

Determination of Eligibility

Hurricane Ridge Road
Olympic National Park
Clallam County, Washington

Prepared for the National Park Service by
Christy Avery
Avery Historical Consulting
Seattle, WA
January 15, 2025

Name of Property

Hurricane Ridge Road

Other Names

Heart O' the Hills Highway; Heart O' the Hills Parkway

Location

Olympic National Park
Port Angeles Vicinity
Clallam County
Washington

Classification

Ownership of property: Federal
Category of property: Structure
Number of resources within property:

Eligible	Not Eligible	
0	0	buildings
0	0	district
0	0	site
1	0	structure
0	0	object
1	0	Total

Historic Function

TRANSPORTATION/Road
RECREATION AND CULTURE/Outdoor Recreation

Current Function

TRANSPORTATION/Road
RECREATION AND CULTURE/Outdoor Recreation

Architectural Classification

N/A

Materials

N/A

Areas of Significance

Entertainment/Recreation

Period of Significance

1958

Significant Dates

1958

State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this ____ nomination ____ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

____ national ____ statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

 X A ____ B ____ C ____ D

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date:

KEVIN
KILLIAN

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KEVIN KILLIAN
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01/16/2025

for

Sula Jacobs, Superintendent

Olympic National Park, National Park Service, Department of the Interior



Allyson Brooks Ph.D., Director
State Historic Preservation Officer

January 22, 2025

Kevin Killian
Deputy Superintendent
Olympic National Park
600 E Park Ave
Port Angeles, WA 98362

In future correspondence please refer to:
Project Tracking Code: 2025-01-00340
Property: Hurricane Ridge Road Determination of Eligibility
Re: Determined Eligible

Dear Kevin Killian:

Thank you for contacting the Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP) regarding the above referenced proposal. This action has been reviewed on behalf of the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) under provisions of Section 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (54 U.S.C. 300101 et seq.). Our review is based upon documentation provided in your submittal: Consensus Determination of Eligibility to the National Register of Historic Places for Hurricane Ridge Road at Olympic National Park.

We concur that Property ID: 735974 Hurricane Ridge Road; Hurricane Ridge Rd, Port Angeles, Washington, 98362 is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the category of entertainment/recreation.

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Maureen Elenga, M.A.
Architectural Historian – Transportation Reviewer
(360) 972-4539
Maureen.Elenga@dahp.wa.gov



Statement of Significance

Hurricane Ridge Road is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance under Criterion A in the category of entertainment/recreation. Hurricane Ridge Road has remained the only new road constructed within Olympic National Park (ONP) since the park was established in 1938. Congress created ONP as a wilderness park, but Congressman Henry Jackson, Olympic Peninsula business interests, and other constituencies pressured the National Park Service (NPS) to build roads into the park in the 1940s. NPS leaders, too, sought to make ONP more accessible to the public, without compromising its wilderness character, by constructing one modern, paved road into the park. After over a decade of debate, the agency chose to build Hurricane Ridge Road—a decision that satisfied political and business leaders, recreational users, and conservationists. The 12.3-mile-long road between Heart O’ the Hills and Hurricane Ridge was constructed between 1950 and 1958, and when completed, it facilitated access to Hurricane Ridge, an alpine area with sweeping views into the heart of the Olympic Mountains and the site of the park’s new alpine lodge and ski area. The road was extended 5.2 miles from Heart O’ the Hills to the Olympic National Park Visitor Center in Port Angeles in 1969.

The road is not associated with a significant person, and is not eligible under Criterion B.

The road is not eligible under Criterion C. It does not embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction; represent the work of a master; or possess high artistic values. The Bureau of Public Roads designed the 12.3-mile section of road between Heart O’ the Hills and Hurricane Ridge in the late 1940s, when federal funds for national park development were scarce, to deliver visitors safely and efficiently to Hurricane Ridge. The road was not designed to maximize scenic views and it lacks associated features, such as rock walls, entrance gates, signage, or buildings, from the period of significance. The 5.2 mile road extension between Heart O’ the Hills and the town of Port Angeles, constructed in 1969, was similarly built to be a practical and efficient route without distinctive characteristics or high artistic values.

Summary Description

Hurricane Ridge Road is located in Olympic National Park (ONP), a 922,651 acre national park in Washington State. The park contains glaciated mountains, rainforest valleys and 73 miles of ocean coast; elevations range from sea level to 7,979 feet at the summit of Mt. Olympus.

Hurricane Ridge Road is 17.5 miles long and it rises over 5,000 feet in elevation as it extends from Mt. Angeles Road in the town of Port Angeles, just south of the Olympic National Park Visitor Center, to its terminus at the Hurricane Ridge parking lot. Hurricane Ridge is the most accessible alpine area and one of the most popular sites in Olympic National Park, and it includes a trail system, visitor services, and, in winter, a ski area.¹ The 12.3 miles of roadway between the Heart O' the Hills entrance station and Hurricane Ridge were constructed between 1950 and 1958, while the 5.2 miles between Mt. Angeles Road and the entrance station were added in 1969. Though the two sections of road were constructed at different times, they are collectively known as Hurricane Ridge Road.

The two-lane road is asphalt-paved and measures, on average, 26 feet wide, with a narrow (1 to 3 feet wide) shoulder. An entrance station, three concrete tunnels, three overlooks with parking, twenty-four paved pullouts, fifteen unpaved pullouts, and one trailhead are located along the route. Steel guardrails affixed to wood posts bound the road in places, particularly along steep slopes. Several sets of metal swing gates allow the NPS to close the road at various points. The road ascends steadily but not steeply—the grade never exceeds 7 percent—through coniferous forest that changes in composition as the road gains elevation. Views along the route are generally limited to overlooks and to the higher elevations near the road's end.

Narrative Description

Hurricane Ridge Road begins at Mt. Angeles Road, about 0.05 miles south of the Olympic National Park Visitor Center's southern driveway, at 370 feet in elevation. The NPS constructed the first 5.2 miles of Hurricane Ridge Road, between Mt. Angeles Road and the Heart O' the Hills entrance station, in 1969. This section of road is set within a narrow strip of federally owned land that connects the main body of Olympic National Park with its visitor center in Port Angeles. A chain up area for winter travel is set on the west side of the road at 0.1 miles; this pullout was formalized and paved in 2018 (prior to this time it was a grassy area that served the same purpose). The road winds in a southerly direction through lowland coniferous forest with Douglas fir, western hemlock, bigleaf maple and red alder, though the vegetation that borders the road is mostly composed of low-growing non-native plant species. At three miles, a box-beam concrete bridge, owned by the Washington State Department of Natural Resources but designed by the NPS, passes over the road. At 4.35 miles, Heart O' the Hills Overlook, includes sixteen parking spaces and a concrete sidewalk laid perpendicular to the parking area, provides views of the Strait of Juan de Fuca and the Olympic Peninsula to the northeast of the national park.

¹ The Hurricane Ridge parking lot was evaluated as part of the Hurricane Ridge Lodge complex in 2021 and determined ineligible for the NRHP. A fire destroyed the lodge in 2023; in 2024, visitor facilities are housed in temporary buildings.

The road reaches Heart O' the Hills in 5.2 miles. Heart O' the Hills Developed Area includes a 105-site campground on the east side of Hurricane Ridge Road and employee housing and a trailhead on the west side of the road.² The Heart O' the Hills entrance station was constructed in 2021 and includes two fee booths set on the roadway (which widens to include two southbound lanes at the park entrance), a metal swing gate, and a small administrative building. The one-story, gable roofed building is set south of the booths, on the west side of the road; three paved parking spaces are located just south of the building. These resources replaced the distinctive Mission 66 era entrance station built in 1958, which included a fee booth and office building separated by a road lane but connected by a steeply gabled roof. Heart O' the Hills served as the park boundary in the 1950s, and the 12.3 miles of Hurricane Ridge Road that was completed in 1958 commences at this point.

The road continues to ascend through coniferous forest, dominated by Pacific silver fir and western hemlock at this elevation, as it proceeds to the southeast past Heart O' the Hills. Morse Creek Overlook (also called Lookout Rock Overlook or Tunnels Overlook), is located on the east side of the road at 2,800 feet and 8.9 miles from the road's start. It is nearly identical in shape and size to Heart O' the Hills Overlook, and it includes sixteen parking spaces and three interpretive panels. The overlook provides sweeping views primarily of areas outside of the national park, including the Strait of Juan de Fuca to the north and the Cascades Mountains to the northeast. An asphalt-paved walkway about 200 feet in length leads from the south end of the parking lot to a semicircular, asphalt-paved viewpoint at Lookout Rock, an outcrop that affords dramatic views into the steep, forested valleys of Morse Creek and its tributaries. The viewpoint includes an interpretive panel and is bounded with chain link fencing.³

From the viewpoint, the road roughly parallels Morse Creek as it proceeds around Burnt Mountain and along Klahhane Ridge on slopes high above the valley bottom. Just past the overlook, the road bends to the southwest, and a series of three concrete tunnels and two viaducts provide passage along and through the steep slopes of Burnt Mountain between mile 9 and 9.3.⁴ A 160 feet long and 26 feet wide concrete viaduct (North Viaduct) with tee-beam spans and spread footing is located between the Morse Creek Overlook and first tunnel; a low concrete wall extends along the viaduct on its downhill side.⁵ Tunnel #1 (North Tunnel) measures 405 feet in length and is 26 feet 8 inches wide. Tunnel #2 (Middle Tunnel) is 293 feet long and 27 feet wide. A cantilevered retaining wall helps to support the road between Tunnels #2 and #3. Tunnel #3 (South Tunnel) measures 515 feet long and 26 feet 7 inches wide. Each tunnel is 17 feet 1 inch

² Heart O' the Hills Developed Area was determined eligible for the NRHP in 2022.

³ The concrete stand that was installed to support the aluminum interpretive panel installed in 1958 remains at the site, but a fiberglass interpretive stand was installed in front of it at an unknown date.

⁴ Bureau of Public Roads, Division 8, "Final Construction Report, Heart O' the Hills Highway, Tunnels and Viaducts," March 19, 1956, RG 79, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA)-Seattle, WA; National Park Service, "Preliminary Report on Unstable Slope Between Tunnels #2 and #3," July 1958, RG79, NARA-Seattle, WA.

⁵ Spread footings are wider than typical footings and distribute the weight of the structure along a greater area. They are commonly employed to support bridges built along ledges, where excavation of a deep pier is not possible.

tall. A second viaduct (South Viaduct), located south of Tunnel #3, is 150 feet in length and 26 feet wide; it also includes a low concrete wall on its downhill side.⁶

The road emerges from the third tunnel and curves to the southwest along Klahhane Ridge. The forest begins to transition from the montane zone to the subalpine zone, and it is increasingly dominated by subalpine fir as the road gains elevation. Open spaces allow occasional views of the Morse Creek Valley to the south. At 11.6 miles from the road's start, a set of two overlooks, connected by a sidewalk, extends for about 0.10 miles (the overlooks were originally called Station 330, and are now known to park staff as Double Overlook). The overlooks are bordered by a concrete, stone-faced wall and include two interpretive panels; these features, along with the sidewalk, were added in 2008. (The stone-faced wall replaced a wood rail on metal posts, and the fiberglass interpretive panels replaced aluminum panels on concrete bases). Pillow basalt—lava that erupted underwater and hardened into rounded, pillow-like shapes—is visible on the slope above the road. Several avalanche chutes cross the road in this area.

Around 14 miles, the forest along the road becomes subalpine in nature. The Switchback Trailhead, which includes a shuttle bus stop and parking for about seven cars, is found on the north side of the road at 14.8 miles. The trailhead, which was paved in 2008, provides hiker access to the trails on Klahhane Ridge. The road continues to ascend. At 17.1 miles, the road turns to the west, and the jagged alpine peaks of the Olympic Mountains come into view. The 17.5-mile-long road ends at the Hurricane Ridge parking lot at 5,223 feet in elevation.

Hurricane Ridge Road Integrity

The NPS has undertaken few significant alterations to Hurricane Ridge Road since the period of significance and it retains integrity to its completion date. In 2008, the 12.3 miles of roadway between Heart O' the Hills entrance station and Hurricane Ridge were rehabilitated. The road was reconstructed but not widened (though it was restriped to widen the road lanes and narrow the shoulders) at this time. Two of the overlooks were modified; a rock-faced concrete wall and sidewalk were added to Double Overlook. The original concrete and aluminum interpretive panels at Morse Creek and Double Overlooks have been replaced with high-pressure laminate panels. The 5.2 miles of road between Port Angeles and Heart O' the Hills were rehabilitated in 2018, and new guardrails, culverts, and turn lanes (to Lake Dawn Road and the Mt. Angeles trailhead) were installed. The most significant alteration to the road was the replacement of the distinctive Mission 66-era Heart O' the Hills entrance station, which was built in 1958. The original facility included one fee station and one small administrative building under a shared roof. In 2018 it was replaced with two fee stations, two road lanes, and a larger new administrative building built to the south of the original building.

