of the West's battles over the water in an increasingly dry landscape.

Lessons *Continued from P. 10*

few local fishermen took on an entrenched government regulatory agency and a powerful commercial industry. But the overwhelming power and presence of a magnificent river made an eloquent case for its own freedom. The river spoke and the world listened.

Attempt to Weaken State Wolf Protection is Defeated

By Tom Bihn

At its July meeting, the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission rejected an attempt to weaken protections for wolves in Washington. Commissioners voted five to four to maintain the state's "endangered" status of grey wolves in Washington.

Classified by the state as endangered in 1980, long before their return in the late 1990s and early 2000s, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) staff proposed downlisting wolves to either "threatened" or "sensitive" status in 2023. Either determination would result in lower penalties for unauthorized killing of wolves, and likely more permits issued to ranchers to kill wolves determined to have attacked or killed livestock.

A majority of the commission questioned the hard science behind the staff recommendation, particularly the opacity of population numbers provided by the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation.

"I do not believe I was presented reliable, compelling science to downlist," said Commissioner Lorna Smith.

"We're not only considering what to do with the wolves. We're also trying to build a 'best management' approach for all species," said Commissioner Tim Ragen. "I want us to do all of our homework. I think we can do a better job than we have now."

Not only have wolf numbers in the Southern Cascades not approached minimum targets set by the state for delisting, but also no wolves have returned to the Washington coast or Olympic Peninsula. Olympic Park Advocates opposed the downlisting, writing in our letter to the commission: "With an estimated 260 wolves statewide and no pair, in fact only one wolf documented in the South Cascades/Northwest Coast region, the proposed change in status is clearly premature."

OPA applauds the Commission for exercising a precautionary approach on this important vote and hopes the commissioners continue their careful review of all the data when they consider downlisting or delisting of wolves in the future. The next time a decision might be made is in five years, when the next periodic wolf status review is completed. In addition to state law, wolves in the western two-thirds of the state remain protected under the federal Endangered Species Act.

Now a decade into recovery, the Elwha teaches us a vital lesson in a troubled time: how diverse communities can come together to heal a damaged earth.

An earlier version of this essay was published in Rewilding Earth.



Voice of the Wild Olympics

Amy Youngblood, Editor

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