Precious gold symbolizes 50th anniversaries. Its rarity and cost reflect the high value we place on five decades of caring and commitment.

In 2014, America celebrates the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act. Congress overwhelmingly passed the act in 1964, creating a National Wilderness Preservation System representing our nation’s commitment to preserving some of the last, large undeveloped tracts of our natural heritage. In the 1988 Washington Park Wilderness Act, Congress designated 95 percent of Olympic National Park and much of Mount Rainier and North Cascades National Parks as wilderness, adding to the national system.

Room to Roam
The value of wilderness depends on perspective. For threatened species like salmon, bull trout or marbled murrelets, the Olympic Wilderness is a rare place to call home. They find sanctuary in the cloak of old-growth forests draping protected lowlands and mountain slopes, and in the 3,000 miles of rivers and streams that are unmatched in the lower 48 states. For far-ranging species like elk, cougars, fishers and bears, there is room to roam in nearly one million acres of wilderness away from roads and other development.

For scientists, these wild lands provide a living laboratory to study and measure changes—from intertidal zones to glacier-capped peaks. Long-term monitoring of old-growth forests, mountain lakes, climate, water and air quality, as well as fish, elk and bird populations offers insights into our changing planet. Although wilderness isn’t immune from impacts originating outside its boundaries, it serves as a gold standard to compare with changing conditions elsewhere.

A Dose of “Vitamin N”
For people who like to explore, wild lands offer a sanctuary of quiet, solitude and challenge on many scales. You can wander up a trail immersing yourself in moss-muffled silence, or embark on an epic adventure. Both offer a big dose of what author Richard Louv calls “Vitamin N.” Medical professionals have learned this natural essential “vitamin” benefits us all, and have used it to treat patients from traumatized veterans to over-stressed children.

Winter and spring in the Olympics is an ideal time to take a healthy dose of Vitamin N, whether you gaze into the park’s wild interior from a viewpoint or head up a trail. Snowshoe or ski amid snow-clad firs. Escape into a symphony of wind, water and a wren’s ebullient song in the temperate rain forest. Feel the power of storm-driven surf pommeling the wilderness coast.

With your continuing support, this priceless wilderness park will be protected for the next 50 years, and beyond.

Get Involved!
Olympic National Park is developing a Wilderness Stewardship Plan for protecting and managing wilderness. You can review preliminary management alternatives this spring. For details go to the park’s wilderness planning website at http://parkplanning.nps.gov/olymwild.

February moonrise along Olympic Wilderness coast, photo by Bryan Bell.
Looking for Olympic National Park’s tree-lined coasts and forested interior may be a challenge, but it takes planning.” ...are available year-round at the Olympic National Park Visitor Center/ Wilderness Information Center in Port Angeles. General Park Information: Call (360) 406-5056 and make selections for information about different areas of the park.

Port Angeles Area

Olympic National Park Visitor Center & Wilderness Information Center: Open 9-4 daily except Christmas Day. Video exhibits, movies, and book sales and staff to help you plan a visit. Wilderness camping, hiking, and permission information, as well as bear canisters, are also available. More ranger stations do not have regular winter hours; call the main visitor center (360) 565-5310 for general park information or (360) 565-3100 for wilderness trip planning.

Emergency

Dial 911 for emergencies or to report a crime. For non-emergency help call (360) 565-5072 ext. 0. After 7:50 (360) 457-2499 after hours.

Entrance and Other Recreation Fees

Entrance fees apply year-round in main spur road areas (Elwha, Heart O’ the Hills, Hoh, Ozette, Sol Duc, Staircase). A single visit pass (1-7 days) is $15 per vehicle or $5 per person on foot. The Olympic National Park Annual Pass is $30. The America the Beautiful-Parks Pass is available for $15 per person. Free passes are available for certain military personnel and their dependents. Additional recreation fees are charged for certain facilities and activities.

General Park Information

For park information, see the park website www.nps.gov/olym or call (360) 565-3100. Park information, maps, wilderness permits, bear canisters, and information on wilderness fees are available year-round at the Olympic National Park Visitor Center/ Wilderness Information Center in Port Angeles. For questions bear call (360) 406-5056 and make selection for information about different areas of the park.