⁶ Gina Ottoboni, "Olympic National Park Road System," Written Historical and Descriptive Data, Historical American Engineering Record (HAER) No. WA-166, 2004, 7, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/wa0708/>, accessed on January 6, 2025.

Hurricane Ridge Road History and Context

Olympic National Park and the Wilderness Ideal, 1938-1949

President Theodore Roosevelt created the 610,000-acre Mount Olympus National Monument from Olympic National Forest lands in 1909. Conservationists were critical of US Forest Service management of the monument, and they lobbied for national park status for almost thirty years after monument establishment.⁷ In 1933, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued an executive order that placed all national monuments under National Park Service (NPS) management, an act that infuriated the Forest Service but gave the NPS and conservationists an opportunity to pursue the creation of a national park. Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes became an enthusiastic supporter of the park idea, as did President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who was interested in forest conservation. Secretary Ickes, known for his forceful nature and his willingness to take on a fight, believed that the proposed park represented “the last American wilderness” and that it would become one of “the most magnificent areas set aside for the enjoyment of the American people.”⁸ Congress established Olympic National Park in 1938.

Olympic National Park was created as a wilderness park.⁹ At the time, wilderness was generally defined by a lack of roads, but roads had become an essential part of the national park experience. The National Park Service had partnered with the Bureau of Public Roads (BPR) since 1914 to construct roads in parks, and the proliferation of new roads “changed both the nature of the park experience and the national parks themselves,” writes historian Laura Soulliere.¹⁰ Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, the NPS designed parks for motorists. In 1930, over three-quarters of American households owned a car; the roads became tourist attractions and driving them became a quintessential national park experience.¹¹

By the 1930s, however, conservationists began to express concern about roads and automobiles in national parks; they also objected to the substantial amount of new development facilitated by New Deal relief programs such as the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). Secretary Ickes, too, disliked cars in national parks; in 1933 he declared that he would love to establish a new park that was “impenetrable forever to automobiles.” He lamented, “When a national park is established, the insistent demand is to build roads everywhere...to make it easy for everybody to go everywhere—*without effort*.”¹² In 1934, a coalition of western outdoor clubs adopted a

⁷ Hal Rothman, *American Eden: An Administrative History of Olympic National Park*, npshistory.com/olymp, 49-51; National Park Service, *Olympic National Park: An Administrative History* (Seattle: National Park Service, 1992), 34-39.

⁸ Rothman, 86-87.

⁹ The park’s enabling legislation states, “The purpose of Olympic National Park is to preserve for the benefit, use, and enjoyment of the people, a large wilderness park...” National Park Service, “Foundation Document, Olympic National Park, Washington,” 2017, 5, accessed on November 1, 2024 at https://www.nps.gov/olymp/upload/OLYM_FD_2017_508.pdf.

¹⁰ Laura Soulliere, *Historic Roads in the National Park System Special History Study*, (Denver: National Park Service, 1995).

¹¹ David Louter, *Windshield Wilderness: Cars, Roads and Nature in Washington’s National Park*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006), 22 and 38; Paul Sutter, *Driven Wild: How the Fight Against Automobiles Launched the Modern Wilderness Movement*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005), 79-80.

¹² Harold Ickes, “Keep it a Wilderness,” *National Parks Bulletin* Volume 14 No. 66 (December 1938), 9.

resolution that called for Olympic National Monument to be managed as a wilderness, where “all roads, settlements and power transportation are barred.” That same year, a survey of local residents indicated that many who favored the creation of Olympic National Park also opposed road building in a new park—a result that surprised NPS Director Arno Cammerer, who stated, “I can’t think of a national park as a complete wilderness area without being developed by some roads for public use.”¹³

Secretary Ickes, ONP Superintendent Preston Macy and other agency leaders drafted the park’s first master plan in 1938, shortly after the park was established, and they deemed new roads “entirely unnecessary.” Agency leaders determined that the NPS would prioritize “natural conditions,” and that ONP would be “a trail park with minimal road construction.”¹⁴ There were nine rough, dusty, dead-end roads, originally built by the US Forest Service (USFS), that entered the park and four others that ended at trails near the park boundary; these were deemed sufficient to provide visitor access.¹⁵ One of these was a narrow dirt road, with numerous switchbacks and a grade of over 18 percent in places, that led from the road along the Elwha River to Hurricane Ridge and Obstruction Point. Superintendent Macy believed that these “stub” roads should be improved, but he argued, “The proposals for other roads should be strongly resisted or our wilderness values may be lost.”¹⁶

Olympic National Park Chief Ranger Fred Overly, who later became ONP superintendent, disagreed with the prohibition on road building. “While I am agreeable to the general policy of maintaining the Olympic National Park as a wilderness park,” he wrote in response to the 1938 master plan, “I cannot bring myself to believe that the term ‘wilderness’ should be applied to roads in the park or approaching it.”¹⁷ He called the park’s stub roads “monuments to the folly of poor road construction and improper planning,” and he believed that well-designed, asphalt-paved roads, such as the NPS had constructed at Mt. Rainier National Park, represented a better option. “It would appear that enough emphasis has been placed upon the wilderness character of the park without taking a ‘crack’ at the general motoring public who have as much interest in the Olympic National Park as anyone else,” he concluded.¹⁸

The NPS proposed one new road in the 1938 master plan: a seven mile link between the end of Hurricane Ridge Road at Obstruction Point and the end of Deer Park Road, in the park’s northeastern corner. Construction of this road would create a one-way loop that took advantage of existing roads, and the one-way designation meant the NPS would not need to widen the existing roadbeds. NPS planners reasoned that the loop would facilitate visitor access into the

¹³ *Olympic National Park: An Administrative History*, 89-91.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 90.

¹⁵ The USFS roads were Graves Creek, North Fork Quinault, Hoh River, Sol Duc River, Dosewallips River, Deer Park, Staircase, Elwha River (which continued to Hurricane Ridge), and Olympic Hot Springs (which branched off of the Elwha Road).

¹⁶ Preston Macy to Regional Director, Region IV, March 15, 1939, RG 79, Records of the National Park Service, Central Classified Files, NARA-San Bruno, CA.

¹⁷ Fred Overly to Preston Macy, November 8, 1938, Central Site Files-Olympic National Park, 1927-1953, RG 79, Records of the National Park Service, NARA-San Bruno, CA.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

Olympic Mountains and it would provide the type of scenic driving experience that national park visitors had come to expect.¹⁹ Chief Ranger Overly supported this plan. “It is lamentable that the Forest Service constructed the road it did on Hurricane Ridge. The road is there, however, and the Park Service can do little but make the best of a bad job.” Overly also envisioned an entirely new road to Hurricane Ridge, and he hoped that the NPS would ultimately construct “a good surfaced road from Heart O’ the Hills around the west side of Mount Angeles” to replace the older Hurricane Ridge Road and to connect with Deer Park Road. (He was likely describing a route along the South Branch Little River, which flowed north from its headwaters between Hurricane Hill and Mt. Angeles). Such a road, he reasoned, could be constructed with a reasonable grade and it would allow the NPS to relocate the Deer Park Ski Area to Hurricane Ridge.²⁰

Pressure to move the ski area spurred the NPS to consider building a new road to Hurricane Ridge. The Deer Park Ski Area first opened in the winter of 1936-1937 on the slopes of Blue Mountain at the end of Deer Park Road.²¹ Downhill skiing had skyrocketed in popularity after the invention of the rope tow in 1931; prior to this time, skiers had to hike up mountain slopes between each run, which made skiing an exhausting activity and limited its appeal. Improved ski technology and teaching techniques also contributed to the ski craze of the 1930s. Ski clubs and ski areas proliferated at this time and spectators flocked to alpine racing and ski jumping competitions.²² NPS policies permitted and even facilitated ski area development. Yosemite’s Badger Pass Ski Area opened in 1935 and that same year, Paradise, at Mt. Rainier National Park, hosted ski racing’s US National Championships and Olympic qualifying events. By 1937, Paradise, with its CCC-constructed rope tow, had become the most popular ski area in the Pacific Northwest; the NPS even installed lighting to permit night skiing.²³

The NPS constructed a water and sewer system, erected a maintenance shed, and improved the ski runs at Deer Park once the facility was incorporated into the new national park. A rope tow powered by a motorcycle engine pulled skiers up the slope and former CCC camp buildings functioned as a dormitory-style lodging (a concessioner operated meal service and lodging). In 1940, the CCC built a ski jump and extended the downhill race course to a mile and a half in length.²⁴ More adventurous skiers embarked on “the finest ski route established in the Olympics

¹⁹ National Park Service, “The Master Plan, Olympic National Park, General Statement of Controlling Development Policies,” Central Site Files-Olympic National Park, 1927-1953, RG 79, NARA-San Bruno, CA.

²⁰ Louter, 17; Ottoboni, “Olympic National Park Road System,” 27.

²¹ Deer Park was located on Olympic National Forest land when it opened but was incorporated into ONP when the park was established in 1938.

²² Lowell Skoog, *Written in the Snows: Across Time on Skis in the Pacific Northwest*, (Seattle: Mountaineers Press, 2021), 119; Morton Lund, “The 1930s: The Unexpected Blossoming of Alpine Skiing,” International Skiing History Association website accessed on January 6, 2025 at <https://www.skiinghistory.org/gallery/1930s-unexpected-blossoming-alpine-skiing>.

²³ Theodore Catton, *Wonderland: An Administrative History of Mt. Rainier National Park*, (Seattle: National Park Service, 1996), 303.

²⁴ Olympic National Park Superintendent’s Monthly Report, March 9, 1940, ONP archives; Olympic National Park Superintendent’s Monthly Report, September 10, 1940, ONP archives; Olympic National Park Superintendent’s Monthly Report, November 10, 1940, ONP archives.

in the 1930s”—a traverse from Deer Park to Hurricane Ridge via Obstruction Point.²⁵ Deer Park was the only destination in Olympic National Park to receive a significant number of visitors in winter in the late 1930s and 1940s.²⁶ It drew skiers from around the Pacific Northwest and it remained the primary ski area on the Olympic Peninsula until 1958.²⁷

However, access to Deer Park was difficult and Port Angeles area business interests and the Olympic Ski Club began clamoring for better road access and for alpine lodges in the park. The narrow, unpaved road to Deer Park had been constructed by the CCC in 1934, and it operated on a one-way system, with vehicle travel uphill permitted until 2 p.m. and downhill travel allowed after 3 p.m. Motorists frequently broke tire chains along the steep drive, particularly near the top where the road reached a 23 percent grade. In addition, snow melted early on the site’s south facing slopes. A new road to a relocated ski area on Hurricane Ridge “would eliminate much of the danger now encountered by winter sports fans in driving to Deer Park,” Fred Overly reasoned.²⁸ In January of 1940, NPS staff skied from Hurricane Ridge to Heart O’ the Hills to investigate sites for a new ski area to replace Deer Park and, in September of that year, Regional Landscape Architect Ernest Davidson journeyed to Hurricane Ridge to study the possibility of a new approach road.²⁹

The Port Angeles business and recreation organizations who sought new ski areas, lodges, and roads found a champion in Congressman Henry M. Jackson. Jackson represented Washington’s Second Congressional District, which included the northern half of the Olympic Peninsula, between 1940 and 1952; in 1952 he became a Washington State Senator, an office he would hold until his death in 1983. As a congressman-elect in 1940, he told the Port Angeles Chamber of Commerce that Hurricane Ridge should have an iconic alpine lodge similar to Timberline Lodge on Mt. Hood or Paradise Inn at Mt. Rainier National Park; without it, he maintained, the park would not reach its “great tourist potential.” Throughout the 1940s, Jackson pressured the NPS to construct roads to both Hurricane Ridge and Seven Lakes Basin (a pristine subalpine area dotted with lakes west of Hurricane Ridge), as well as lodges and ski areas in these locations. Port Angeles was the largest city in this part of his district and he met regularly with the Port Angeles Chamber of Commerce, which had formed its own “park advisory committee” to help the congressman identify development needs in Olympic National Park.³⁰ With the onset of World War II and the discontinuation of federal work programs like the CCC, however, the NPS lacked the money to build any new roads, lodges, or ski areas.

²⁵ Skoog, 142.

²⁶ Preston Macy, “Superintendent’s Monthly Narrative Report for December 1940,” ONP archives.

²⁷ Skoog, 142.

²⁸ Fred Overly to Preston Macy, November 8, 1938, NARA-San Bruno, CA.

