

Mount Rainier National Park Associates Newsletter



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

Summer 1987



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HODEL, MOTT BATTLE OVER NATIONAL PARKS FUTURE

Like two jousting knights, Secretary of the Interior Donald P. Hodel and National Parks Director William Penn Mott Jr. are locked in a struggle that could affect the way federal parks like Yosemite and the Grand Canyon are run for years to come.

Technically, the secretary is responsible for all agencies within the Department of the Interior, including the National Park Service, but traditionally the professional park rangers appointed to the directorship have been given a relatively free hand running the agency. That is changing under the Reagan administration.

Within the past two years, Hodel's staff has taken unprecedented steps

(cont. on p.2)

FROM THE SUMMIT.....

This is the best of times, and the worst of times. Collecting my thoughts after five days in Washington, D.C., I am struck by the dangers and the opportunities available to supporters of the National Parks.

Hodel and Horn, of the Interior Department, clearly intend to carry out Watts' anti-environmental agenda without accomplishing the Public Works Projects for the parks. Congressional leaders seem sincerely interested in small wilderness designation, funding open space, creation of new parks, and the expansion of park boundaries if citizens make a good strong case for action.

At the convention, I heard a genuine concern for the rapid loss of biological diversity, such as the shrinking Northwest Old Growth Forest. I saw support for expansion of the Wild and Scenic Rivers, and more "linear" parks; water, trail and roadway. I felt the commitment to a new environmental ethic, with discipline to work for positive change.

The risks are great. The

(See "Summit" p. 2)

(HODEL, MOTT BATTLE....

to wrest control of the service away from the director, according to senior park officials, who say the secretary's pro-development philosophy favors increased use of these areas and less protection of the natural and cultural resources.

"Hodel is a (James) Watt clone in a three piece suit," one senior park official said, referring to the controversial former interior secretary who resigned in 1983. Hodel was Watt's deputy for a time. Asking not to be named, the ranger contended, "Ideologically they are absolutely aligned, but Hodel is smoother."

Where Watt was publicly critical of environmentalists and advocated mining, oil and gas exploration adjacent to park lands, Hodel keeps a much lower profile, but he too says the park service has been overly protective of its domain and has not kept up with changing times and increased public demands for recreation areas.

Critics who oppose the Watt-Hodel involvement in park management say that while the ranger corps was able to withstand Watt's efforts to change the park service, Hodel has succeeded in controlling park management policies like no other secretary, an allegation that Hodel denies.

Recent interviews with both men reveal there are areas of sharp disagreement between them over how the National Park Service should be managed, and by whom. And leaders in environmental groups that supported Mott's appointment are skeptical about any claims that the director is running the national parks.

Destry Jarvis, director of the National Parks and Conservation Association, said it would be a mistake to say that Mott was in charge, given the Interior Department's ongoing efforts to "harass, sabotage and politicize the park service."

Mott has spoken out on such issues as the need to curtail the use of aircraft, snowmobiles, dune buggies

(SUMMIT...

Professional Park Service is demoralized and underfunded. Political appointments hope to undercut the long standing commitment to quality and preservation. And yet there are more untapped opportunities for change than any of us have ever dreamed. The worst of times, and yet the best of times.

Bob Aegerter - President

and other vehicles in the nation's parks, seashores and recreation areas where they pose a threat to park natural or cultural resources. Noise, he contends, is a destructive intrusion on the solitude of a park. Hodel, 52, has a different view, saying, "As times change, as uses change, we've got to keep up with the changes." He favors continuing the popular Grand Canyon air tours pretty much as is, saying that neither airplanes flying low over the canyon nor snowmobiling in Yellowstone harm these parks.

The secretary said such urban noises do not bother the wild animals in Yellowstone, for example. Deer and bear "are used to these noisy, smelly" snowmobiles but run away at the sight of a cross country skier, Hodel said, claiming that it is the skiers who are "putting more burden on wildlife."

Mott of course, disagreed.

