

Olympic National Park Update

The Quarterly Newsletter of Olympic National Park

January 4, 1999

Vol. III, No. 4



As we look around us, we see that winter has taken a firm hold on the peninsula, both in the mountains and lowlands. Record snowfall for December has covered the Olympics, while late autumn storms have taken a toll on park roads, trails and other facilities.

When and where conditions allow, we invite you to enjoy this winter season in the park, whether that means a day of playing in the snow at Hurricane Ridge, or a walk along a storm-pummeled beach. But while you're enjoying the park, please be safe. Before you leave home, take a few extra moments to make sure you're properly prepared for changeable winter weather and that someone at home knows your planned itinerary. Always check the weather forecast before your trip and use an extra dose of caution while enjoying the park at this time of year.

As always, we appreciate your input on park issues, plans and activities. Barb Maynes, the park's public information specialist, can now be reached at a new telephone number, (360) 452-0317.

On behalf of the entire park staff, I wish each of you a new year filled with good health and happiness. May you continue to use and cherish Olympic National Park and its boundless treasures and mysteries.

Sincerely,

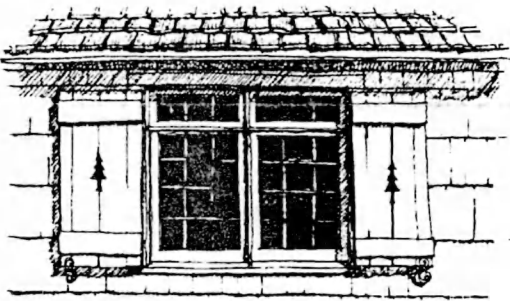
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David K. Morris".

David K. Morris
Superintendent

Update on Fee Demonstration Program

Despite seasonal weather and staffing constraints, work on several fee-funded projects is proceeding throughout the winter.

In the Quinault Valley, two major projects are underway. The historic North Fork ranger station, garage and barn are being rehabilitated and improved. The ranger station has been raised six inches, to allow construction of a crawl space and installation of new floor joists and flooring. Park maintenance employees are completely renovating the building's interior and this spring, will install a new roof.



In addition, park road crews are grading and re-gravelling the North Fork Quinault Road, with the goal of bringing this road's condition to a higher standard, similar to the improvements made to the Graves Creek Road last year.

A Washington Conservation Corps crew is replacing fire grates and picnic tables as needed at Sol Duc and Fairholm campgrounds this winter.

New projects for next year have recently been approved and include \$30,000 for purchase and installation of animal-proof trashcans at front country campgrounds and trailheads throughout the park.

Other fee-funded projects slated for 1999 include installation of new barrier logs at pullouts along Lake Crescent, upgrade of free visitor information publications, and installation of asphalt paving around comfort stations to improve accessibility.

Despite a drop in visitation, revenue from park entrance and use fees rose in fiscal year 1998, to a yearly total of just over \$2.1 million. This is a 16 percent revenue increase over fiscal year 1997.

Storms Hit Park Facilities

Heavy rain and melting snow over the weekend of December 12 and 13 contributed to a partial washout and the temporary closure of the Hoh Road. The popular two-lane road was closed late December 12 at the washout site three-quarters of a mile inside the park boundary. The remaining lane was reopened on December 17, while emergency repairs were completed. The road was opened again on December 30. More extensive repairs will take place this summer when weather and river conditions are more favorable. These repairs will include the use of engineered logjams and bank barbs, both of which result in enhanced fish and wildlife habitat while providing necessary riverbank protection for the road.

The Hoh River has a long history of meandering and cutting new and changing channels within its wide gravel bed. A storm in November 1995 led to the washout of approximately 1000 feet of roadway at the park boundary and resulted in the road being closed for the entire winter. The current road damage has occurred about three-quarters of a mile upstream of the site of the 1995-96 event and is much less severe.

Storm erosion along the Kalaloch coast has also taken a toll on park facilities. Beach Trail Six was obliterated when the bluff traversed by the trail collapsed and slid down onto the beach. There are currently no plans to repair this trail, as the remaining bluff is too steep to accommodate trail construction. Bluff erosion continues to occur along Kalaloch Creek, adjacent to the main lodge and three cabins at Kalaloch Resort.

Winter Is Here!

The December storms that brought rain and flooding to the west side blanketed the mountains with unusually heavy snow. On December 7, the snow measuring station at Hurricane Ridge (elevation 5,230') showed 80 inches of snow, the most ever recorded for this date. The previous record for this date was 61 inches in 1995. Record keeping began in 1980. There are currently 75 inches of snow at Hurricane Ridge.



Drifts of up to 16 feet made opening the road especially challenging this year. During a single day in early December, the road crew used over 400 gallons of diesel fuel in clearing the last half-mile to the visitor center. The road was open most of the holiday week as scheduled, but was closed twice because of blizzard and whiteout conditions.