²⁹ Olympic National Park Superintendent’s Monthly Report, January 1940, ONP archives; Superintendent’s Monthly Report, September 1940, ONP archives.

³⁰ National Park Service, “Henry M. Jackson’s Political Impact on Olympic National Park,” February 23, 1987, NARA-Seattle, WA; Gail H.E. Evans, *Olympic National Park Historic Resource Study*, (Seattle: National Park Service, 1983), 138; *Port Angeles Evening News*, “Jackson Talks Park Problems To Local Groups,” July 9, 1948, NARA-Seattle, WA.

Despite the shortage of funds, the NPS responded to pressure from Congressman Jackson and Port Angeles area organizations by continuing to study new roads to Hurricane Ridge. In 1943, NPS regional engineer R.D. Waterhouse explored two routes from the Port Angeles area: one along the South Branch Little River and one above Morse Creek. Waterhouse dismissed the Little River route as impractical and expensive. The forest was too dense, the slope too steep, and the amount of solid rock (including several miles of narrow canyon walls) along the route would make road building difficult.³¹

Waterhouse preferred the Morse Creek route. Road building could follow a reasonable grade around Burnt Mountain and Klahhane Ridge; no expensive-to-construct switchbacks would be necessary. There was only one section of cliff, on the side of Burnt Mountain, to negotiate and the rock in this location was softer and would be easier to blast than the rock along the South Branch Little River. In Waterhouse's estimation, the road would be economical to build; he believed it would require only two bridges and three years to complete.³² The addition of 20,000 acres of the Morse Creek Watershed to ONP in June of 1943 facilitated this option.³³

Waterhouse's Morse Creek route followed a similar path to part of the Old Cox Trail which had been established in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century by Aurin Cox. Cox homesteaded land in the upper Morse Creek Valley in the 1890s and cut a trail that traversed the east side of Burnt Mountain, passed just above Lookout Rock, and continued west along Klahhane Ridge before descending the lower slopes of Mt. Angeles to the Cox Valley. Game wardens used this trail to access Olympic National Forest throughout the early twentieth century, and the US Forest Service designated it as a stock driveway by the early 1920s.³⁴ The trail also appeared on recreational trail maps and atlases until about 1950 when it was probably at least partially obliterated by road construction.³⁵

The agency continued to investigate locations for new alpine lodges—infrastructure that Congressman Jackson considered vital to the park's success—and ski areas in the mid-1940s. By this time, Deer Park commonly hosted around one thousand skiers each winter weekend. In 1946, NPS regional landscape architect Sanford Hill, along with Superintendent Macy and *Port Angeles Evening News* editor Charles Webster, visited both Hurricane Ridge and Sol Duc Park, an alpine area just east of Seven Lakes Basin, to evaluate potential locations for a lodge and ski

³¹ R.D. Waterhouse, "Proposed Morse Creek-Hurricane Ridge Approach Road, Olympic National Park," February 10, 1943, RG 79, NARA-San Bruno, CA.

³² Ibid., "National Park Service, Branch of Plans and Designs, "Proposed Morse Creek-Hurricane Ridge Road," NP-OLY-2116, September 18, 1943; National Park Service, *Olympic National Park: An Administrative History*, 83.

³³ National Park Service, *Olympic National Park: An Administrative History*, 83. Morse Creek supplied water to Port Angeles and area residents lobbied the NPS to acquire the watershed to protect it from logging.

³⁴ Robert Wood, *Olympic Mountains Trail Guide*, (Seattle: Mountaineers Press, 2000), 228-229; US Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, *Olympic National Forest* [map], 1911, University of Washington Historic Map Cases, Suzzallo Library, Seattle, WA; US Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, *Olympic National Forest* [map], 1923, University of Washington Historic Map Cases, Suzzallo Library, Seattle, WA.

³⁵ *Jim Taplin's Olympic Trail Guide* [map], 1930, University of Washington, Suzzallo Library, Historic Map Cases; National Park Service, Olympic National Park brochure, 1949, accessed on January 6, 2025 at <https://www.npshistory.com/olymp>; Charles F. Metsker, *Metsker's Atlas of Clallam County, Washington*, (Tacoma, WA: 1942).

area. The group ultimately recommended the Hurricane Ridge site for winter sports development.³⁶ However, though World War II had ended, national park budgets remained low as Congress concentrated on paying down the nation's war debts. The NPS undertook little construction, and almost no road construction, throughout the system during the remainder of the 1940s.³⁷ "Since the war," NPS Acting Director Jackson Price wrote in September of 1949, "our roads and trails appropriations have been so meager that very little construction could be undertaken to alleviate the unsatisfactory road conditions" throughout "practically all areas" of the national park system.³⁸

Despite the lack of funds, the agency engaged with other Olympic Peninsula communities who lobbied for new roads into the park during the 1940s as well. On the east side of the Olympic Peninsula, the Quilcene Community Association sought a road through the park's southern section, between Dosewallips and Quinault; the NPS countered with the suggestion of the shorter Staircase to Quinault route, which included seven miles of road above tree line as well as miles of road through old-growth forest.³⁹ The NPS investigated various other routes through the park as well, but all were determined to be too expensive and environmentally destructive. NPS regional director Owen Tomlinson noted that the ideal park road—one that showcased a variety of landscapes—would necessarily have to bisect the park, and in doing so, would "destroy the very thing we seek to preserve and present."⁴⁰

As historian David Louter notes, "In some ways, Park Service leaders endorsed Hurricane Ridge Road because they had little choice."⁴¹ In October of 1947, Regional Director Herman Maier suggested that the NPS focus their efforts on a new road to Hurricane Ridge to help deflect other proposals, including Senator Jackson's request for a road into Seven Lakes Basin.⁴² Development at Hurricane Ridge would provide access to alpine meadows and sweeping views into the heart of the Olympic Mountains. The Deer Park Ski Area could be relocated to Hurricane Ridge and a new paved road with a reasonable grade would offer safe passage to skiers in winter. A road along the Morse Creek route would enable visitors to travel relatively quickly and easily from Port Angeles, so there would be no need for the overnight lodging Jackson sought. The Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs, an alliance of conservation-minded outdoor recreation groups including the Sierra Club, the Mazamas, and the Mountaineers,

³⁶ National Park Service, *Olympic National Park: An Administrative History*, 154; "Director's Annual Report, Olympic National Park," 1947, RG 79, Central Classified Files, Box D30, Box 1474, NARA-College Park.

³⁷ Richard West Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks: A History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), 174.

³⁸ Jackson Price to A.P. Carroll, September 22, 1949, RG 79, Central Classified Files, Box 1072, NARA-College Park, MD.

³⁹ Herbert Maier, Acting Regional Director, to Director, "Olympic National Park Road Projects," November 29, 1949, RG 79, Records of Director Newton B. Drury, 1940-51, Box 17, NARA-College Park, MD.

⁴⁰ Louter, 189-190.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 196.

⁴² Herman Maier to Director, National Park Service, October 22, 1947, RG 79, Central Classified Files, Roads and Trails, Box 1072, NARA-College Park, MD.

supported the construction of Hurricane Ridge Road, while opposing roads into Seven Lakes Basin and through other parts of the park.⁴³ Still, the NPS lacked the funds to build the road.

Heart O' the Hills Highway, 1949-1959

Funding for a road to Hurricane Ridge was obtained through Congressman Jackson, who, in 1947, began serving on the House Appropriations Committee. In 1949, he secured \$660,500 for the initial phase of road construction, as well \$148,500 to begin construction of a day lodge, as part of a \$1.3 million appropriation for the park that included money for campgrounds in the park's coastal strip and the Hoh rainforest, and for road and trail maintenance.⁴⁴ The decision to build a road to Hurricane Ridge and an alpine lodge—though it would not be the overnight accommodations he had insisted upon—placated Jackson as well as the Port Angeles business community. Jackson ultimately sponsored nine bills that included funding for ONP construction projects or land acquisition; similarly, Jackson obtained significant amounts of money for Mt. Rainier, and, after 1968, North Cascades National Parks.⁴⁵ (After Jackson became a senator, he and Senator Warren Magnuson became known as the “Gold Dust Twins” for their ability to steer federal money to Washington State.)⁴⁶

The Bureau of Public Roads (BPR), which commonly oversaw road work on federal lands, designed the road and managed construction of what was officially called Heart O' the Hills Highway. The BPR surveyed the route in 1949 and a Port Angeles contractor began clearing and grading the road corridor in April of 1950. The road began at Heart O' the Hills, at the national park boundary, six miles from the center of Port Angeles. Congress had not appropriated the entire sum needed to complete the road, so the NPS depended on smaller annual appropriations to complete the work in stages, and work proceeded slowly. Clearing and grading were not completed until October of 1954. Three tunnels were constructed through the rock on Burnt Mountain between 1953 and 1956. Hurricane Ridge Lodge construction began in 1952 and was completed in 1954.⁴⁷

The decision to construct Heart O' the Hills Highway did not prevent Olympic Peninsula communities and business interests from continuing to advocate for other new roads. Furthermore, while NPS leaders had decided, in 1947, to focus only on the construction of a road to Hurricane Ridge, the agency approved a road between Staircase and Quinault in March of 1949 and five additional roads were under consideration in the early 1950s.⁴⁸ However, the NPS had a systemwide road maintenance backlog of \$175 million at this time and as Acting Director

⁴³ Preston Macy, “Director’s Annual Report, Olympic National Park,” 1947, RG 79, Central Classified Files, Box 1474, NARA-College Park, MD; Louter, 183-185.

⁴⁴ *Port Angeles Evening News*, “Olympic National Park Assured of Record Breaking Appropriation,” August 29, 1949, RG-79, Road Project Files, 1941-1982, NARA-Seattle.

⁴⁵ “Henry M. Jackson’s Political Impact on Olympic National Park;” Louter, 186 and 196.

⁴⁶ Sharon Boswell and Lorraine McConaghy, “Twin Towers of Power,” *Seattle Times*, September 29, 2006.

⁴⁷ Bureau of Public Roads, Division 8, “Final Construction Report, Heart O' the Hills Highway, Grading and Advance Clearing,” October 15, 1954, RG 79, Subject Files, 1954-1962, Box 8, NARA-Seattle; National Park Service, *Olympic National Park: An Administrative History*, 154.

⁴⁸ Louter, 188-189.

Price explained, “Unless Congress appropriates roads and trails funds in proportion to the backlog of needed construction projects, the possibility of multiple new roads in Olympic National Park is simply not possible.”⁴⁹

Olympic National Park Chief Ranger Fred Overly succeeded Preston Macy as park superintendent in August 1951 and he resurrected plans to build other park roads while Heart O’ the Hills Highway was under construction. NPS director George Harzog Jr. characterized Overly as “aggressive, arrogant, and imaginative,” while historian Hal Rothman describes Overly as “the most controversial superintendent in the park’s history, and arguably in the history of the National Park Service.”⁵⁰ Overly was a forester by training and he believed that national parks should benefit the economies of local towns. As superintendent, he sought to forge strong relationships with surrounding communities through salvage logging, ostensibly from the park’s diseased or damaged trees, though his own staff, as well as conservationists, accused him of harvesting mature, healthy trees. Logging in the Heart O’ the Hills Highway corridor was particularly visible to the public, and park advocates characterized it as “pure and simple commercial logging.” Overly ultimately oversaw the removal of over 65 million board feet of timber in the park.⁵¹

Overly firmly believed in making ONP’s resources more accessible to the public and he shifted the park’s management philosophy from wilderness preservation to development. He hoped that the NPS’s Mission 66 program—a ten-year-long program initiated in 1956 that was intended to modernize and improve national park facilities by the fiftieth anniversary of the National Park Service in 1966—would provide the funding to construct new park roads. Through the program, Overly sought to secure money for a road link between the ends of Heart O’ the Hills Highway and Deer Park Road. He also included the Staircase to Quinault road that the NPS had approved in 1949, as well as a highway along the park’s coastal strip, in the park’s Mission 66 plan.⁵²

NPS leaders rejected Overly’s plans for additional roads in Olympic National Park. Aside from the short access roads that served new Mission 66 developments, most new roads constructed by the NPS during Mission 66 were in the system’s new national recreation areas and national seashores. Some Mission 66 funds were utilized to complete Heart O’ the Hills Highway in 1957-1958, and park staff utilized program money to reconstruct the Upper Hoh Road, the 18-mile-long road between Highway 101 and the Hoh rainforest.⁵³ Overly had also proposed building overnight accommodations and a visitor information station on Hurricane Ridge but NPS Director Conrad Wirth deflected the request by asking Overly to study the need for these

⁴⁹ Jackson Price to A.P. Carroll, September 22, 1949, RG 79, Central Classified Files, Box 1072, NARA-College Park, MD; Frank Kittredge to Conrad Wirth, September 18, 1951, RG 79, Central Classified Files, Box D30, Box 1072, NARA-College Park, MD.

