

Olympic National Park Update

The Quarterly Newsletter of Olympic National Park

March 30, 1998

Vol. III, No.1

Spring has arrived, and with it has come the annual preparation for summer. This spring's work is more intense than we've seen in recent years, thanks to proceeds of the Recreation Fee Demonstration Program. Revenue from last year's fee program resulted in nearly \$600,000 for backlogged projects around the park. Details on many of our ongoing and soon-to-begin projects are contained in this issue of the *Olympic National Park Update*.

Other projects are underway as well. We will soon be ready to announce the completion of two new accessible trails at Staircase and the Olympic National Park Visitor Center. New improvements funded by our non-profit partner, *The Mount Rainier, North Cascades & Olympic Fund* will also be completed this year. We invite you to visit the park soon and hope that you'll take advantage of our new and improving facilities.

As always, we welcome your questions, comments and suggestions. Barb Maynes, the park's public information specialist, can be reached at (360) 452-4501, extension 207.

Sincerely,



David K. Morris
Superintendent

Wolf Prey Base Studies Begin

Park biologists have begun gathering information to be used in developing population estimates for Roosevelt elk and black-tailed deer in the park. During the month of March, park biologists will conduct an aerial census of Roosevelt elk on the west side of the park. Biologists observing from a helicopter will count elk in three of the park's western river valleys. Data from this census will be used to

develop a population estimate for elk on the west side of the park. This information will compliment population estimates already in place for the east side elk herds.

Meanwhile, black-tailed deer survey methods are being field-tested and refined this winter in the Hoh and Elwha river valleys. Data collected during this period will be used in developing a preliminary estimate of the deer population in these drainages.

These studies are part of the overall wolf restoration feasibility study that was authorized by Congress this year. In addition to information about deer and elk, the feasibility study will examine a variety of other topics related to possible wolf restoration. These include the current and historic status of wolves on the peninsula, the suitability of habitat for wolves, the socioeconomic impacts of wolf restoration, and projections on the future of a potential wolf population, (including possible impacts to human safety, as well as livestock and pets). The feasibility study will begin this spring and is targeted for completion by the end of the year.

Along with the feasibility study, Congress directed that a public outreach and opinion-gathering project be completed this year. Both the feasibility and public opinion studies are being coordinated by an interdisciplinary group of managers from several federal and Washington state agencies, as well as area tribes and the Olympic Natural Resource Center. The agencies include the National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife and the U.S.D.A. Forest Service.



Maintenance Crews Prepare for Summer

Park maintenance crews are busy preparing for the summer season, readying trails, roads and campgrounds throughout the park. Personnel from the park trail crew are rebuilding the 0.7-mile-long Second Beach trail near La Push, replacing the old wooden boardwalk with over 360,000 pounds of hard-packed gravel. During the weekend of March 21, a military Chinook helicopter flew the gravel to locations along the trail, where it is now being spread by trail crew members. The trail has reopened for hiking, one week earlier than anticipated.

The trail crew is also making improvements to Beach Trail Four at Kalaloch, replacing the 35-foot bridge. New support beams ("stringers") for the bridge were flown to the bridge site on March 21. Beach Trail Four will be completed by summer and is expected to remain open throughout the repair project.

Beginning on April 1, members of the park trail crew will begin the final steps of replacing the Three Prune, Stalding and Kimta Creek bridges on the North Fork Quinault trail. All three bridges are targeted for completion by Memorial Day. Also beginning April 1, other members of the trail crew will begin spring opening on the Elwha trail. Initial assessments on trail conditions throughout the park indicate that this trail will require the most work in order to prepare it for the summer season.

Elwha, Fairholm and Sol Duc campgrounds are also receiving face-lifts this spring, with new picnic tables and fire grates at many sites and improved campground trails. Much

of this work is being done by members of the Washington Conservation Corps. Boaters and other lakefront visitors may notice improvements to the public-use docks at Lake Ozette and at Fairholm and Log Cabin on Lake Crescent. New floats, cleats and bumpers will be installed in time for the April 25 opening of fishing season.

Repairs Underway at Lake Crescent Lodge

By the end of June, the sun porch at Lake Crescent Lodge will have new, weather-tight windows. A Port Angeles architect is currently finalizing blueprints for the windows, which will be installed by a Sequim contractor. Special considerations are being made in this project, in order to retain the historic integrity and appearance of the building. As a result of this project, contracts totaling over \$108,000 are being awarded to local design and construction firms.

New outdoor lighting will also be installed at the lodge, providing brighter and safer after-dark access to the facility and grounds.

The Lake Crescent Lodge is owned by the National Park Service and operated by National Park Concessions, Inc. This project is funded through the concessionaire's franchise fees. The project is a joint undertaking between National Park Concessions, Inc. and Olympic National Park.



Work Nearly Complete on New Accessible Trail

Construction is nearly complete on the new Accessible Loop Trail at the Olympic National Park Visitor Center in Port Angeles. This new trail will provide a universally accessible route for school groups, local residents and others to explore the forest immediately adjacent to the visitor center. The trail will offer an alternative to the present loop trail, which is quite steep and not accessible to physically challenged individuals. A Washington Conservation Corps (WCC) crew has completed the work done so far. In July, a volunteer group of high school students from around the country will complete finishing touches to the trail.