The Deer Park Road was closed at the park boundary on December 5 after a series of snow-related traffic accidents. During typical winters, the road is closed to vehicle traffic 2.5 miles below the campground. However, this season's extreme snow accumulations, coupled with concern for visitor safety, have necessitated closing the road at a lower elevation. Road and weather conditions will be monitored throughout the winter and if conditions improve, the road may be opened to a higher location. The Deer Park Road ascends approximately seven miles from the park boundary to the Deer Park campground at 5,400 feet.

Park Benefits from Washington Conservation Corps

Several Washington Conservation Corps (WCC) crews have been hard at work this fall building and improving trails around the park. At Quinault, the Big Cedar Trail will soon be complete. There has long been a series of undesignated social trails leading to the Big Cedar tree; the new trail will provide a safer and more pleasant experience for area residents, as well as park visitors. This project was funded through two grants: a grant to the park

from the Public Land Corps Program for materials and an Americorps grant to the WCC to cover labor costs.

Another WCC crew put final touches on the Living Forest Trail at the Olympic National Park Visitor Center this fall. A short spur trail leading to a large fallen tree, benches and a small amphitheater are now in place. Repairs to the Kalaloch Nature Trail have also been completed this fall.

Improvements Complete at Lake Crescent Lodge

New pathway surfaces and lighting have just been completed at the Lake Crescent Lodge. Thanks to this project, which was funded by the concessionaire's franchise fees, visitors will have adequate lighting between all of the lodge buildings and the parking lots. The newly refurbished trails provide links between all the lodge buildings and the Moments in Time trail and are universally accessible.

Lake Crescent Lodge is owned by the National Park Service and operated by National Park Concessions, Inc.

Discover the "Tree" at www.nps.gov/olym; More Website Innovations in Store

A new learning center, the "Olympic Tree", has been recently added to the official Olympic National

Park website at <http://www.nps.gov/olym>. The "Olympic Tree" leads web visitors through a broad network of information about the park's natural and cultural resources. Other recent additions include trail condition reports, which are updated weekly in summer, and feature articles found within the "Olympic News" section.

Even more additions are in store for the park's website, thanks to a \$20,000 grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency "Hands on the Land" program. Along with Everglades National Park, the second of only two NPS "Hands on the Land" recipients, Olympic will use the grant to enhance educational opportunities through the Internet. At Olympic, this program will provide for the development of the Olympic National Park "Virtual Classroom".

Park Employee Speaks at International Wilderness Congress

Ruth Scott, one of Olympic's natural resource specialists, gave a presentation entitled "Managing High Use Areas of the Olympic National Park Wilderness" at the 6th World Wilderness Congress in Bangalore, India. Olympic is a recognized leader in wilderness revegetation and restoration; Scott manages these programs at the park. The World Wilderness Congress was held in October and brought together over 600 delegates from a variety of countries and wilderness-related disciplines. Scott's trip was funded in part by a grant from the National Park



Foundation's Albright-Wirth Employee Development Fund.

News from the *Mount Rainier, North Cascades & Olympic Fund*

Olympic has just received word of the *Mount Rainier, North Cascades and Olympic Fund's* most recent grant awards. Four important park projects have been funded; work will begin soon. The four projects are described below.

Enhanced educational opportunities will be developed at the Children's Discovery Room in the Olympic National Park Visitor Center in Port Angeles (\$9,150). The park will produce an educator's curriculum guide to the Discovery Room, will have a ranger available for school groups visiting the room, and will also provide assistance for schools unable to pay the full price of field trip transportation.

Other projects include the purchase of cold-weather uniforms for winter volunteers at Hurricane Ridge (\$1,600), allowing the public to easily identify park staff, while providing quality winter gear for winter volunteers to use while working at the Ridge. In addition, *The Fund* has

made \$1,176 available for improvements to the park's greenhouse, and \$4,700 for marking hatchery steelhead on the Queets River.

With these latest disbursements, *The Fund*, since 1994, has made possible 20 projects in Olympic National Park with donations totaling nearly \$160,000.

To learn more about *The Mount Rainier, North Cascades and Olympic Fund* and its work with Washington State's national parks, call (206) 621-6565.

Park Visitation

There have been 4,482,257 visits to the park this year, with an estimated 198,740 visits during the month of November. Visitation so far this year is currently 15 percent less than the total for the first 11 months of 1997.

Last year's visitation was the highest ever at Olympic National Park, with an estimated 5,023,000 recorded visits. This was a 15 percent increase over the number of visits in 1996.

Olympic National Park
600 East Park Avenue
Port Angeles, WA 98362



Inside This Issue:

- Update on Fee Demonstration Projects
- Storm Damage Report
- Website Additions