⁵⁰ Rothman, 115.

⁵¹ Ibid., 120.

⁵² Rothman, 115 and 122-123.

⁵³ The reconstruction of the Upper Hoh Road included widening and realigning portions of the road. National Park Service, “Mission 66 for Olympic National Park,” 5; Associate Director Eivind Scoylen, National Park Service, to Fred Overly, March 1, 1956, RG 79, Central Classified Files, NARA-Seattle; National Park Service, “Hoh Developed Area Cultural Landscape Inventory,” 2014, accessed on November 13, 2024 at <https://irma.nps.gov/DataStore/DownloadFile/606883>.

buildings when the road was complete.⁵⁴ In 1958, however, the NPS reassigned Overly to Great Smoky Mountains National Park due to his alliances with timber companies and the visibility of the logging along the new road.⁵⁵

Contractors completed construction on the roadbed in 1957, and the road opened to the public on a temporary basis on January 1, 1958.⁵⁶ The National Park Service had relocated three tow ropes from Deer Park to Hurricane Ridge in 1957 and the agency chose a concessioner—Olympic Ski Lifts Inc.—to operate the new Hurricane Ridge Ski Area, which opened at the same time as the road. (The removal of the tow ropes marked the closure of Deer Park Ski Area). Hurricane Ridge Lodge, which was operated by another concessioner, opened then as well; it was designed to serve the needs of winter sports enthusiasts and included ski rentals and ski lockers in the basement and a coffee shop and fireplace on the main floor. Skiers immediately pushed for a ski area expansion but Superintendent Dan Beard, who succeeded Fred Overly, looked dubiously upon the idea. He believed that the NPS had “overemphasized” the importance of skiing in plans for Hurricane Ridge, though it was likely that the small ski area had become less of a destination over the course of the 1950s, when a number of new ski resorts, with ski lifts rather than rope tows, opened in Washington. Beard stated, “From what we know now, we are going to oppose any extension of winter use such as additional ski tows or new slopes. We do not think it advisable to expand anything at the Ridge.” He also believed that designing the lodge to serve skiers had been a mistake and he proposed remodeling the building interior to better accommodate summer users.⁵⁷

The new road remained open on winter weekends for skiers, then closed for five months as the contractor completed paving. During the closure, the Bureau of Public Roads also undertook work to mitigate the hazard from the unstable slope between Tunnels #2 and #3. The road agency characterized the slope as “a continuous maintenance problem and highly dangerous.” The mountainside showered the roadway with rocks and debris and in 1958 the BPR reported, “Near misses have become common.” The BPR and the NPS worked together to determine solutions and both agencies agreed that extending Tunnels #2 and #3 each 25 feet in length would be the ideal resolution. However, it was the most expensive solution and the most disruptive to long-awaited Hurricane Ridge visitor access. Instead, workers stabilized and applied gunite, a form of concrete that can be sprayed onto a surface, to the slope.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ National Park Service, *Olympic National Park: An Administrative History*, 154.

⁵⁵ Rothman, 120-123.

⁵⁶ Bureau of Public Roads, *Annual Report, Fiscal Year 1958*, (Washington D.C: US Department of Commerce, 1958), 28-29.

⁵⁷ Daniel Beard, “Report on Winter Use, Hurricane Ridge,” July 24, 1959; Svein Gilje, “Hurricane Ridge’s Potential Held Back by Dubious Policies” *Bremerton Sun*, Feb 25, 1960; National Park Service, *Olympic National Park Administrative History*, 165. A Poma lift was added in 1971.

⁵⁸ The BRP applied gunite in two spots in 1959 and inspected the slope in the spring of 1960 to determine if the material had weather the area’s severe winter weather. The agency determined the gunite a success and in May of 1960 applied the material to the remainder of the unstable slope. Bureau of Public Roads, “Narrative Statement to Accompany Completion Report, Slide Stabilization and Paving, Heart O’ the Hills Road, Olympic National Park,” June 30, 1960, RG-79, Records of the National Park Service, Columbia Cascades Support Office, Completion Reports, 1932-1969, Box 10, NARA-Seattle; Bureau of Public Roads, “Project Construction Proposal Form, Slide

Heart O' the Hills Highway opened on a daily basis in August of 1958.⁵⁹ The 12.3-mile-long road between the new Heart O' the Hills entrance station and the Hurricane Ridge parking lot included three tunnels, sixteen culverts, and two scenic overlooks with parking lots and interpretive panels. The road rose steadily but never steeply, with a maximum grade of only 7 percent. The *Seattle Times* noted that the road started at the park boundary, and "From there it swings in a long rising semicircle to Hurricane Ridge. It's as simple as that."⁶⁰ The entrance station (also called Checking Station 749), which had been completed in 1958, was composed of a 494 square foot building with two small offices and a restroom, set on the west side of the road, and a 42 square foot fee booth positioned in the middle of the road. The two buildings shared a gabled roof and cars passed under the roof to pay the park entrance fee, which was collected here for the first time in Olympic National Park in order to offset the cost of the road.⁶¹ Heart O' the Hills Highway was the third paved road, after the Elwha Road and North Shore Road at Lake Quinault, in the park; a fourth, the Upper Hoh Road, would be reconstructed and paved in 1961.⁶²

Over 85,000 people traveled to Hurricane Ridge in 1959. The NPS surveyed visitors that year, in part to determine whether the NPS should build overnight lodging on the ridge—an amenity that Senator Jackson still pressured the NPS to develop—but also to gauge visitor satisfaction with the road and the Hurricane Ridge area. A road link between Hurricane Ridge and Deer Park had remained part the ONP master plan and NPS staff also contemplated the demand for a loop composed of the old Hurricane Ridge Road and the new Heart O' the Hills Highway.⁶³

The agency found that visitors "were extravagant in their praise" of the new road and the new facilities at Hurricane Ridge. The visitor register in the lodge was studded with "laudatory comments about the scenery, the road, the Park Rangers, and so on." Visitors loved the chalet-style lodge and the interpretive programming. They submitted more than 10,000 written comments and "except for some unkind remarks about foggy weather," only a dozen people submitted complaints. Very few expressed a desire for overnight accommodation or a loop road. The park received "one letter from a lady who thought Heart O' the Hills Road was built at too high a standard, without due respect for the landscape. Just one." ONP staff surmised that a circulatory road was not necessary since they found that most visitors simply drove "back down the road they came without comment of any kind," and therefore, "the Hurricane Ridge Complex

Stabilization and Roadway Paving, March 20, 1959, National Park Service, "Preliminary Report on Unstable Slope Between Tunnels #2 and #3," July 1958, RG 79, Completion Reports of Construction Projects, 1932-1969, Box 10, NARA-Seattle; National Park Service, Western Office of Design and Construction, "Tunnel Extension and Portal, Route 1/Heart O' the Hills Road, Olympic National Park," March 25, 1959, ONP files.

⁵⁹ *Seattle Daily Times*, "Our First Stop: Hurricane Ridge," February 2, 1958.

⁶⁰ Byron Fish, "Hurricane Ridge Trip to Be Easy with New Highway," *Seattle Daily Times*, September 3, 1957.

⁶¹ "New Checking Station, Completing Construction 1954," Photographs, Road Project Files, 1941-1982, Maintenance Division, RG 79, NARA-Seattle; National Park Service, "Project Construction Program Proposal Form, Construct Checking Station," March 5, 1956, NARA-Seattle.

⁶² Olympic National Park brochure, 1959, Olympic National Park brochure collection at <https://npshistory.com/publications/olym/brochures/>.

⁶³ National Park Service, Olympic National Park, "Special Report on Summer Use of Hurricane Ridge," November 1959, RG 79, Subject Files, 1941-1962, Box 7, NARA-Seattle.

should be perfectly satisfactory without it.” Visitors praised the ease of the drive, the proximity to Port Angeles, and the high quality of the road, and they loved the view toward the Strait of Juan de Fuca and the northeastern Olympic Peninsula—from the Lookout Rock Overlook.⁶⁴

Completing Hurricane Ridge Road, 1960-1980

Visitors did complain about Mt. Angeles Road, which served as an approach road to Heart O’ the Hills Highway. Mt. Angeles Road lay outside the park boundary; it was a dusty county road that roughly paralleled White Creek as it linked Heart O’ the Hills to the new Olympic National Park Visitor Center in Port Angeles. As tourists began visiting Hurricane Ridge in increasing numbers, Mt. Angeles Road became infamous for its poor condition but, aside from occasional oiling, Clallam County lacked the funds to improve the road. The state legislature, acutely conscious of the economic impact of tourism to Hurricane Ridge, assumed management of the county road in 1961.⁶⁵

At the same time, ONP Superintendent John Doerr worked with the Washington State Highway Department to acquire a right-of-way connecting Heart O’ the Hills and the visitor center, with the goal of eventually extending Heart O’ the Hills Highway to Port Angeles. In 1962, the state purchased an 825 foot wide and 5.28 mile long right-of-way east of Peabody Creek with the intention of transferring the land to the federal government (though the land transfer did not occur until around 1980).⁶⁶ In 1969, the NPS constructed 5.2 miles of roadway between the Olympic National Park Visitor Center and Heart O’ the Hills entrance station. Visitors could now travel the entire 17.5 miles of road between the Olympic National Park Visitor Center and Hurricane Ridge on a well-engineered and maintained paved road. Though it provided a seamless route between Port Angeles and Hurricane Ridge, the NPS often continued to refer to the two sections of road as Heart O’ the Hills Parkway and Heart O’ the Hills Highway.⁶⁷

The completion of the road did not prevent the NPS from continuing to consider building other new roads. The agency never fully abandoned the idea that park visitors preferred loop roads, so that they could enter the park at one location and leave at another; in addition, Hurricane Ridge Road had become popular and experienced congestion at peak times. Master plans prepared in both 1966 and 1974 resurrected the idea of a road link between Deer Park and Hurricane Ridge, which would have established the loop that the NPS first proposed in 1938.⁶⁸ In 1974, park staff

⁶⁴ “Special Report on Summer Use of Hurricane Ridge.”

⁶⁵ John Doerr, “Heart O’ the Hills Approach Road, Olympic National Park, Washington,” April 18, 1962, 1-8, Denver Service Center Electronic Technical Information Center; *Seattle Daily Times*, “The Road to Hurricane Ridge,” February 10, 1959; Ross Cunningham, “Plan for Improving Hurricane Ridge Road Gets Backing,” *Seattle Daily Times*, February 25, 1959.

⁶⁶ Doerr, 1-8; *Seattle Daily Times*, “New Port Angeles Road Approved,” November 14, 1962; National Park Service, *Olympic National Park, Master Plan*, 1974, (Denver: National Park Service, 1976), 70. It is unclear when the land transfer occurred but the road corridor between Port Angeles and Heart O’ the Hills is depicted as part of ONP for the first time on park maps in 1981.

⁶⁷ The lack of consistent name for the entire road continued into the twentieth century; the 2008 General Management Plan utilizes Heart O’ the Hills Parkway for the lower part of the road. By 2010, however, NPS documents consistently use Hurricane Ridge Road for both sections of road.