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

The *Mount Rainier, North Cascades & Olympic Fund* is celebrating its first five years of generating private support to restore, enhance, and preserve Washington's national parks.

At Olympic, cause for celebration is clear. In 1997, *The Fund* awarded Olympic National Park \$47,287 in support of five projects to be completed this year:

- \$33,487 toward the ongoing rehabilitation of the Lake Ozette loop trail;
- \$5,000 for the production of an hour-long educational film on Olympic, a project in partnership with the Northwest Interpretive

Association and the N.P.S. Parks as Classrooms program;

- \$4,000 toward construction materials for the Olympic National Park Visitor Center Accessible Loop Trail;
- \$3,000 for the publication of a study on the park's Roosevelt elk herd and
- \$1,800 for the services of a private pack company to support a Washington Conservation Corps crew performing backcountry trail maintenance.

Overall, *The Fund* awarded \$152,331 to Washington's three national parks in 1997. During 1998, *The Fund's* goals for Olympic include identifying funding for the park's wilderness revegetation program and publication of an educator's guide to the Children's Discovery Room at the Olympic National Park Visitor Center.

To learn more about *The Fund* and its work with the parks, call (206) 621-6565.

New Employees Join Park Staff

Polly Angelakis is the new manager of the Olympic National Park Visitor Center in Port Angeles. A Massachusetts native, Polly replaces long-time park employee Sharon Wray, who retired this past September. Polly has worked for the National Park Service both as a seasonal and year-round ranger since 1986. This is her second stint at Olympic -- Polly was a seasonal education ranger at Sol Duc during the summer of 1993. Since then, she has worked at Jean Lafitte National Historical Park, George Washington Memorial Parkway and

Shenandoah National Park. Polly arrived at Olympic in late December.

The park also has a new personnel officer, James Kirkland. Originally from Oregon, James transferred to the National Park Service after completing a four-year stint in human resources with the Defense Logistics Agency (a branch of the Department of Defense) in Los Angeles. James studied political science, economics, and French while earning a B.A. from the University of Oregon, and prior to joining the federal sector, James worked for state and local government in Oregon and California. He began his federal career in 1991 as a Presidential Management Intern after graduating with a Masters in Public Administration from Syracuse University. James replaces Terri Sumner-Pearson, the park's former personnel officer, who recently accepted a position abroad in the United Arab Emirates.

Park Visitation

Park visitation so far this year has paralleled that of the first two months of 1997. Through the end of February, there have been 378,288 visits to the park this year.

Last year's visitation was the highest ever at Olympic National Park, with 5,023,302 recorded visits. This was a 15 percent increase over the number of visits in 1996.



Special Report on Fee Demonstration Projects

In 1997, Olympic National Park implemented the Recreation Fee Demonstration Program. This three-year program is designed to explore the feasibility of using fees to help offset budgetary shortfalls within the National Park Service and several other agencies. Under this program, all money collected at Olympic will be returned to the National Park Service. Eighty percent of that amount is retained by Olympic to fund visitor use, maintenance and resource management projects, while the remaining 20% helps fund priority projects throughout the national park system.

Increased entrance and camping fees, as well as new fees for wilderness use, RV dump station use and parking at Ozette were put into effect last year. Thanks to the proceeds from these fees, as well as thoughtful input from the public and park staff, 17 important projects are underway at the park. A number of them are described below.

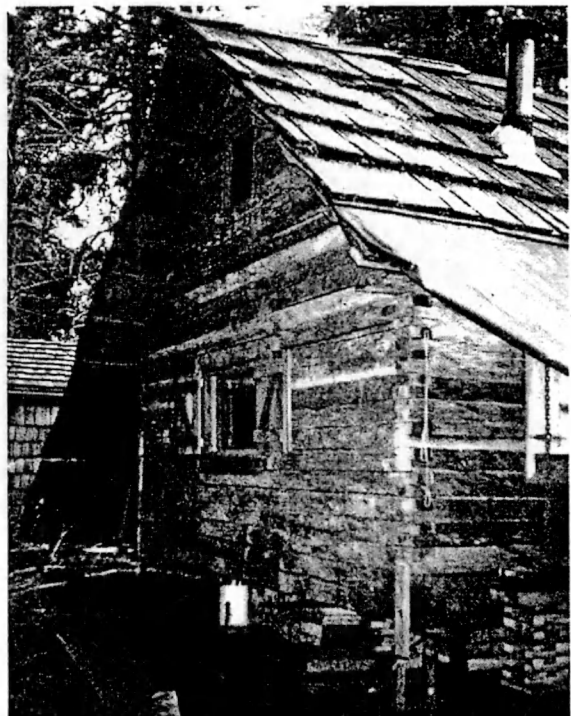
Rehabilitate Backcountry Trails

Five additional people will be hired to join the trail crew for four and a half months this summer. Beginning in mid-May, this extra crew will focus on clearing and improving the Bogachiel trail. As time permits, this crew will move on to the Queets and Duckabush trails. \$50,000 has been allocated to backcountry trail rehab this year, with an additional \$50,000 per year programmed for each of the next two years.