The key questions separating Hodel and Mott focuses on who should be managing the 344 units in the national park system. Should it be political appointees selected by the president, such as the interior secretary, or the professional rangers who see protection of the natural and cultural resources as their primary goal, with public use and visitor services ranking second?

(Ronald B. Taylor, LA Times-Washington Post Service)

SUMMER BOARD MEETING AT THE PARK

Plan to join us on Saturday, July 11th, as the Board members meet at Longmire to discuss relevant issues pertaining to the Park. After the meeting, those interested can join for a leisurely stroll in the meadows or a hefty hike to the higher alpine areas. For time and place of meeting, call:

Bob Aegerter: 527-4492 (Seattle)
Margie Goulden: 863-3265 (Sumner)

DIRECTOR OF PARK SERVICE CALLS FOR LIMITING URBAN INTRUSIONS

The National Park Service, fighting political battles within and struggling against a growing number of outside hazards to its natural treasures, must reduce the effect of urban crowds on the nation's parks, director William Penn Mott Jr. said. Mott and other top parks officials from around the country gathered in late May in Yellowstone, the world's oldest national park, to plan for a future that is increasingly expected to turn the parks into islands of wilderness in seas of development.

"In the next 25 years, at least 80 percent of our visitors will be living in urban centers---accustomed to noise, traffic jams and unaccustomed to not having street lights," Mott said in an interview. "We've got to educate the urban public on how to enjoy and still protect the units of the Park Service."

Part of the push, Mott said, will be to try to limit use of private automobiles in crowded parks and encourage visitors to travel to relatively unused parks instead of the most popular parks like Great Smoky Mountains, Yosemite, Grand Canyon and Yellowstone. Many of the country's 338 parks, national monuments, military battlefields and recreation areas are

Trail Work Party

July 25

MRNPA will again be doing volunteer work in the Park on the weekend of July 24th, 25th, and 26th. We have been assigned to the Rampart Ridge Trail above Longmire Inn. I expect that the work the group will be doing involves brushing and clearing. The work day for the group will be Saturday, July 25th. Free camping and a no-entrance fee will be part of the benefits we will receive along with the knowledge we are helping the Park. Group camp sites #2 and #4 at Cougar Rock have been reserved for our party. If you are interested in joining us in July please fill out and mail the information notice below. Thanks for your support.

endangered by development on their boundaries, by pollution and acid rain, and by overcrowding.

And Park Service officials have been fighting behind the scenes in Washington with their Interior Department superiors, who have been pushing for less emphasis on preservation and more on "visitor use."

Defending the department's policies at the weekend conclave was Assistant Interior Secretary William Horn. The department appointee who oversees the park system and who has been widely criticized by conservation groups as being too closely allied with development interests, said parks had to serve snowmobilers and off-road vehicle users, as well as cross-country skiers and canoeists.

"The parks don't exist to be looked at under glass," Horn said. "They have to serve a broad range of recreational activities."

Horn said that, increasingly, as parks draw more and more urban users, the Park Service's challenge would be to referee conflicts between those seeking wilderness experiences and those who want to bring urban amenities to the parks.

(Paul Nussbaum, Knight-Ridder News Service)

CAN THE FOREST SUSTAIN THE YIELD?

Dr. Cris Maser, Forest Research Biologist at the BLM Laboratory in Corvallis, Oregon, has published some significant challenges to traditional views of forest management.

For as long as I can remember, we have been assured that the Forest Service is dedicated to a policy that preserves the forest resource for future generations. They proposed each year to cut only as much timber as could be grown in a year with proper management.

Flying over or driving through the forests of Western Washington, it is difficult to reconcile what we see with what we have been told. The clear cutting on the productive land appears to outdistance the remaining forest. In fact, only two percent of the old growth forest remains uncut, much of it in small national parks and wilderness areas. Now research suggests that our intuition, regrettably, was correct.