⁶⁸ National Park Service, Western Office of Design and Construction, “General Development, Part of the Master Plan,” Drawing ONP 2029-E, March 1966, ONP files.

revived the idea of a loop road composed of the old Hurricane Ridge Road, between the Elwha River and the Hurricane Ridge parking lot, and the new road. Skiers lobbied the NPS to build a road up the South Branch Little River and to create a new ski area at the end of that road. There was also a proposal to build an aerial tramway to Hurricane Ridge to help ease road congestion. None of these plans were realized. Hurricane Ridge Road remained one of four paved roads into the park and the Hurricane Ridge developed area represented one of ten major developed areas in ONP (there were an additional seven “minor” developed areas).⁶⁹

Hurricane Ridge Road, 1980-2024

The NPS undertook few alterations on the road throughout the remainder of the twentieth century. When the road was completed in 1958, about 1.8 million visitors per year entered Olympic National Park. By 2000, that number had climbed to almost 3.3 million and Hurricane Ridge was one of the park’s premier attractions. The road’s pavement was deteriorating. At the entrance station, long lines of cars meant that visitors bound for the Mt. Angeles trailhead, a spur road that intersected Hurricane Ridge Road just north of the entrance booths, created an informal turn lane on the unpaved shoulder. Similarly, motorists bound for Lake Dawn Road, which led to a residential area just outside park boundaries, utilized the road shoulder to avoid park traffic. Motorists often found the intersection of Mt. Angeles Road and Hurricane Ridge Road confusing, and some failed to make the southbound turn onto Hurricane Ridge Road. In addition, ONP staff considered pedestrian access at the road’s overlooks “substandard.”⁷⁰

The NPS sought to remedy these issues in 2008 by rehabilitating Hurricane Ridge Road. The section of roadway between the Heart O’ the Hills entrance station and the Hurricane Ridge parking lot was repaved and, while there were no changes to the road width or alignment, the NPS widened the travel lanes by reducing shoulder width. The intersection at Mt. Angeles Road and Hurricane Ridge Road was improved with a new traffic island and signage. Two gravel pullouts were paved, and four turnouts were reduced in size. Double Overlook, at 11.6 miles, was reconstructed and joined by a sidewalk; a new stone-faced concrete wall replaced the original wood and metal rail. New interpretive panels were installed at Double Overlook and Morse Creek Overlook. Finally, the contractor repaired three sections of road that were damaged in a storm in December of 2007. The three tunnels were also in need of repair and, in 2012, the NPS removed deteriorated concrete, patched cracked concrete, and painted a high visibility white paint on the lower section of the tunnel interiors and ends.⁷¹

⁶⁹ The major developed areas were: Headquarters, Heart O’ the Hills, Hurricane Ridge, Mora/Rialto Beach, Elwha, Lake Crescent, Sol Duc, Hoh, Lake Quinalt, and Kalaloch. The minor developed areas were: Graves Creek, Dosewallips, Staircase, Deer Park, Queets, July Creek, and North Fork. National Park Service, Denver Service Center, “Environmental Statement, Proposed Master Plan, Olympic National Park,” 1974, 13-14, accessed on January 6, 2025 at <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=ien.35556030176051&seq=1>.

⁷⁰ National Park Service, “Finding of No Significant Impact, Environmental Assessment for the Rehabilitate Hurricane Ridge Road Project,” February 22, 2006, ONP archives.

⁷¹ Engineering Environmental Management, Inc, “Environmental Assessment, Rehabilitate Hurricane Ridge Road Project,” September 2004, ONP archives; National Park Service and Federal Highway Administration, “Finding of No Significant Impact for the Rehabilitate Hurricane Ridge Road Project,” February 22, 2006, ONP archives.

The agency had intended to rehabilitate the entire 17.5 miles of road in 2008 but funding limitations meant that the first 5.2 miles, between the visitor center and Heart O' the Hills, were excluded from the project. Park staff noted that this section of road had the most significant grade and was most vulnerable to storm damage. The culverts were in poor condition or were inadequately sized and, in 2010, the slope below the road, just north of the entrance station, collapsed, taking 100 feet of road with it. (This section of road was repaired.)⁷²

In 2018, a contractor repaved this section of road and installed new culverts and guardrails.⁷³ A new turn lane to the Mt. Angeles trailhead was added. In 2021, the NPS replaced the Heart O' the Hills entrance station, which was built in 1958. The small office building no longer met modern electrical and plumbing codes and the single entrance booth was inadequate for the volume of traffic. Two new fee stations, two southbound traffic lanes, and a separate office building replaced the original facilities. The new office building was constructed to the south of the original building. A second traffic lane was added and a paved turn lane was constructed at the intersection with Lake Dawn Road.⁷⁴ The alterations helped to accommodate the over 330,000 visitors that journeyed to Hurricane Ridge each year by 2022.

⁷² National Park Service, "Final phase of Hurricane Ridge Road construction proposed for summer 2017," July 18, 2016, ONP files.

⁷³ National Park Service, "First Five Miles of Hurricane Ridge Under Construction, May 28, 2018, Olympic National Park News Release at nps.gov/olym/news; National Park Service, "Final phase of Hurricane Ridge Road construction proposed for summer 2017," July 18, 2016, ONP files.

⁷⁴ National Park Service, "Entrance station project underway on Hurricane Ridge Road," March 24, 2021, nps.gov/olym/news.

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Washington D.C: Government Printing Office, 1983.

Geographical Data

Acres of Property: The road is a linear resource that measures 17.5 miles long.

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

A (Northern end of Hurricane Ridge Road): 48.098611/-123.425000

B (Heart O' the Hills Entrance Station): 48.037500/-123.430278

C (Morse Creek Overlook): 48.012500/-123.371111

D (End of Hurricane Ridge Road): 47.969444/-123.494167

Verbal Boundary Description

See the USGS topographical maps for the points that correspond with the latitude and longitude coordinates indicated above. The evaluated area boundaries follow the edges of Hurricane Ridge Road and its shoulders, pullouts, parking areas, sidewalks (at Morse Creek Overlook and Double Overlook), the Switchback Trailhead, ditches and culverts. The boundary includes the 200 foot long asphalt paved trail between the Morse Creek Overlook parking area and the Lookout Rock viewpoint, as well as the viewpoint.

Boundary Justification

The road is a linear resource and the evaluated area boundary includes the road and all associated features.

Form prepared by:

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Statement of Significance prepared by Olympic National Park staff.

Additional documentation

Maps

1. US Geological Survey, Morse Creek Quadrangle, Washington, 7.5 Minute Series, 2023.
Point C: C: 48.012500/- 123.371111
2. US Geological Survey, Morse Creek Quadrangle, Washington, 7.5 Minute Series, 2023.
Point C: C: 48.012500/- 123.371111
3. U.S. Geological Survey, Mount Angeles Quadrangle, 7.5 Minute Series, 2023.
Point D: 47.969444/- 123.494167
4. Hurricane Ridge Road site plan.

5. An overview of Hurricane Ridge Road. The road extends from the Olympic National Park Visitor Center to the Hurricane Ridge parking lot. National Park Service, Olympic National Park map, 2024.

Figures

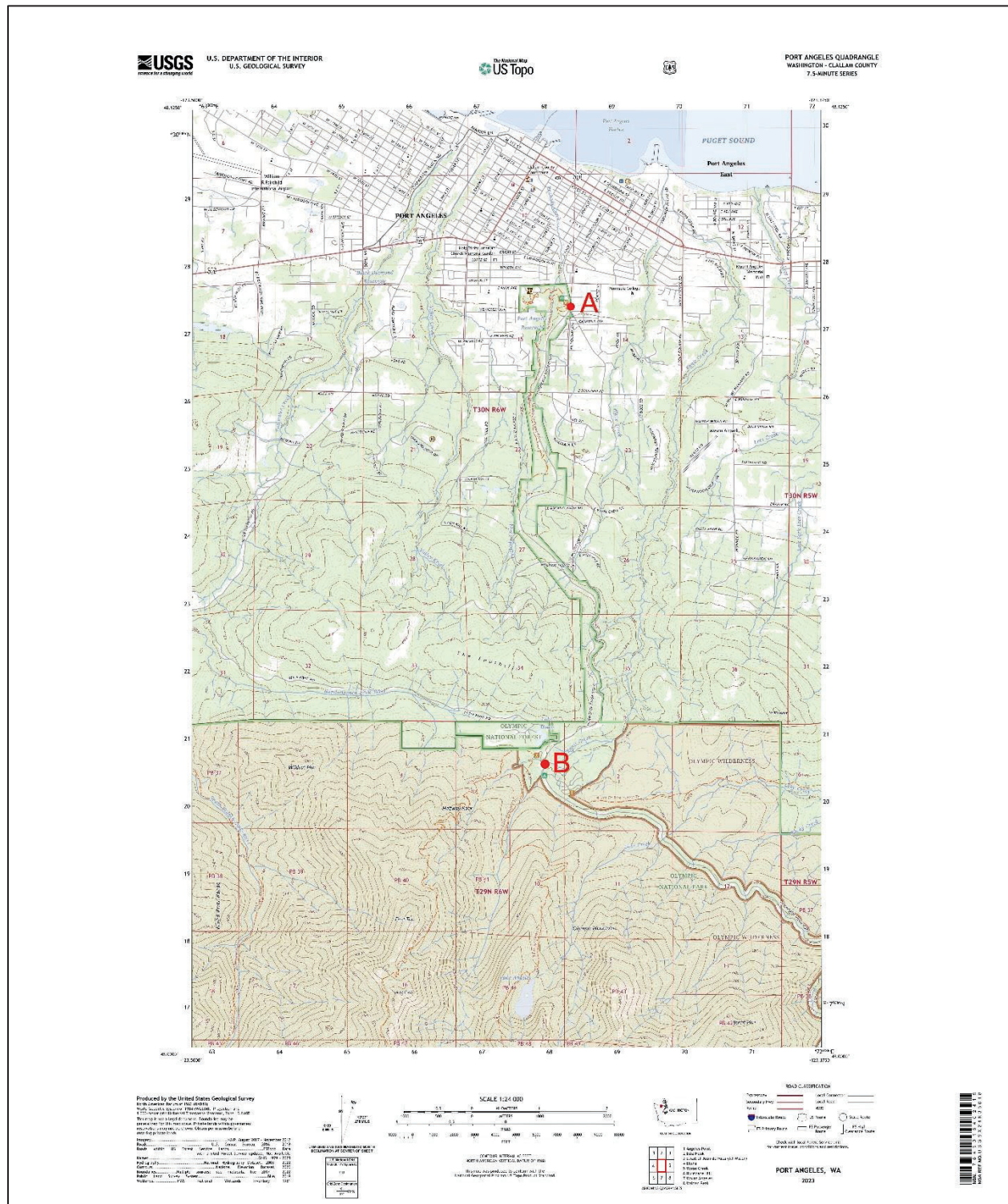
1. A view of the CCC-built road to Hurricane Ridge. *Tourist with automobile, Hurricane Ridge, Olympic National Park, Washington, approximately 1935*. University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections, UW17041.
2. The first Hurricane Ridge Road, as it rose steeply from the Elwha River Valley, ca. 1935. Olympic National Forest historic photograph collection, accessed on November 26, 2024, at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/forestservicenw/>.
3. The Old Cox Trail in 1918. Hurricane Ridge Road followed a similar path around Burnt Mountain. U.S. Geological Survey, Port Angeles Quadrangle, 7.5 Minute Series, 1918.
4. The Old Cox Trail became a stock driveway in Olympic National Forest. Charles F. Metsker, *Metsker's Atlas of Clallam County, Washington*, (Tacoma, WA: 1942).
5. This 1950 ONP map shows the original Hurricane Ridge Road that led from the Elwha River to Hurricane Ridge and Obstruction Point, as well as the approximate paths of the two routes investigated by NPS engineer R.D. Waterhouse in 1943. One of these was South Branch Little River (marked by the red arrow on the left) and the other was the stock driveway around Burnt Mountain (marked by the red arrow on the right). Olympic National Park brochure, 1950, <https://npshistory.com/publications/olym/index.htm>.
6. The proposed route between Heart O' the Hills and Hurricane Ridge, in 1947. Herman Maier to Director, National Park Service, October 22, 1947, RG 79, Central Classified Files, Box D30, Box 1072, NARA-College Park, MD.
7. "Station 330," now part of Double Overlook, in 1957. National Park Service, "Completion Report, Construct Wayside Exhibits, Interpretive Signs and Markers, Heart O' the Hills Road," Records of the National Park Service, Olympic National Park, Completion Reports, 1932-1969, Box 10, NARA-Seattle, WA.
8. Morse Creek Overlook in 1957. National Park Service, "Completion Report, Construct Wayside Exhibits, Interpretive Signs and Markers, Heart O' the Hills Road," RG 79, Records of the National Park Service, Olympic National Park, Completion Reports, 1932-1969, Box 10, NARA-Seattle, WA. The masonry stands with aluminum alloy panels have been replaced.
9. Heart O' the Hills entrance station, which was built in 1958 and replaced in 2021. National Park Service, "Special Report on Summer Use of Hurricane Ridge," November 1959, RG 79, Records of the National Park Service, Olympic National Park, Subject Files, 1941-1962, Box 7, NARA-Seattle, WA.
10. Heart O' the Hills entrance station. The fee booth was on the left, while staff offices were on the right. "Special Report on Summer Use of Hurricane Ridge."
11. A view of Tunnel #1, probably in the 1960s. Kirk, Ruth. "Hurricane Ridge Highway, Olympic National Park" [Postcard]. University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections, WAS1552.
12. The unstable slope between Tunnels #2 and #3 posed a danger to drivers when the road was completed in 1958. National Park Service, "Preliminary Report on Unstable Slope Between Tunnels #2 and #3," July 1958, RG 79, Completion Reports of Construction Projects, 1932-1969, Box 10, NARA-Seattle, WA.