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Hurricane Ridge Area in Winter

Before heading out, check at the Hurricane Ridge Visitor Center for current avalanche conditions. Wear an avalanche beacon, carry a probe, snow shovel and the 10 essentials (see page 8), and avoid avalanche terrain such as cornices, gullies and steep lee slopes.
Winter 2013-2014

Cross-Country Skiing and Snowshoeing

With its easy access and 15 to 20 miles of routes, Hurricane Ridge is the focus of cross-country skiing and snowshoeing in Olympic National Park. Though winter explorers of all abilities can enjoy the area, flat, easy, beginner ski terrain is limited to the meadows above the Hurricane Ridge Visitor Center. Backcountry skiers can explore several slopes and bowls in the area. No trails are groomed or marked, however; two routes use unplowed roads which can usually be navigated.

NOTE FOR SNOWSHOERS, WALKERS AND SNOWBOARDERS: Skiers, walkers, snowshoers and snowboarders can safely share this area. Snowshoers, walkers and snowboarders, please stay to one side to avoid damaging ski tracks on trails, and do not snowshoe or walk through the downhill ski area.

Before heading out on any trip remember to register at the Hurricane Ridge Visitor Center and check current avalanche conditions. Below are descriptions of routes in the Hurricane Ridge area.

- **Easiest**

  **The Meadows**
  The meadows above the Hurricane Ridge Visitor Center offer gentle, easy terrain for everyone and excellent views in fair weather. Because the meadows are exposed to the wind, they are sometimes icy or wind-packed.

- **More Difficult**

  **Hurricane Hill Road**
  1.3 miles one way
  Beginning just west of the visitor center, this trail first descends steeply, then follows the rolling, moderate ridge line along the unplowed Hurricane Hill Road. Experienced skiers can use this trail to reach the Hurricane Hill Route (see Most Difficult), as well as several bowls for backcountry skiing. In clear weather there are good views to the north and south, especially at the trail’s terminus at the Hurricane Hill trailhead. Much of this ridgetop trail is sheltered by a subalpine forest, making it a good choice in windy, inclement weather or when there is elevated avalanche hazard.

  **Wolf Creek Trail**
  8 miles one way to Whiskey Bend
  This route begins 0.6 miles west of the visitor center along the unplowed Hurricane Hill Road (see above) and descends through meadows and forests into the Elwha valley. There are several south-facing slopes near the beginning which are good for backcountry skiing. The Wolf Creek Trail is seldom snow-covered at lower elevations. Users usually just descend a few miles through forest and several meadows with nice south views, then return the same way.

  **Obstruction Point Road: To Waterhole**
  3.3 miles one way
  Rather than descend the exposed, steep, often drifted and icy route of the summer Obstruction Point Road, the winter route starts at the sharp curve along the Hurricane Ridge Road, 0.5 miles below the Hurricane Ridge Visitor Center. Park in the plowed pull-off below the curve, cross to the east side of the road and walk the snow bank back uphill to the curve. After descending a steep but short meadow, the route turns due south and follows the unplowed Obstruction Point Road. The first 1.5 miles are relatively easy and sheltered by forest. After a steep climb, the route crosses below Steepie Road, and onto a short section of exposed slopes which can be icy and difficult to traverse. After that, the trail flattens and meanders through subalpine forest. Beyond Waterhole, it climbs steeply (see below).

  **Most Difficult**

  **Hurricane Hill Route**
  1.6 miles one way
  This route starts at the end of the Hurricane Hill Road route and climbs 700 feet to the summit of Hurricane Hill. There are several very steep sidehills if users follow the summer trail route, so use extreme caution under icy or elevated avalanche hazard conditions. As an alternative, skiers and snowshoers can follow the ridge line which has fewer steep sections. Be careful to stay off cornices that build up along the lee side of the ridge. Under good conditions, advanced skiers will find this a rewarding trip with good views and some nice slopes.

  **Obstruction Point Road: Waterhole to the end**
  4.3 miles one way
  (Obstruction Point Road is 7.8 miles one way)
  This route begins at the midway point on the unplowed Obstruction Point Road (see description above for the first 3.4 miles to Waterhole). After Waterhole, the route gains 400 feet, climbing steadily for 0.5 miles to open slopes on Eagle Peak. In clear weather, views can be spectacular, but steep sidehills and exposure to storms make this a difficult route. It is recommended only under good conditions for experienced skiers. Travel beyond Obstruction Point can entail steep terrain with high avalanche potential.

