

Mount Rainier National Park Associates Newsletter



Vol. 1, No. 1

"a non-profit citizens awareness organization for the Park"

March 1985

MOUNT RAINIER NATIONAL PARK ASSOCIATES, INC.

ELK HERD MIGRATION & MEADOW EROSION

On January 19, 1985, a meeting of citizens interested in the protection and continuity of Mount Rainier National Park for future generations convened in Federal Way, WA, to discuss the formation of a group of individuals which will function as a citizens-awareness organization for the Park.

There were 25 concerned individuals in attendance at this charter meeting, which was moderated by Margie Goulden and Jon Soest. Included in those attending were Jim Rieck (State Game Dept.), Lisa Freedman (U.S. Forest Service), Clark Colvin (Wa. State Public Lands Assoc.), and Darrell Weaver (Dept. of Ecology). In addition, Laura Loomis, a representative of the National Parks and Conservation Association, flew out from Washington, D.C., to be present at this meeting and voiced informal NPCA support for our fledgling organization. NPCA has established itself as a leading advocate of the National Parks through the years.

Initial discussion was centered on general topics and issues of particular interest to those in attendance. Jim Rieck and Margie Goulden discussed problems with the North elk herd; Darrell Weaver presented information on air quality and interim solutions that have been enacted; Larry Carreau talked about waste management on the climbing routes; and Mary Fries and Ruth Ittner offered information on trail issues. A spinoff of these discussions was the formation of a number of committees - and committee chairpersons, who are noted elsewhere in this Newsletter.

Four names were placed in nomination for our new organization: Mount Rainier Conservation Council, Friends of Mount Rainier National Park, Mount Rainier Advisory Council, and Mount Rainier National Park Associates. The latter name was selected by hand vote. Names were also placed into nomination for officers of the organization and the following were selected: President - Margie Goulden; Vice-President - Jon Soest; Secretary/Treasurer - Roger Garrett. Donation totalling \$41. were accepted to help defray start-up costs until a decision is made concerning membership dues.

The next general meeting of MRNPA was scheduled for March 2, 1985, at Coco's Restaurant, 32065 Pacific Highway South in Federal Way, WA, at 9:00 AM. All of us wish to thank especially Laura Loomis and Margie Goulden for their efforts in getting this grassroots effort underway. We are off and running! Welcome!

-Roger C. Garrett, Communications
and Newsletter Chairperson.

TRAIL MAINTENANCE

A trail maintenance workshop in tool use, brushing, drainage and tread repair will be held at the Skykomish Ranger Station on June 20th. Interested people can sign up for the workshop by calling Volunteers for Outdoor Washington at (206) 467-0278. The workshop will have a fee connected with it but the exact cost has not yet been determined.

The Trail Maintenance Committee has scheduled its first workparty for July 25th through July 29th. We have tentatively been assigned the section of the Wonderland Trail between Reflection Lakes and Box Canyon. Camping space will be set aside for our group in the Longmire area by the Park Service. We plan on working all day Thursday and Saturday and possibly a few hours on Sunday morning. Friday, Monday and all or part of Sunday will be days of rest to enjoy the Park. People interested in being part of this historic workparty on any or all of the days please call Art Kiehn at (206) 789-2856 (home) or (206) 783-4851 (work).

Thanks for your help!

-Art Kiehn, Trail Maintenance
Committee Chairperson.

More than 50 species of mammals consider Mount Rainier National Park as home. Among these the Roosevelt elk, by their very nature, are causing soil and vegetation destruction in the higher elevations on the north side of the Park. Since Mount Rainier is not an isolated island, but rather a part of an even larger ecosystem, the elk and their behavior patterns must be viewed in such light. Because of their nature and size, the elk gather in large groups leaving behind large traces of meadow damage.

Logging and human encroachment in the lower perimeters of the Park have encouraged the elk to seek higher ground in the summer. When the snows fall however, this animal instinctively moves down, finding shelter in the trees and sustenance in the clear cuts.

The State Game Dept. has initiated some road closures during hunting season to help manage the elk population. With such road closures, the elk from the Mount Rainier high meadows are provided with wider corridors of descent to lower grazing lands. This allows for a greater harvest during hunting season since the elk are not "frightened" back into the Park where they cannot be hunted.

The National Park Service has been monitoring elk population and vegetation destruction for several years. They plan to continue to gather data, refining methods as needed, until a management plan for the Park elk herds can be supported.

Despite the efforts of the State Game Dept. and the NPS, the fact still remains that meadow damage is occurring in some higher elevations of the Park. An outing will be planned during the late summer of 1985 to view one of the elk grazing areas of the Park. Also, some members of MRNPA are interested in joining the NPS in their annual head count of elk in Sept. of 1985. More information on this in the next Newsletter.

-Margie Goulden, President and
Wildlife Committee Chairperson.

AIR QUALITY AND VISIBILITY PROTECTION AT MOUNT RAINIER NATIONAL PARK

As seasonal variation brings change to the flora and fauna of Mount Rainier National Park, so too will the Park visitor note change in the air quality and visibility from time to time. Amendments to the Clean Air Act in 1977 established visibility protection goals for the national parks and wilderness areas. The State of Washington responded by requesting the State Department of Ecology to conduct a study of air quality during the summer and early falls of 1981 and 1982, for the 3 national parks. At MRNP, visibility was monitored at Paradise and Camp Muir.