13. Mt. Angeles Road, a county road, served as the approach road to the park boundary at Heart O' the Hills before 1969. U.S. Geological Survey, Port Angeles Quadrangle, 1962.
14. Mt. Angeles Road became infamous for its poor conditions until the state assumed management of the road in 1961. The NPS built a new road from the Olympic National Park Visitor Center to Heart O' the Hills in 1969. *Seattle Daily Times*, February 10, 1959.
15. A view of Hurricane Ridge Road in 2004 as it traverses Klahhane Ridge. Lowe, Jet, photographer, "Hurricane Ridge Road telephoto view from Deer Park Road." Photograph, Historic American Engineering Record, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, 2004. From Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, HAER WA-166-14.

Photographs

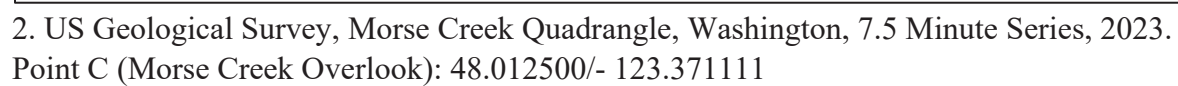
Photographer: Christy Avery, Avery Historical Consulting, October 3, 2024

1. Hurricane Ridge Road begins at the intersection with Mt. Angeles Road in Port Angeles. View to south.
2. The road at 5.2 miles, just north of the entrance station. View to north-northeast.
3. Heart O' the Hills entrance station was constructed in 2021 and includes two fee booths and an office building. The traffic lane on the right was added in 2021 as well. View to south.
4. The gate south of the entrance station, and a typical section of the road. View to southeast.
5. Morse Creek Overlook, at 8.9 miles, provides views of the northeastern Olympic Peninsula and the Strait of Juan de Fuca, outside the park. View to north-northeast.
6. A 200 foot long walkway leads from Morse Creek Lookout parking area to Lookout Rock overlook.
7. The Lookout Rock viewpoint is accessed from the Morse Creek Overlook parking area. View to south.
8. Tunnel #1 is located just south of the Morse Creek Overlook. The viaduct supporting the road structure is visible in this photo. View to west-southwest.
9. The southwest (uphill) side of Tunnel #2. View to northeast.
10. The southwest (uphill) side of Tunnel #3. View to northeast.
11. Two overlook parking areas, connected by a walkway and a rock-faced wall, are located at mile 11.6. View to southwest.
12. The Switchback Trailhead, at mile 14.8. View to north.
13. A section of road just west of the Switchback Trailhead. View to west.

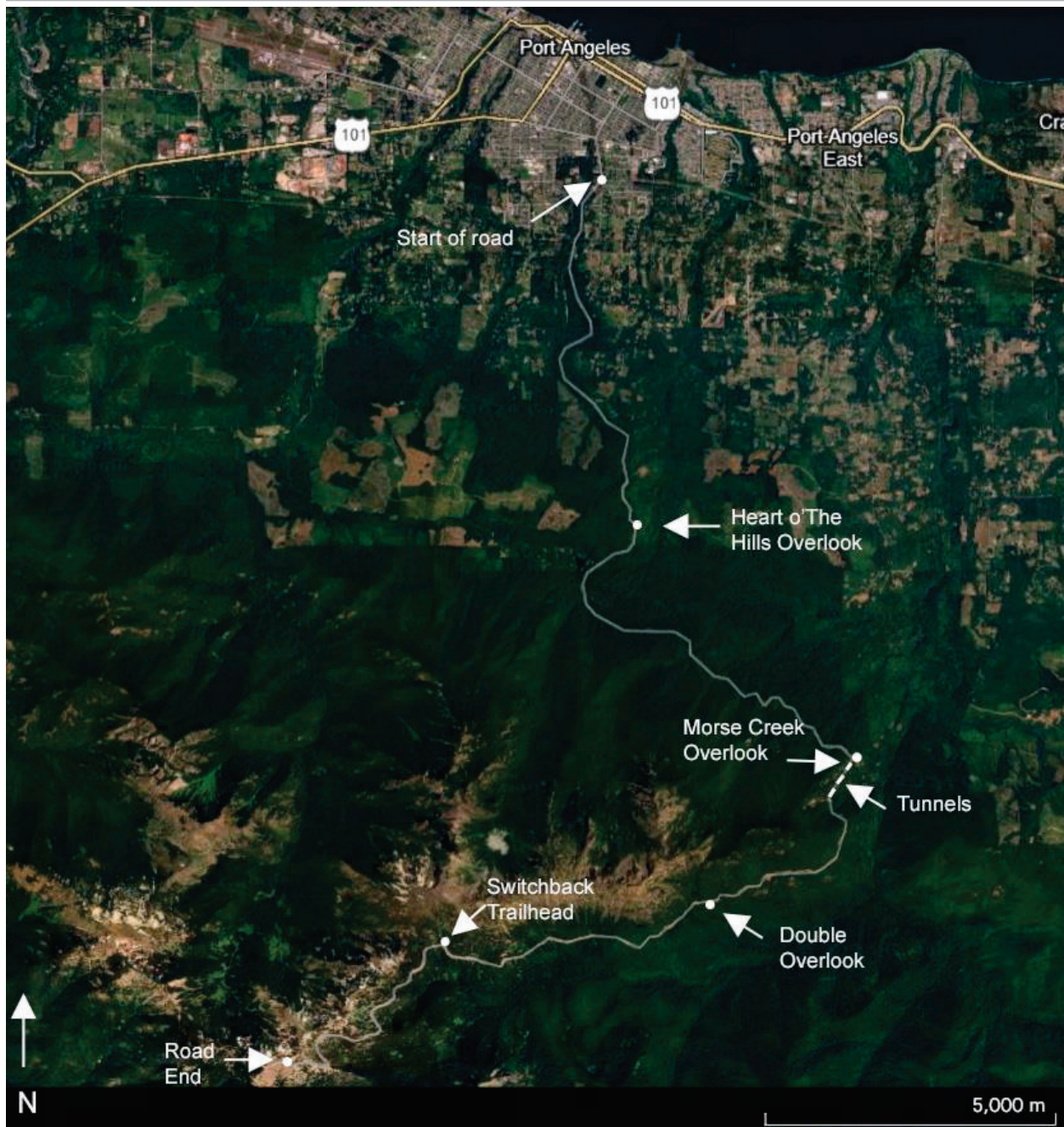


1. US Geological Survey, Port Angeles Quadrangle, Washington, 7.5 Minute Series, 2023.
Point A (northern end of Hurricane Ridge Road): 48.098611/-123.425000
Point B (Heart o' The Hills entrance station): 48.037500/- 123.430278

Olympic National Park
Clallam County, WA







4. Hurricane Ridge Road site plan.



5. An overview of Hurricane Ridge Road. The road extends from the Olympic National Park Visitor Center to the Hurricane Ridge parking lot. National Park Service, Olympic National Park map, 2024.



Figure 1. The CCC-built road to Hurricane Ridge. *Tourist with automobile, Hurricane Ridge, Olympic National Park, Washington, approximately 1935.* University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections, UW17041.



Figure 2. The first Hurricane Ridge Road rose steeply from the Elwha River Valley. Ca. 1935. Olympic National Forest historic photograph collection.

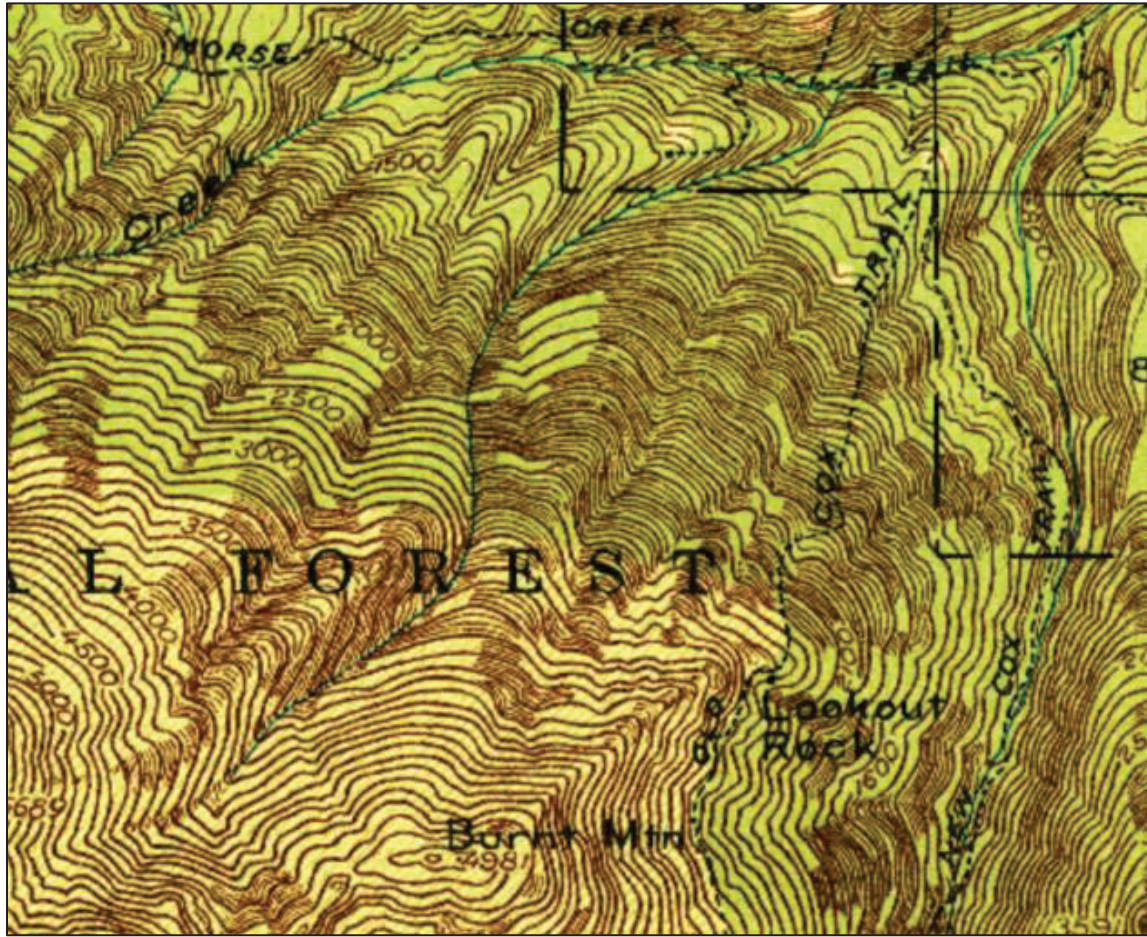


Figure 3. The Old Cox Trail in 1918. Hurricane Ridge Road followed a similar path around Burnt Mountain. U.S. Geological Survey, Port Angeles Quadrangle, 7.5 Minute Series, 1918.