  **Sunrise Ridge**
  2.1 miles one way
  Begin this route by crossing below the intermediate rope tow and tube area, then climbing to the right of the ski hill (stay right of the trees). After crossing under the top of the ski area’s intermediate rope tow, this route follows a trail toward the south side of Mount Angeles. There are several avalanche prone areas along the way, so check conditions and use caution under unstable conditions. Be especially careful to stay off cornices that form along the ridge and side slopes. Several nice views on the east side descend to the Hurricane Ridge Road.

  **Other Areas**

  Depending on the snow level, other roads and trails in both the park and in Olympic National Forest may be snow-covered. Check at the visitor center for current snow levels. The Deer Park Road may provide skiing or snowshoeing opportunities. For safety, this steep, narrow road is closed to cars at the park boundary, 9 miles from Highway 101, at around 2,000 feet elevation. The road climbs steadily about 9 more miles from the park boundary up to Blue Mountain. If the snow level is low enough, the road may be skiable from the boundary; but users usually need to hike several miles before reaching snow.

  For other routes on the Olympic Peninsula, refer to guides such as 100 Best Cross-Country Ski Trails in Washington, by Tom Kirkendall and Vicky Snow or Snowshoe Routes: Washington by Dan Nelson.

**Avalanche!**

Olympic Mountain terrain and weather create ideal conditions for avalanches. Before heading out, check the Northwest Avalanche Center forecast at www.nwac.com, and check at the Hurricane Ridge Visitor Center for current local conditions and carry a probe and snow shovel. The hazard levels range from low to extreme. Even in low hazard conditions avalanches can occur on some slopes. With extreme conditions backcountry travel should be avoided. Certain terrain features, for example steep gullies that funnel snow, unstable cornices (see below), or dark cliff faces on warm spring days, can increase avalanche hazard. The survival rate for avalanche victims is extremely low. If you or a group member are caught in an avalanche, take these steps in your rescue attempt:

- Ensure the safety of survivors.
- Mark where victims are and last seen.
- Quickly search downslope from the last seen points for clues.
- Search the avalanche debris below the last seen points by probing in a grid pattern with probes, ski tails or poles.
- Keep searching! The victim could be inches away from your boots.
- Send an extra person for help.
- If you are caught, make swimming motions and try to keep yourself on top of the snow.
- As the snow begins to slow, push the snowaway from your face to create an air pocket.

**Snow Play**

Snow sliding is a favorite pastime for some, but it has also been one of the most dangerous activities at Hurricane Ridge. Serious injuries, even permanent disabilities occurred when people clashed with trees, other sliders, or lost control and ended up in the road.

For your safety, sliding/tubing is permitted in only two locations:

- The Small Children’s Snowplay area near the Hurricane Ridge Visitor Center where children right and under may slide.
- The tubing park operated by the Hurricane Ridge Winter Sports Club in the downhill ski area.

Sliding is not allowed anywhere else in the Hurricane area or along the Hurricane Ridge Road.

If conditions are too icy to allow safe sliding, the sliding areas may be closed. For the safety of participants, metal or hard plastic bumper sleds and wooden toboggans are required. Only tubes provided by the ski area will be permitted in their tubing park. Compressed air for inflating inner tubes is not available. To be as safe as possible, observe the following rules:

- Slide only in the designated areas.
- For your safety, be sure the path is clear of snow! Collisions can result in injuries. Watch for skiers and snowboarders crossing below the areas.
Exploring Olympic in Winter

Olympic is a park for all seasons. Visitors prepared for unpredictable weather can experience the beauty and solitude of winter without summer crowds. But winter is the wet season. Snow and rain can swell streams overnight, making crossings treacherous and washing out trails. Camp above flood plains. Boardwalks and bridges are very slippery when wet or icy. On the coast, storms push tides higher, creating huge waves that easily move beach logs or trap hikers on rocks. Winter storms can blow down trees, blocking trails. Be prepared, always carry the 10 essentials, even for short hikes: extra clothing, extra food and water, map, compass, flashlight, knife, sunglasses, matches, fire starter/candle, first aid kit.

