

Olympic National Park Update

The Quarterly Newsletter of Olympic National Park

September 19, 1996

A Message from the Superintendent

I am pleased to present this first edition of the Olympic National Park Update, the quarterly report of Olympic National Park. It is designed to provide an overview of park actions, programs and issues -- current, upcoming and recently completed.

By sharing this material with you, we hope to provide a starting point for dialogue and information exchange about the park and how it is managed. As we and our neighbors and visitors continue to learn more about each other, we will together build a stronger foundation of communication and understanding.

Should you have comments, questions or suggestions about this or future editions of the Olympic National Park Update, please contact Barb Maynes, the park's Public Information Officer at (360) 452-4501, extension 207.

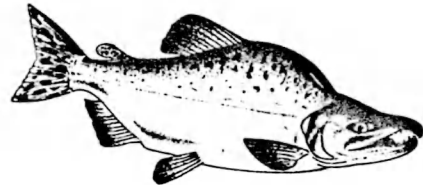
Sincerely,



David K. Morris
Superintendent

Elwha River and Ecosystem Restoration

An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on Elwha River Ecosystem Restoration Implementation, the second of two EIS's on Elwha restoration, was released in April of this year. A 60-day public comment period followed, during which three meetings were held and 374 comment letters received. The final version of this EIS will address questions and concerns brought forward during the comment period and is targeted for release sometime this November.



Mountain Goat Management in Olympic National Park

Publication of the final EIS on Mountain Goat Management was delayed because of the unique and uncertain federal budget situation earlier this fiscal year. The draft EIS was released in March 1995. About

1,200 letters were received during the 107-day public comment period. Concerns and questions voiced during the comment period will be addressed in the final EIS, which will be released this winter.

Lake Crescent Management Plan/EIS

The Lake Crescent Management Plan/EIS will be released early next month. A 60-day public comment period will follow, with two public meetings planned for late October or early November.

The plan will address a wide range of issues and uses of the lake and watershed and when complete, will serve as a guideline for management of the Lake Crescent watershed (an area of about 30,000 acres) for the next 15 to 20 years.

Statement for Management

The Olympic National Park Statement for Management (SFM) will be published this fall, providing an overview of the park's mandates, resources, facilities, programs and management issues. Primarily intended as a source of information and guidance for park managers, the SFM will also serve as a reference for others interested in the park.



Possible Changes to Park Fishing Regulations

Following the state's lead, the park last May implemented new catch-and-release regulations on wild steelhead in the upper portions of the Queets and Hoh rivers.

More changes may be in store as park fisheries biologists conclude a three-year study on fish populations and fisheries within Olympic National Park. Data they have gathered includes information on fish (types, locations, population estimates) and anglers (numbers, types of gear used, success rate, satisfaction, home county or state). An analysis of this information may lead to new proposed regulations. The proposed new regulations may be released this fall, for implementation in May of 1997. A 60-day public comment period will follow release of the proposed regulation changes.

New Barrier-Free Nature Trail at Lake Crescent

The "Moments in Time" Nature Trail on Lake Crescent's Barnes Point was dedicated on Saturday, August 10. The trail is two-thirds mile long and is gravel-surfaced and barrier free. Nineteen trailside exhibits offer insights into the area's natural and human history.

A number of volunteer groups aided in building the trail, including the Klahhane Club, Port Ludlow Hiking Club, Peninsula Trails Coalition, Washington Trails Association and the Washington Conservation Corps. Students from the

Port Angeles High School's Choice program, several Boy Scout Troops and many individual park volunteers also participated. The Northwest Interpretive Association, the Mount Rainier, Olympic & North Cascades Fund and the Rob Reed and Lena Sharpe Memorial Foundation also supported the trail.

The "Moments in Time" Trail honors the memory of Rob Reed and Lena Sharpe, producers at KCTS Channel 9 in Seattle. Rob and Lena died in a plane crash in Oct 1993, while filming a documentary about old-growth forests.

Wilderness Information Center Celebrates Its First Season

The park's new Wilderness Information Center (WIC) opened on June 27. Funded in part by a grant from the Mount Rainier, North Cascades & Olympic Fund and staffed largely by volunteers, the WIC provides a central information source for visitors to the Olympic National Park wilderness. In addition to general hiking and backpacking information, the WIC offers trip-planning, safety and minimum impact advice.

In its first month of operation, the WIC received over 2600 visitors, 10,000 phone calls and issued approximately 1,000 wilderness use permits. The center is open daily from 7:30 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. through the Labor Day weekend and after that from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. through the end of September.

Kalaloch Housing

Construction began in early September on a 12-person bunkhouse in the NPS housing area at Kalaloch. The bunkhouse, which will house NPS seasonal and temporary employee, will replace three old and dilapidated mobile homes. Budgeted at \$650,000, the bunkhouse construction is funded through a congressional appropriation specifically targeted for park service employee housing.



Campground Improvement

Once the Fairholm campground closes for the winter, park maintenance crews will move in, building tent pads, enlarging parking pads and replacing old and worn-out picnic tables and fire grates. Comfort stations will also be improved, with more energy-efficient light fixtures and universally accessible facilities. Crews recently completed the upgrade of Loop C at Fairholm -- this winter's work will focus on Loops A and B.

Sand Point Restoration

Park staff and volunteers will plant over 15,000 native plants at Sand Point this fall. Sand Point, located along the popular Ozette loop trail, is one of the most heavily-used wilderness camping areas in the park. Heavy use has resulted in large patches of bare ground and a network of social trails. Restoration crews will replant bare patches with native plants propagated in the park's greenhouse and will designate and define area access trails. This project is funded in part, by a grant from the Canon Corporation and the National Park Foundation.

Ongoing Repair of Storm Damage

Repair and reconstruction continues after last winter's extensive storm damage to park trails and roads. Maintenance crews have worked throughout the spring and summer to repair trails and remove rock and flood debris from stream channels around the park. Trail clearing and repair have continued at a slower-than-normal pace this year because of budget shortfalls and a smaller number of summer seasonal employees.

The North Shore Road at Lake Quinault remains open to only one lane due to a washed-out culvert near Milepost 3. The Federal Highway Administration will begin repair on this section of road in September.

The Rialto Beach parking lot remains partially closed, with only 50 of its original 100 parking spaces available. About half of the parking lot was destroyed and washed away by storm waves last winter. Restoration of the parking lot will begin after completion of the Army Corps of Engineers Quileute River project at LaPush.

Park Visitation Drops

As of the end of July, the park had recorded a 12 percent drop in total park visitation compared to the first seven months of 1995. While some of this decline may be attributed to closure of the Hoh Rainforest area January through May due to the road washout, the drop in park visitation mirrors the overall decline in visitation Peninsula-wide. As of July 31, there had been approximately 2.1 million visits to Olympic National Park.