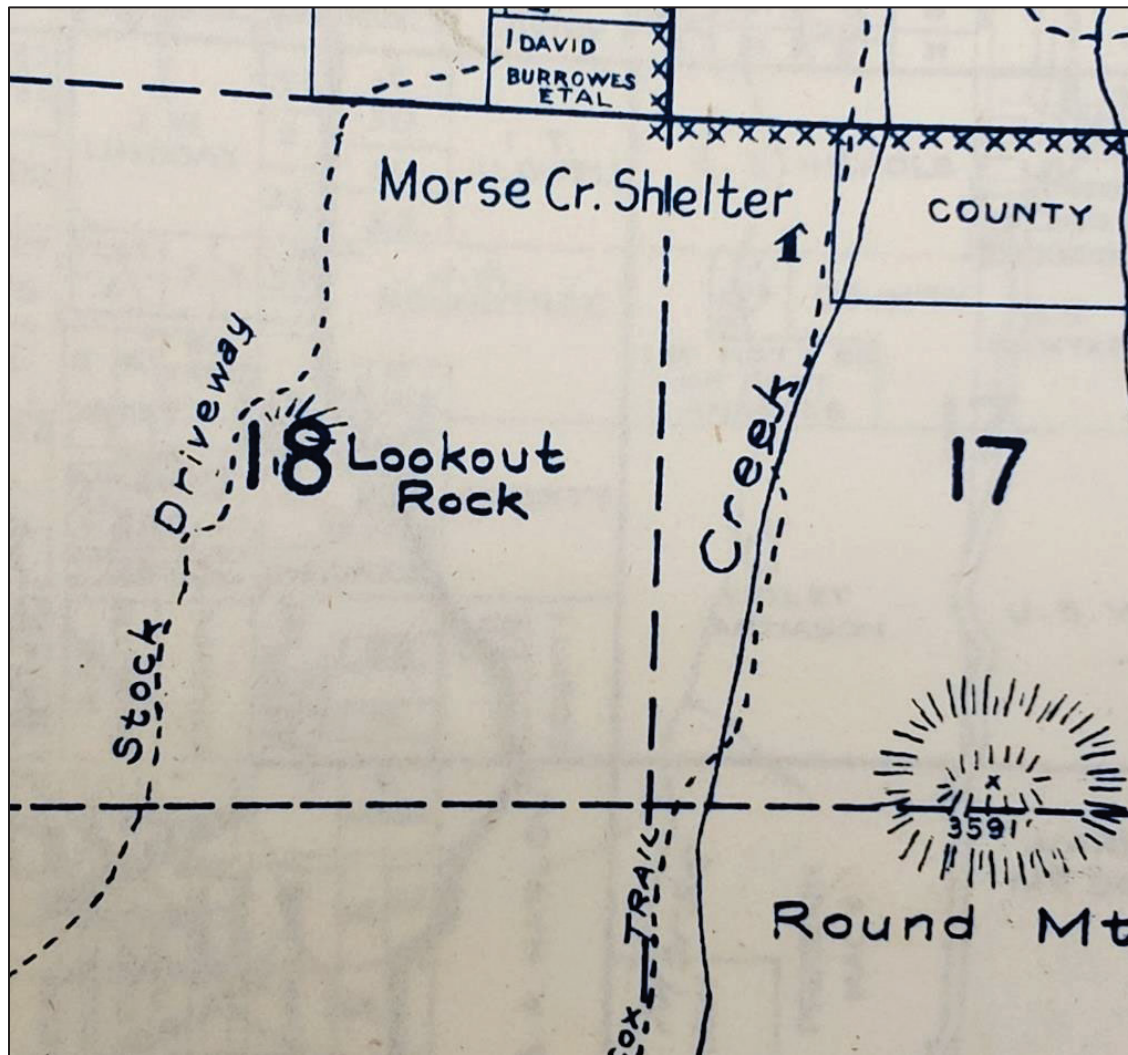


Figure 4. The Old Cox Trail became a stock driveway in Olympic National Forest. Charles F. Metsker, *Metsker's Atlas of Clallam County, Washington*, (Tacoma, WA: 1942).

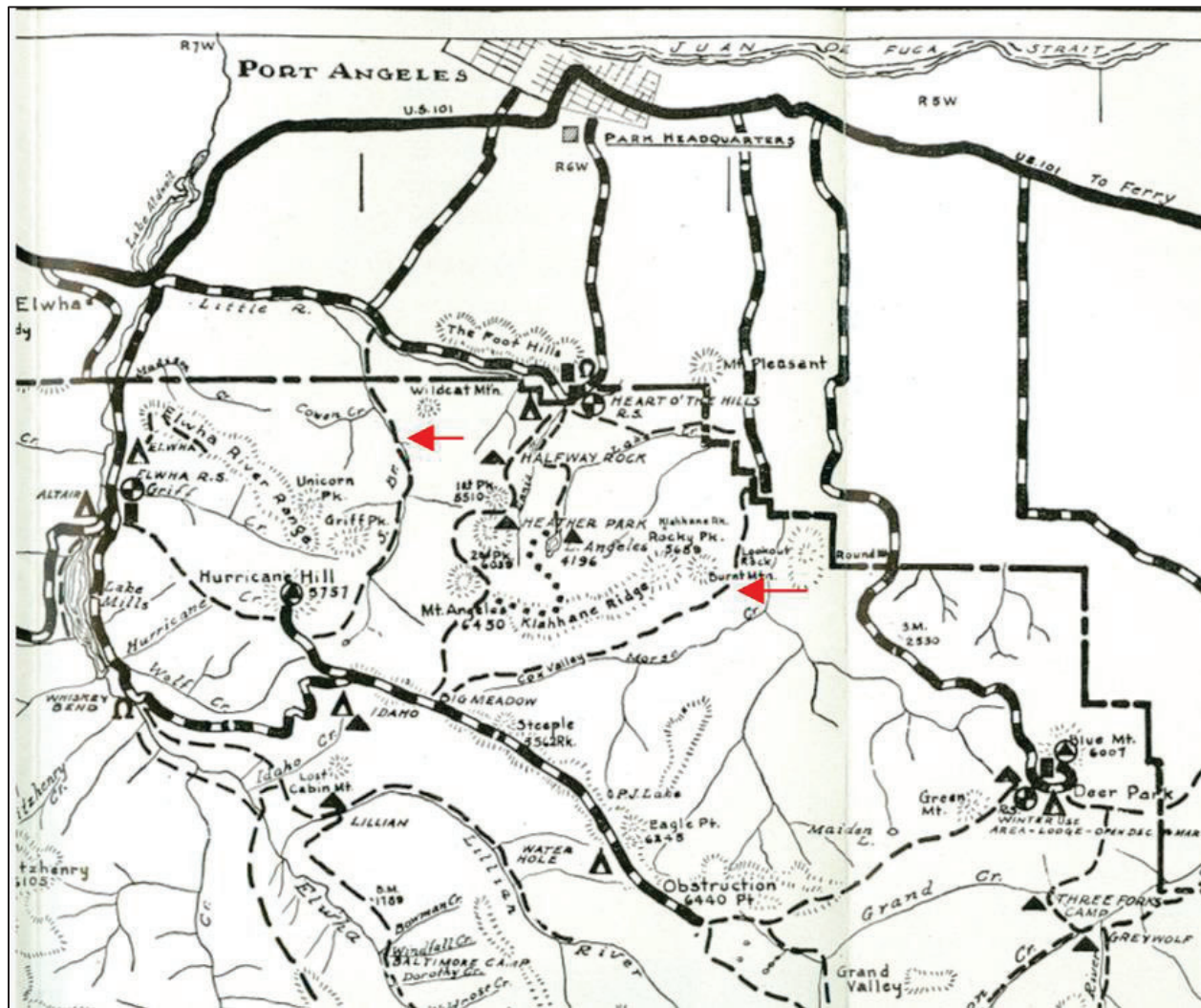


Figure 5. This 1950 ONP map shows the original Hurricane Ridge Road that led from the Elwha River to Hurricane Ridge and Obstruction Point, as well as the approximate paths of the two routes investigated by NPS engineer R.D. Waterhouse in 1943. One of these was South Branch Little River (marked by the red arrow on the left) and the other was the stock driveway around Burnt Mountain (marked by the red arrow on the right). Olympic National Park brochure, 1950, <https://npshistory.com/publications/olym/index.htm>.

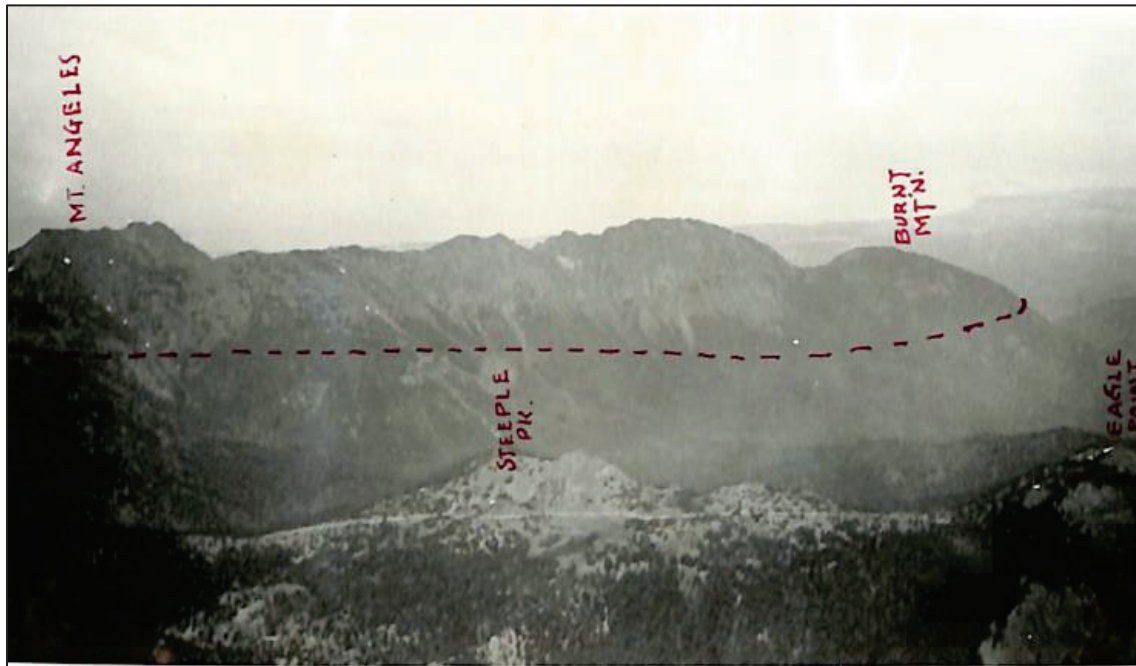


Figure 6. The proposed route between Heart o'The Hills and Hurricane Ridge, in 1947. National Park Service photo.



Figure 7. "Station 330," now part of Double Overlook, in 1957. The concrete and aluminum interpretive stands have been replaced with fiberglass stands, and the guardrail has been replaced by a stone-faced concrete wall. National Park Service photo.



Figure 8. Morse Creek Overlook in 1957. The concrete and aluminum interpretive stands have been replaced with fiberglass stands, and the rail has been replaced with a low concrete curb. National Park Service photo.



Figure 9. Heart o' The Hills entrance station, which was built in 1958 and replaced in 2021. National Park Service photo.



Figure 10. Heart o' The Hills entrance station. The fee booth was on the left, while staff offices were on the right. National Park Service photo.



Figure 11. A view of Tunnel #1, probably in the 1960s. Kirk, Ruth. "Hurricane Ridge Highway, Olympic National Park" [Postcard]. University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections, WAS1552.

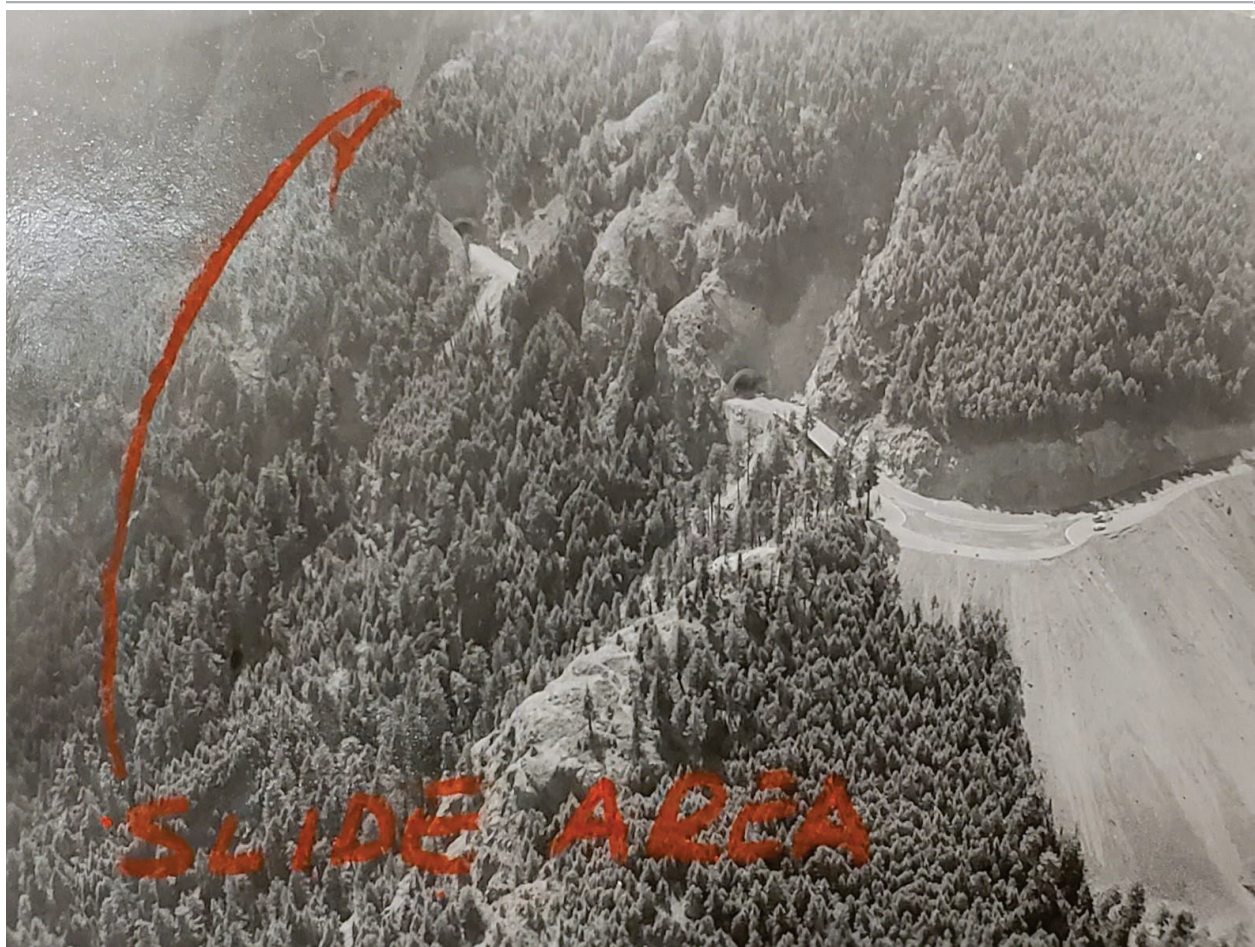


Figure 12. The unstable slope between Tunnels #2 and #3 posed a danger to drivers when the road was completed in 1958. National Park Service photo.