But don’t let winter chase you inside! There are always options for exploring. Stop at the Olympic National Park Visitor Center/Wilderness Information Center (WIC) in Port Angeles for maps, tide tables and trail reports or check the park website www.nps.gov/olymp. If you plan to camp overnight in the park’s wilderness, check the above website for information on bear canisters, wilderness fees and required permits, or call the WIC (360) 565-3100. May through September some popular spots, including the coast, have camping limits. See the website for making reservations. For you and your pet’s safety, pets are not allowed on trails in the park. The following options are usually accessible in winter, depending on snow level and storm damage.

Low-Elevation Hiking

Elwha Valley: Geyser Valley Loop, West Elwha, Grif Creek, Cascade Rock trails and lower parts of the Elwha River trail.
Lake Crescent: Marymere Falls and Spruce Railroad trails.
Ozette: Cape Alava or Sand Point trails.
Mora and La Push: James Pond, Second, Third and Rialto Beaches.
Kalaloch: Short trails to beaches, beach hikes and the forest nature trail.
Hoh: Hall of Mosses and Spruce Nature trails, or lower Hoh River trail.
Quinault: Nature trails on both sides of the lake, Irey Lake and Cascading Terraces trails, or lower parts of the North Fork and Graves Creek trails.

High Country Trips

Snow camping requires preparation and many safety precautions, but offers a glimpse into a season that few truly experience. Weather can change quickly. Places like Hurricane Ridge and Blizzard Pass earn their names, and whiteout conditions can occur anytime. Be prepared!

Hurricane Ridge offers the easiest access to winter high country. For safety, please observe these rules:
- Overnight campers must get a permit at the WIC, and register and check with a ranger at Hurricane Ridge for camping and parking locations.
- Plan trips for weekends since the road is usually closed Monday through Thursday. If a storm forces a road closure, you may need to install tire chains and have a shovel in case of a snowy descent. Use caution as plow operators may not see you! If you are locked in uphill from the gate, call (360) 565-3000 ext. 0 (before 5:30 p.m.) or (360) 417-2459 after hours.
- Because of the risk of sudden storms, winter overnight parking is not allowed at Hurricane Ridge. You must park 3.3 miles below the Ridge at Third Peak (see map pages 4-5). Check with rangers at Hurricane Ridge to see if a shuttle is available.
- Camps must be 1/2 mile away from the Hurricane Ridge parking lot and out of sight of ski/snowshoe trails. Check with a ranger for suggestions.
- Use a camp stove. Campfires are prohibited.
- Share the trails—avoid walking or snowshoeing in ski tracks.
- In emergencies, dial 911 from the Hurricane Ridge Visitor Center foyer.
- Check avalanche conditions and carry beacons (see page 7).

Restoring the Elwha

After years of planning and preparation, the largest dam removal in United States history began September 2011. Two years later, removal of the Elwha Dam is complete, less than 40 percent of Glenes Canyon Dam remains and the Elwha River flows freely from its headwaters in the Olympic Mountains to the Strait of Juan de Fuca for the first time in 100 years.

As the dams come down and the river returns to its historic channels, the Elwha Valley is experiencing dramatic changes. The Lake Mills and Lake Aldwell reservoirs have drained, revealing the old forest floor now blooming with new life. To date, over 67,000 seedlings and 2,000 pounds of native seed have been planted in the former reservoirs. Millions of cubic yards of sediment, once trapped behind the dams, are washing downstream, expanding the estuary at the river mouth, replenishing beaches, and creating critical habitat for spawning salmon and other marine life.

In fall 2013, the strongest run of Chinook salmon in over 20 years returned to river stretches once blocked by the Elwha Dam, carrying with them marine derived nutrients and restoring a vital link between sea, river and forest. And the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe, inhabitants of the Elwha Valley since time immemorial, has renewed access to historic and cultural sites long covered by the waters of Lake Aldwell.

Removal of the dams will be completed in fall 2014, but the story of Elwha River restoration is just beginning. For more information, frequent updates and links to project webcams, visit Olympic National Park’s website www.nps.gov/olymp, share or interact with ‘Elwha River Restoration’ on Facebook, pick up a brochure at a park visitor center, or take a walk to one of the viewpoints along the Elwha River.

Glenes Canyon Dam September 2011 (close), November 2013 (middle). Newly released sediment is building new beach at the river mouth (far right, photo by Tom Roorda).