As a result of this study, slash burning was identified as a significant contributor to visibility impairment of vistas within the Park as well as of "integral vistas," which are landmarks or panoramas outside the Park that are viewed from within the Park boundaries. The Washington State Department of Natural Resources is responsible for managing smoke emissions from slash burning as outlined in the State Smoke Management Plan, though other organizations including the National Park Service and the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service are actively involved in this issue.

The Air Quality Committee of MRNPA supports continued monitoring of visibility impairment in the Park, to better define the contribution of slash burning and to identify other sources of man-made air pollution. Further, we encourage the development of control strategies for minimizing slash burn impact, such as not scheduling burns on summer weekends. Additionally, certain vistas could be recommended by MRNPA for consideration as "integral vistas." Thus, by cooperation with other private environmental organizations as well as state and federal agencies, we hope to insure that "mountain-fresh" air be a continuing attribute of our Park.

-Sue Stann, Air Quality Committee.

WILDERNESS FOR THE MOUNTAIN

Although 2.5 million acres in Washington State have been designated by Congress as Wilderness, Mt. Rainier surprisingly has not. In fact, even though they are widely considered the best examples of supremely wild lands in our state, the three National Parks -- Mt. Rainier, Olympic, and North Cascades -- have all been overlooked for Wilderness to date.

Under the landmark Wilderness Act of 1964, federal lands in National Forests, National Wildlife Refuges, and National Parks can be given permanent protection as parts of the National Wilderness Preservation System. Why hasn't that happened for Mt. Rainier and Washington's other National Parks? Under the Wilderness Act, Congress and only Congress can designate Wilderness Areas. And so far Congress has not acted on National Park Wilderness in our state.

Last year Congress did act for National Forest lands, setting aside 1.03 million acres for permanent protection. On lands designated as Wilderness, logging is not permitted. New mining claims can not be established. Moreover, motorized vehicles are prohibited, and roads and other permanent developments can not be built for any reason.

The ban against roads and motorized vehicles is the most important reason for Wilderness designation on National Park lands. As we all know, pavement, lodges, traffic jams, and trailer campgrounds can and do invade the Parks, wrecking the natural quality of the land. Tramways have been seriously proposed for North Cascades and Olympic National Parks.

Wilderness designations can prevent such abuses forever. Not every acre in a National Park must qualify under the Wilderness Act. In 1974, the National Park Service recommended 210,865 acres out of 235,404 in Mt. Rainier N.P. for Wilderness. That recommendation is split (by roads) into 4 tracts.

Clearly a high priority for the Mt. Rainier National Park Associates will be to bring the Wilderness issue to the attention of the public and the Congress. We have set up a Wilderness Committee to lead our efforts. If you would like to participate in the Wilderness Committee, please contact: Jim Baker, c/o Washington Wilderness Coalition, P.O. Box 45187, Seattle, WA 98145. (206) 633-1992. Thank you!

-Jim Baker, Chairperson
Wilderness Committee

MRNPA CALENDAR OF MEETINGS AND EVENTS

- April 24 -- The next general meeting will be held
7:30 PM in Room #207, Bldg. 10 at the Highline Community College at South 240th and Pacific Highway So. Take exit 149 off I-5. See adjacent map.
- May 22 -- The first Annual Meeting of MRNPA
7:30 PM will be held in the same room and at the same time as the April 24th meeting. Mr. Peter Thompson, a back-country specialist from Mt. Rainier National Park, will present a slide show and discussion concerning back-country management.

Mount Rainier National Park Associates Officers

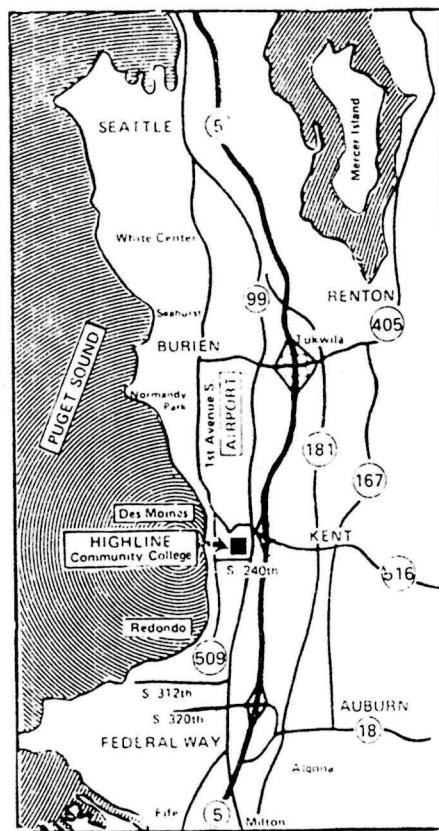
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MRNPA NEEDS A LOGO DESIGN ??ANY IDEAS??

If you have any ideas for a suitable logo for the MRNPA please send it to Shari Dowd, 2334 NE 102nd #203, Seattle, WA 98125. (206) 527-2181.

Any ideas you may have with a Mt. Rainier N.P. theme are welcome! Don't be shy! Express them verbally or include a sketch, however rough it may be, because we need YOUR help. Thank you!

Highline Community College South 240th & Pacific Highway South Midway, Washington



Highline Community College MIDWAY, WASHINGTON