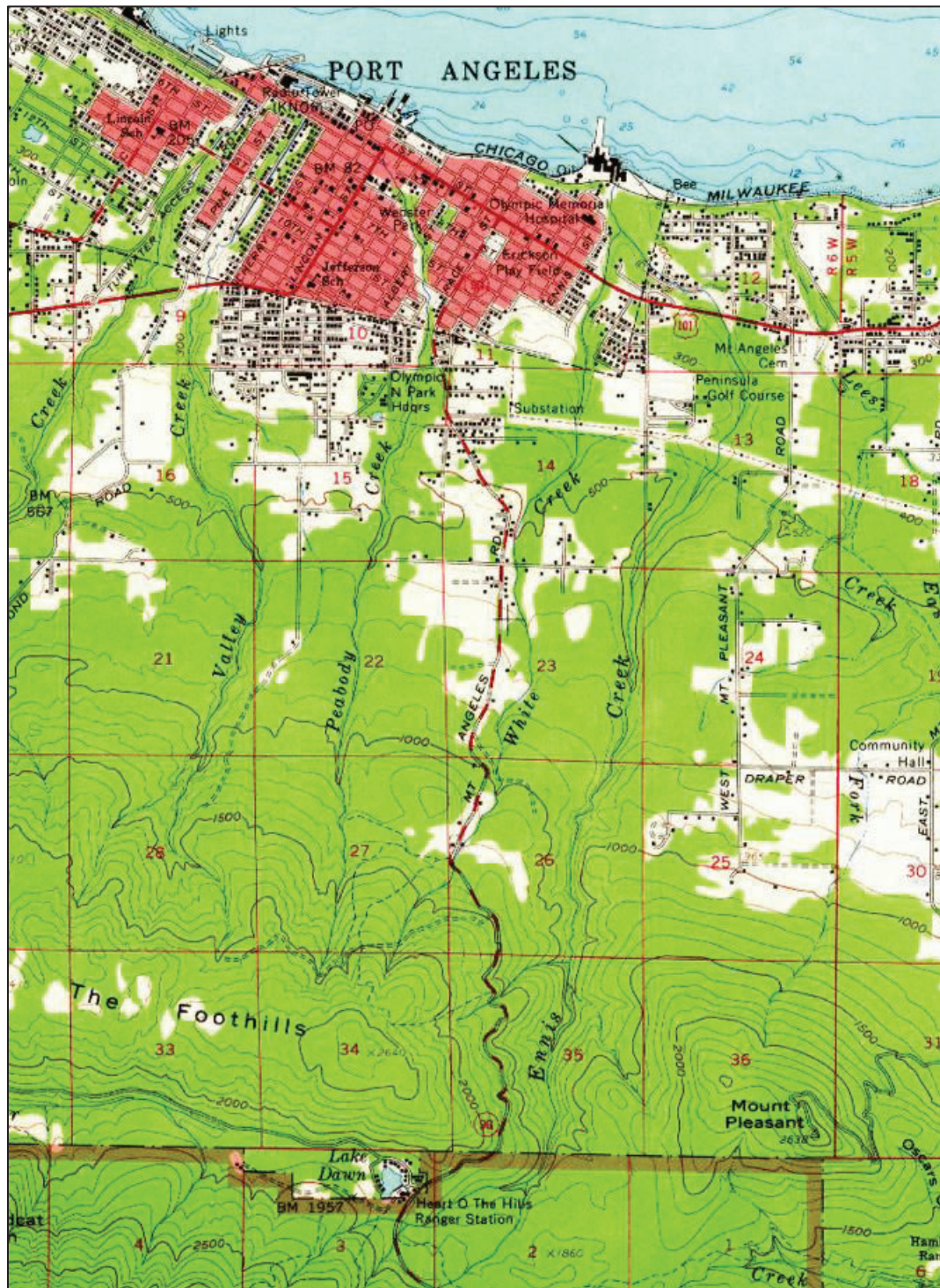


Figure 13. Mt. Angeles Road, a county road, served as the approach to the park boundary at Heart o' The Hills before 1969. U.S. Geological Survey, Port Angeles Quadrangle, 1962.

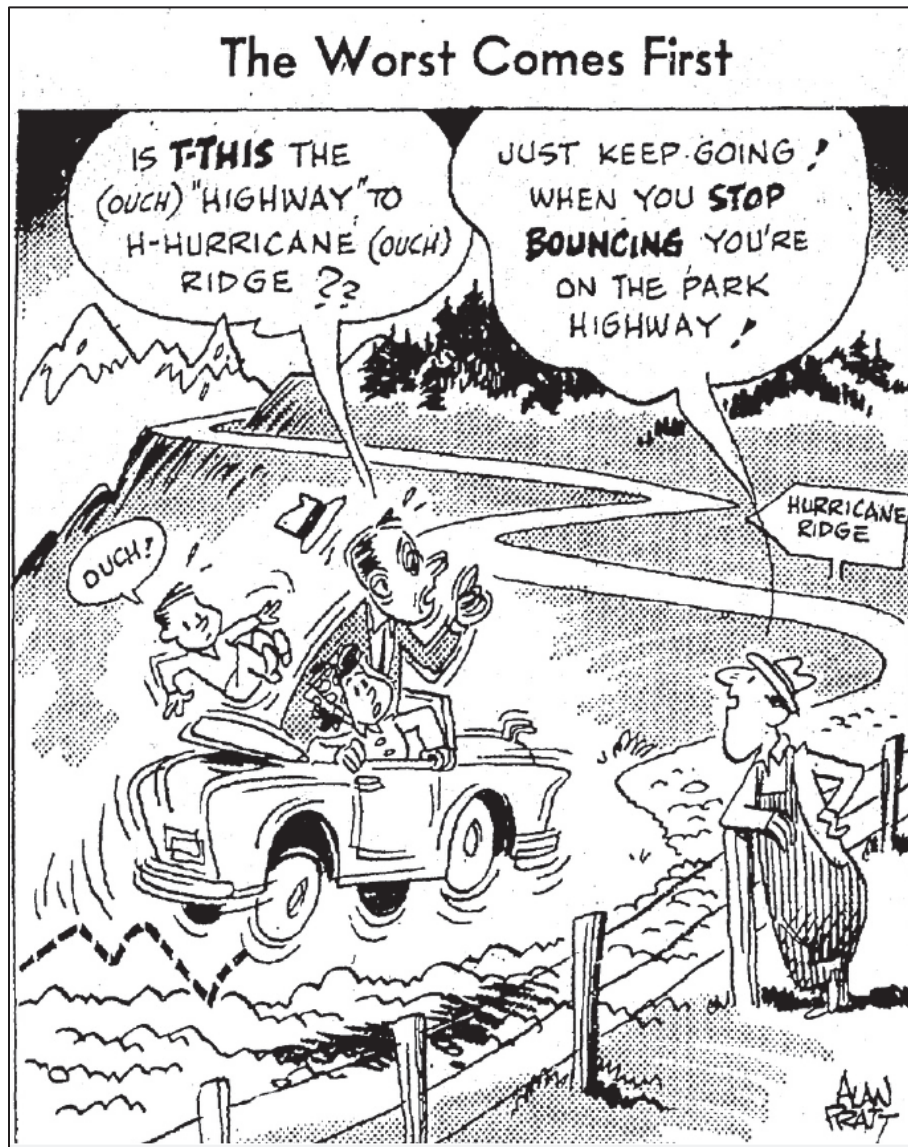


Figure 14. Mt. Angeles Road became infamous for its poor conditions until the state assumed management of the road in 1961. The NPS built a new road from the Olympic National Park visitor center to Heart o' The Hills in 1969. *Seattle Daily Times*, February 10, 1959.



Figure 15. A view of Hurricane Ridge Road in 2004 as it traverses Klahhane Ridge. Lowe, Jet, photographer, "Hurricane Ridge Road telephoto view from Deer Park Road." Photograph, HAER WA-166-14.



Photo 1. Hurricane Ridge Road begins at the intersection with Mt. Angeles Road in Port Angeles. View to south.



Photo 2. The road at 5.2 miles, just north of the entrance station. View to north-northeast.



Photo 3. Heart o' The Hills entrance station was constructed in 2021 to replace the facility built in 1958. The traffic lane on the right was added in 2021 as well. View to south.

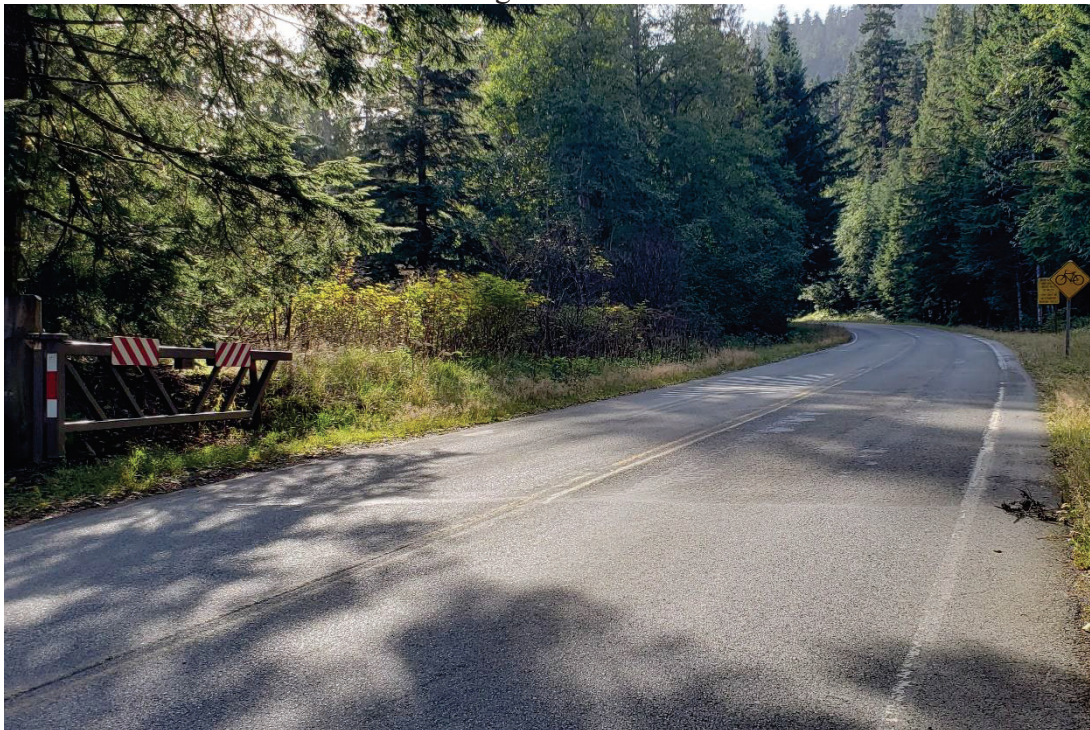


Photo 4. The gate south of the entrance station, and a typical section of the road. View to southeast.



Photo 5. Morse Creek Overlook, at 8.9 miles, provides views of the northeastern Olympic Peninsula and the Strait of Juan de Fuca, outside the park. View to north-northeast.



Photo 6. A 200 foot long walkway leads from Morse Creek Overlook parking area to Lookout Rock overlook.



Photo 7. The Lookout Rock viewpoint is accessed from the Morse Creek Overlook parking area. View to south.



Photo 8. The North Viaduct and Tunnel #1 are located just south of the Morse Creek Overlook. View to west-southwest.



Photo 9. The southwest (uphill) side of Tunnel #2. View to northeast.



Photo 10. The southwest (uphill) side of Tunnel #3. The road in this section is supported by the South Viaduct. View to northeast.



Photo 11. Double Overlook at mile 11.6 includes two parking areas that are connected by a walkway (added in 2008) and bordered by a rock-faced wall (erected in 2008). View to southwest.



Photo 12. The Switchback Trailhead, at mile 14.8. View to north.



Photo 13. A section of road just west of the Switchback Trailhead. View to west.