Forest managers have claimed a higher yield is possible from a managed "new growth" forest than from a mature "old growth" stand. This is true for the first rotation, but there is evidence that the impacts of clear cut logging on the soil --- erosion, compaction, loss of nutrients and fungus, etc.--- are significant. A productive soil is the true capital of the forest industry. It is not enough simply to keep a sufficiently large forest of trees so that this year's cut is the "interest" or the annual growth. It is also necessary to be a steward of the soil, which is basic to the resource that produces the forest.

Forest management has failed to look below the surface. Consider Figure One.

Each rotation of new growth timber is less productive than the previous, because the soil capacity is diminished thru disruption by logging and management activity. For most soils, with 80 year rotation of tree crops, only 3 harvests of new growth will be accomplished before the residual soil will no longer support trees, and only shrubs will grow.

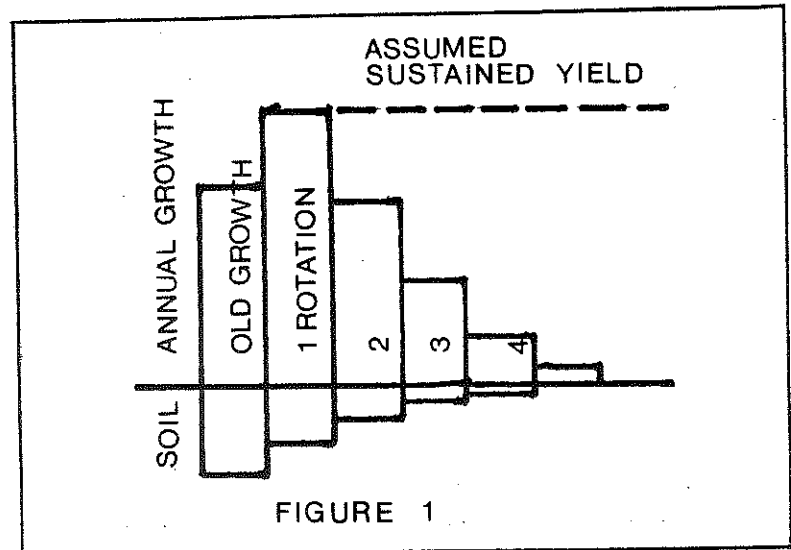


FIGURE 1

(cont. on p.5)

PERMIT FOR HYDRO FACILITY SOUGHT ON THE CARBON RIVER

A Bellevue developer plans to build a \$22 million hydro-electric project on the Carbon River. The project would be located south of Carbonado and would divert a stretch of river through a four mile long pipe, seven feet in diameter, to a penstock and powerhouse. At peak time about 80% of the river flow would be diverted. The power produced would be enough to supply 4700 homes.

The Dept. of Fisheries has expressed some serious concerns regarding the protection of this salmon-spawning and rearing area. Although this project would be located outside of

MRNP, it bears watching for possible negative impacts upstream. There are some efforts at this time to have the Carbon River declared "Wild and Scenic" from MRNP to some point near its confluence with the Puyallup River.

The developer has applied for a preliminary permit from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), the first of many permits which will be required. The company hopes to be operational in 3 to 4 years.

by Yolanda Thompson
Chair: Resources Comm.

LAKE ACIDIFICATION IN MRNP

According to a study by the U.S. Geological Survey in co-operation with MRNP, thirteen lakes in the Park were evaluated for general chemical characteristics, sensitivity to acidification by acidic precipitation, and degree of existing acidification. They were found to be pristine for the most part. None of the lakes had a pH level lower than 5.5, the level generally accepted as indicative of acidification. Also, nitrate, sulfate, and metals concentrations were low. Plots based on pH and calcium, which represented the original alkalinity, suggest most of the lakes are not being acidified. The study indicated that all of the selected lakes except Allen would be sensitive to acidic precipitation because of the small size of the lakes, their location in basins of high precipitation, and weathering resistant rock types with thin soil cover.

