



Olympic Update

The Quarterly Newsletter
of Olympic National Park

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Despite Lingering Snow, Summer Is Here

Summer has just arrived and staff attention is focused on readying the park for its annual busy season. Already, most campgrounds are open and crews are hard at work clearing roads and trails from the winter's debris.

With this winter's record-breaking snowfall, and spring's extraordinary amount of lingering snow, this summer is sure to be unusual as well. Please be extra careful when visiting the park this year, especially when hiking and exploring away from the road. Rivers and streams are likely to be higher than normal for the season, and at the higher elevations, many trails and familiar

landmarks may be obscured by snow throughout most of the summer. The park's Wilderness Information Center staff will be happy to help plan your trip and suggest alternatives to damaged or snow-covered trails.

We also invite you to enjoy one of the park's ranger-guided programs, which began on June 23 this summer. A full schedule of these programs can be found in the Olympic National Park *Bugler*, the park's visitor newspaper.

In this issue, we are proud to bring you another special report detailing

progress on the park's many fee-funded projects. We hope the work highlighted here will add incentive for you to visit and explore the park, not only for its unique and spectacular natural features, but also to see the tangible benefits of your user fee dollars.

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

David K. Morris
Superintendent

Spring Melt Reveals Winter's Effects

This winter's snowfall broke records that have been in place since records were begun in the Olympics in 1949. On March 27, the snow at Hurricane Ridge was over 25 feet deep; measured according to its water content, it was 253 % of average.



Hurricane Ridge Visitor Center buried in snow in mid March

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As the snow melts and facilities are assessed, the effects of this winter can be more easily seen. Several backcountry bridges were destroyed over the winter; most notably the Enchanted Valley suspension bridge and the High Dose bridge. Some roads, such as the Hurricane Hill and Obstruction Point roads remain closed due to heavy amounts of lingering snow. Most trails are still covered by snow

above 2,500 feet in elevation. Trees blown down during the winter have yet to be cleared from many park trails.

For current trail condition reports, hikers should call the Olympic National Park Wilderness Information Center (WIC) at 360-452-0300 or visit the park's website at <http://www.nps.gov/olym>.

Bears Active After Long Winter

In three separate incidents over the Memorial Day weekend, bears in the Elwha Valley either damaged camping equipment or found and broke into hikers' food caches.

To prevent further incidents, the 6.8-mile stretch of the Elwha River trail between Lillian River and Elkhorn was immediately closed to overnight camping. The trail remains open to dayhiking. Both the Lillian and Elkhorn backcountry campsites are open to camping at this time.

Campers are **required** to hang all food and food-scented items from bear wires provided at the following

locations: Humes Ranch, Lillian River and Elkhorn. In all other locations, campers must carry at enough cord to hang their food at least 12 feet off the ground and 10 feet away from the nearest tree trunk. All campers are strongly encouraged to carry bear-resistant food containers. Bear-resistant food containers are available for rent or for sale at many outdoor stores.

In established campgrounds and other road-accessed areas, food and food-scented items must be either hung or secured in a vehicle. Proper food storage and garbage disposal are the keys to preventing bear – human encounters.

Recent years have seen a growing number of black bear incidents around the park, especially in the



Elwha and Sol Duc valleys. On several occasions, bears were able to obtain human food and in some instances, entered campsites and destroy camping gear. Bears are opportunistic feeders and can easily become accustomed to human food. Once habituated to human food, bears may become dangerous and often must be destroyed. A black bear was destroyed near the Sol Duc campground last summer, after having become accustomed to human food left available in the campground.



Park Visitation

As of June 1, there were 1,114,149 visits to the park this year, with an estimated 394,054 visits during the month of May. Park visitation for the first five months of this year is seven percent lower than the total for January through May 1998, but

visitation for this May is 15 percent higher than last May. This winter's record-breaking snowfall and resulting delays in road and trail openings has contributed to the visitation decline.

Park Receives \$50,000 Grant from Canon USA, Inc.

Thanks to Canon USA's Expedition Into The Parks program and the National Park Foundation, Olympic National Park has received a \$50,000 grant to develop a comprehensive inventory of the park's mosses, lichens and liverworts. An identification guide and new display at the Hoh Visitor Center are also planned. This project will also receive funding from the Biological Resources Division of the U.S. Geological Survey and the Northwest Interpretive Association.

Mosses, lichens and liverworts form the hallmark "green draperies" of Olympic's temperate rainforest. Abundant throughout the rest of the park as well, these plants play important ecological roles by providing food, shelter and nesting materials for a variety of animals and birds. They absorb heavy rains and retain moisture during drought periods, helping to maintain the high humidity of the rain forest. Mosses, lichens and liverworts are important indicators of forest health, and have been used for decades to help monitor and assess the effects of air pollution.

The inventory and educational materials provided by the Canon USA grant will enhance understanding and appreciation of these common, but often overlooked plants and will prove useful for park staff, researchers and the public.

Since 1995, Canon USA's Expedition Into The Parks program has donated over \$4 million in cash and equipment to 80 national park sites. This program is conducted in cooperation with the National Park Foundation, the official nonprofit partner of the National Park Service. Established by Congress in 1967, the Foundation raises support from corporations, foundations, and individuals to preserve and enhance America's national parks.



DoubleTree Hotel to Host Ranger Programs

In a new partnership between Olympic National Park and the Port Angeles DoubleTree Hotel, park rangers will present educational programs on the waterfront adjacent to the hotel in downtown Port Angeles. The one-hour programs will begin on

June 29 and will be offered every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday evening at 8:30 p.m. Programs will vary throughout the summer and will help both visitors and park neighbors learn more about the features and resources of Olympic National Park.

A "Roving Ranger" will also be available Tuesday through Saturday from 5:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m., beginning on June 29. During these times, the roving

ranger will provide information and answer questions in and around the Port Angeles CrabHouse Restaurant and along nearby Hollywood Beach.

A schedule of these programs, as well as the many other programs offered throughout Olympic National Park, can be found in the *Bugler*, the park's visitor newspaper, which is available at all ranger stations and visitor centers.

Introducing *Washington's National Park Fund*

The Mount Rainier, North Cascades and Olympic Fund has a new name, the *Washington's National Park Fund*. *The Fund* also has a new logo, but retains its mission to restore, enhance and preserve the three national parks of Washington State.

One of *The Fund's* major projects this year is an Education Initiative to benefit all three of

Washington's national parks. Phase One of the initiative will be a statewide newspaper campaign to raise public awareness of national parks, their value and what people can do to help the parks.

Phase Two of the project will provide financial support for an education ranger based in the National Park Service's Seattle Office. This ranger will develop school programs about parks and will coordinate NPS school programs throughout western Washington. This position will be jointly funded by *The Fund* and the National Park Service.

The Fund also has a new address and can now be reached at:

Washington's National Park Fund
2112 Third Avenue, #501
Seattle, WA 98121
(206) 770-0627



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

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