Rehabilitate Historic Backcountry Ranger Stations

Improvements and repair to the Olympus Guard Station on the Hoh River trail will be complete by April 1. As illustrated by the photographs, park staff raised the building from its foundation in order to replace rotting sill logs and floor boards. New roof beams and new shutters were also installed. Similar repairs to the Elkhorn Ranger Station on the Elwha River trail are also nearing completion. Building inspections and condition assessments of the remaining backcountry ranger stations are underway and will be completed through the spring and summer. Thirty-six thousand dollars has been allocated for the repair of these two structures.

Olympus Guard Station raised off its foundation, allowing trail crew staff to replace rotting floor joists



Stabilize Backcountry Shelters

This spring, park staff will complete the first phase of this project -- a condition assessment of all shelters. The assessments will help determine the priority in which shelters will be repaired. Supplies and materials for this project will be ordered this year and time permitting, work will begin on stabilization this year as well. Twenty thousand dollars will fund this project in 1998, with an additional \$40,000 programmed for following years.

Replace Campground Fire Grates

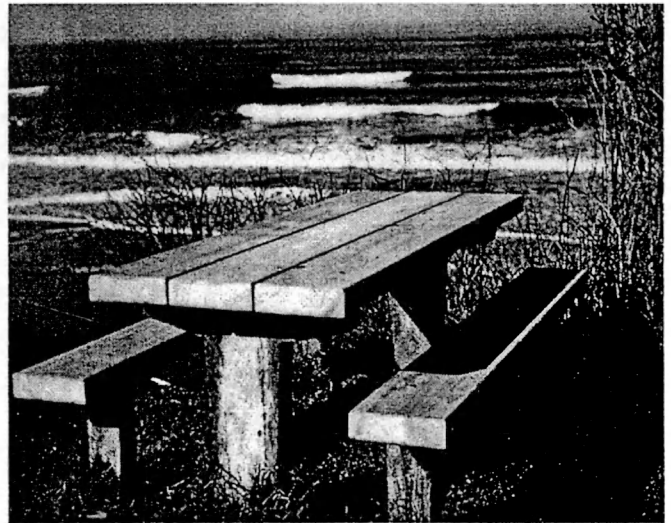
Over one hundred fire grates have been purchased and will be installed at Fairholm, Graves Creek and Sol Duc campgrounds this spring. The new grates will replace old and deteriorated ones, many of which are over 20 years old. Eleven thousand dollars was earmarked for fire grate replacement this year, with an additional \$22,000 to come in future years to complete replacement in other park campgrounds.

Replace Picnic Tables Parkwide

Many of the park's picnic tables are over 30 years old, and while maintenance crews have made them last as long as possible, many of the tables or wooden table tops had fallen into disrepair. This year, \$30,000 has been allocated for picnic table replacement. So far, deteriorated picnic table tops and seats have been replaced at Altaire, Elwha, Fairholm and Kalaloch campgrounds.



Thirty-year-old picnic table at Kalaloch Campground



Same picnic table after replacement of table top and benches

Repair Gravel Roads and Parking Lots

Over \$100,000 will be spent this year to repair, grade and spread new gravel on several park roads. Initial repairs to the Whiskey Bend Road were completed early this winter, with 400 tons of gravel spread onto the road surface. Another 300 tons of gravel will be added this fall, after the main visitor season. The road crew is currently re-gravelling the Graves Creek Road and though recent rains have hampered their progress, the road is expected to re-open in mid-May. Crews will return to Graves Creek in the fall, when they will complete the project by replacing 12 old and deteriorated culverts. The Queets Road is next on the list for repair and re-gravelling and will likely be completed next year.



Graves Creek Road before re-gravelling



*Graves Creek Road after grading
and re-gravelling*

Rehabilitate Campground and Interpretive Trails

Work is nearly complete on upgrade of the Staircase Rapids Loop Trail near the Staircase campground. In addition to general improvements to the trail, a half-mile section of the two-mile loop has been modified to make the trail accessible with assistance to people in wheelchairs. The educational guide book to the trail is also being revamped and improved. Trails at the Fairholm and Sol Duc campgrounds are receiving needed maintenance work and at Ozette, the parking lot and kiosk trails have been improved.

In addition to the projects described above,

- the Olympic National Park Visitor Center will be repainted this summer,
- five fully accessible privy restrooms have been purchased and will be installed at Sol Duc, Whiskey Bend and Boulder Creek trailheads; and at Deer Park and East Beach,
- thousands of native plants are being grown in the park greenhouse for planting in the Hoh Lake area later this year, as part of the park's wilderness revegetation program,
- gravel parking lots at Staircase and Ozette have been graded, smoothed and re-graveled,
- new light fixtures have been ordered for the Hoh Visitor Center and will be installed by the end of April and
- proceeds from the fee program will also fund adequate staffing and improved visitor service at the Wilderness Information Center.

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



Inside This Issue:

- Special Report on Fee Demonstration Projects
- Wolf Prey Base Studies Begin
- Summer Preparations