The lakes chosen were all at high altitude because they receive more precipitation and thus are more susceptible to acidification than lower altitude lakes; they were all over two acres in surface area; most were underlaid with the same rock type. The lakes chosen were on all sides of Mt. Rainier to observe any effects the mountain has on precipitation chemistry. The lakes were: Allen, one of the Chenuis group, Crescent, Crystal, Eleanor, Gan, one of the Golden group, Marsh, Mowich, Mystic, Shriner, and two unnamed lakes.

This study, which was representative of only a few lakes in the park at only one time (August 15-19, 1983), indicates little or no acid precipitation in the area at this time. However, changing meteorological conditions and additional acidic precipitation from new sources, coupled with the sensitivity to acidification in the

Lakes, could change the rate and degree of acidification in a relatively short time.

by Yolanda Thompson
Chair: Resources Comm.

(FOREST SUSTAIN THE YIELD?...P.4)
If the forest is to be managed for a sustained yield, Dr. Maser believes no more than two rotations of new growth may be harvested before the stand is allowed to mature to old growth, perhaps as short as 400 years. See Figure Two.

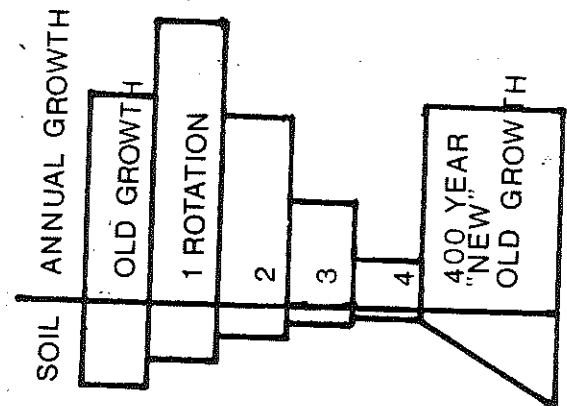


FIGURE 2

Such a management plan would result in three cuttings in 560 years, rather than seven rotations. The sustained yield would be 25-33 percent of the present value. If the present level of cutting is allowed to continue unabated, the old growth in the national parks and wilderness areas will be threatened when the timber industry no longer has a sustained source of logs.

Professional foresters are honorable and dedicated people. How can this be true if they are committed to a sustaining forest? Dr. Maser suggests that we look to the model proposed by Dr. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross from ON DEATH AND DYING. The death of a strong idea, like the loss of a loved one, is acknowledged in five stages: 1-Denial...2-Anger...3-Bargaining...4-Depression...5-Acceptance... The profession is still in denial and anger.

Bob Aegerter-President

THE OWLS OF MT. RAINIER NAT. PARK ON WINGS OF SILENCE

Another day in the Park had come to a close. It was time to contemplate the rotation of the earth from the confines of my sleeping bag. I was content to watch the shadows of the night sticking to the surrounding trees, but then I heard their voices. The dark-eyed sages were scanning the ground from their old growth towers. I had considered crying out "Beware all mice!" But within the beat of a wing, the omniscient observers were spreading their soft feathers of silence upon the night's air. Inevitably, the hands of time could not conceal the sharp talons of truth. Because before the night fell prey to the ghosts of dawn, a small animal fell prey to the silence of an owl.

At least five species of owls are known to inhabit the forests of Mt. Rainier National Park. And of the five types of owls, the spotted owl has become the most popular. As with other owls, it can be said that the spotted owl is very difficult to spot. Fortunately, a "spotted owl survey" was conducted in the park last summer by Janet Edwards, Natural Resource Management Specialist.

In a recent letter, Ms. Edwards has revealed the following information pertaining to the owls of MRNP.

Density: Throughout the summer of 1986, teams were able to conduct 39 surveys along park roads and 20 surveys along trails. Most of the road routes were "called" three times during each survey. In two road locations, the male, female, and juveniles were observed. Spotted owls breed every three years, and their clutch size is generally two. Juveniles were also located in three separate trail areas.

Diet: A few "owl pellets" were collected and sent to the Washington Department of Game for analysis. The pellets revealed the spotted owls' affinity for the following prey items: northern flying squirrel, boreal redback vole, Oregon vole, pika, deer mouse, and rabbit. (Note: this list was derived from a small sample size.)

Diversity: Three screech owls responded to spotted owl calls projected along a trail. At an elevation above 5000 feet, a great horned owl was heard at two locations. And finally, several saw-whet owls were heard during a picnic for volunteers. (The saw-whet owl got its name from its call, which sounds like a saw being filed.)

Predation and Competition: According to a Draft Supplement put out by the Forest Service last year, the great horned owl and the northern goshawk are known to kill spotted owls. Furthermore, the barred owl (*Strix varia*) is invading the spotted owls' range in the Cascades, and has been observed adjacent to or within the spotted owls' habitat. In Washington State, nearly 20% of the spotted owl management areas are now occupied by the barred owls. (Last summer, a barred owl was sighted on the west side of the park!)

Owls are unique among all birds; they have been miraculously "fine tuned" to meet the many trials of nature. Do you know of any other bird that can turn its head up to 270 degrees in either direction? And, whereas most other raptors are noisy in flight, the owls' feathers are soft, enabling them to seek prey silently.

Larry plans to show a sample "spotted owl T-shirt" at the July 11th Board Meeting. The shirt's silk-screen design depicts a spotted owl flying against a full moon, with the words "Strix occidentalis-Seeker of warm hearts and shining eyes". Price is \$7.50 per shirt. Proceeds go to MRNPA. For information, call 845-2364 (Puyallup).

SPOTTED OWL STUDY

John and Yolanda Thompson report they will be calling for spotted owls on the Carbon River and Mowich Lake roads in July and August. The owl survey will be conducted on roads and trails throughout the park to continue gathering information about the biology and numbers of this threatened species.

Interested in helping out? Call John or Yolanda at 1-829-0377.

MRNPA T-SHIRTS AVAILABLE

Light blue T-shirts with MRNPA logo will be available for purchase at the Trail Workparty (July 25th). Or... fill out the order form below and mail to: Art Kiehn

7359 9th Avenue NW
Seattle, WA 98117

Shirt Size: S ___ M ___ L ___ XL ___

Please mark the number of shirts desired beside each size.

Your name _____

Address: _____

Phone #: _____

Enclose \$8.00 for each shirt ordered.
Make checks payable to: MRNPA

LARGE MAMMALS DISAPPEARING FROM PARKS

(taken from WASHINGTON WILDFIRE, June '87)

In a recently published article in NATURE, William Newmark has documented the disappearance of large mammals from all but one of fourteen national parks. Mt. Rainier National Park was one of the parks included in the study, and Newmark found it had lost about a third of the large mammals that inhabited it before it became a national park. Among the animals which have disappeared are the Canada lynx, timber wolf, wolverine, fisher, striped and spotted skunks, and river otters. Olympic National Park, also included, has lost only the timber wolf, but Newmark expects that 40% of its small carnivores and 50% of the large ones will be gone in the next 100 years. The problem is not the park management, says Newmark, but the fact that parks are islands in a sea of human activity. All the laws to protect a species don't do any good without equal protection of their habitat.

MRNPA TRAIL EVENTS 87

FLOWERS OF MT. RAINIER - A HIKE

July 18

Mary Fries has volunteered to lead a group of MRNPA members on a tour of the flower meadows in Mt. Rainier on July 18th (Sunrise or Chinook Pass area). The tour will start from the Safeway Parking lot in Enumclaw at 9:00 a.m. Mary is very knowledgeable on plants and flowers in the Park. This hike is a good opportunity for all of us to learn more about the plants and flowers of Mt. Rainier. See you on July 18th.

SIGN-UP FOR MRNPA TRAIL EVENTS 87

NAME _____
ADDRESS _____

JULY 18th FLOWER/NATURE HIKE

Number in party _____

Willing to help with carpool _____

JULY 25th WORK PARTY

Number in Party _____

Attend potluck dinner (Sat. July 25th)

Yes _____ No _____

Want to camp in park

Yes _____ No _____

RETURN TO: ART KIEHN

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