

Shelton Open House

PEPC 190672

C

To: Olympic National Park Superintendent

From:

Olympia, WA 98516

8/23/2006

Re: Request for the Olympic National Park in their updating of their General Management Plan to include packgoats as packstock and to allow the use of packgoats on "stock" trails in the Olympic National Park.

I am an avid packgoat user. I have been breeding for, raising, training and using packgoats for some 16 years. Each year I put on several packgoat seminars to help newcomers as well as experienced packgoat users the chance to update themselves on the care, training and use of packgoats. I have been an avid backpacker and hunter for over 40 years and was taught by my father to respect, preserve and protect nature. I avidly use and promote the "leave no trace" ethics. I also am involved, and have been for over 18 years, in 4H youth programs, specifically with the goat projects. Some 10 years ago I began the first 4H packgoat club and was instrumental in allowing packgoats to become a new 4H goat project. To this, I educate the 4H youngsters (Thurston County as well as all over the states of Washington, Oregon, Idaho) in the correct use of packgoats and the leave no trace ethics. Our youth are not only learning about care and use of packgoats but also learn about wildlife, forests, habitats, and other natural processes.

Over the past years I have written letters to the previous park superintendent as well as sent emails and called. All these communications have met with an extremely negative and overwhelming "no" to any of my requests, which have included offering to put on a packgoat seminar specific to goat use in the Olympic National Park. I have even offered to take those who made decisions about the park plan on a packgoat hike to see first hand how packgoats are used and their lack of impact on the trail systems, especially when compared to the large hoofed animals such as horses and mules.

I have experience in all stock use, to include horse, mule, llama and goat. Of all of these I have chosen the packgoat as the stock that is most compatible with use in natural areas. Their impact on trails is miniscule if any as they are like deer in their droppings and their hooves are small and soft, which do not break down trails. Packgoats are well-bonded to their hiking partners, and even if off lead they are always under a positive control and do not run off in an uncontrollable manner such as can other larger stock, even the well-experienced horses and mules. This along with the general guideline of using wethers (castrated/nonbreeding males) as packgoats allows no possibility of a feral population hazard. As our packgoats are well bonded and under control at all times, they do not haphazardly meet up with natural populations of wildlife.

In the past the main comments made to us as packgoat users as to not being allowed in the Olympic National Park were: 1. Goats smell; 2. Enough impact on the stock trails; 3. Impact on natural habitat; 4. Goats bring in cougar and other predators. All of these statements are incorrect and although explained before, that explanation had apparently gone unheard. 1. The only goats that smell/have an odor are the bucks or the intact males, which are not used as packgoats. 2. Goats offer no impact on stock trails – if you take a goat and walk the same trail a horse has walked, you will see nothing but the horse impact – on other trails that llamas and goats are allowed only on (Mt. Baker National Forest), you will see pristine trails except where man has left his garbage before us or left his footprints. 3. As it is a general guideline to not let goats browse along the trail they are on and when at camp not allowed to browse directly in camp, this allows the natural habitat to be relatively undisturbed. 4. Goats do not bring in cougar or other predators more than any human or other stock. We have hiked in cougar and grizzly bear country and this does not make us more vulnerable than normal hikers. Indeed, with our group usually being 2 or 3 hikers with 4 to 6 goats, this makes a formidable presence to any predator and they are likely to look at this situation as a non-win situation for them.

With this new opportunity to have input into an updated general management plan for the Olympic National Park I would again like to offer my expert service in showing you all about packgoats and to answer any questions you might have concerning their use.

We certainly understand that certain trails should be kept from stock use especially in a fragile habitat. As packgoat users we also understand that maintaining stock trails is a volunteer responsibility to us. As a member of a local packgoat club and a national packgoat association, our members promote volunteer time for our forests and other lands/trails that we use. I am a board member on Washington Trails Association and know the true meaning of a mission statement that includes preserve and protect.

As packgoat users we would like the opportunity to visit the Olympic National Park. Some of us have a definite need for packgoat use, as in my case I have degenerative osteoarthritis of the knees and have had one knee replaced already. Having a packgoat to carry my load and be my hiking partner makes it possible for me to enjoy the outdoors and get to places I would otherwise not be able to hike to.

In your mission statement, the last paragraph states "While protecting these resources for future generations, our mission includes providing today's visitors with the access, facilities ... the park." I believe this to mean that other users should be allowed to use the park with specific guidelines so that the natural processes, habits and life forms within the park are protected. As responsible packgoat users we are capable and ready to help make the necessary guidelines in order for us to use the Olympic National Park and enjoy one of the Northwest's most beautiful and diverse parks.

Thank you for your time. Please do not hesitate to call me with questions or, when you are ready for a seminar or talk or hike with the packgoats, I will be happy to provide that service to you. For more information about packgoats, please visit our website at <http://home.comcast.net/~edelweissacres/>.

Sincerely,

A solid black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area of the letter.

HIGHLINING YOUR GOATS:

The first thing we do when we get to a camp spot is take care of the goats – these are your best hiking partners and need the extra special care to keep packing well for you.

1. We take off their packs and let them browse (usually they are so tired they are not going to meander and bother anybody, but most of the time we secure them to a tree, rock, large bush, just for a very short period of time).
2. We then set up their “Tony tarp” (so named from a friend who came up with this idea some 14 years ago). One highline for the goats is put up between two trees and is where you will highline the goats to using a Prusik knot to keep them in their own area and not butting heads with their neighbor on the same line. We put a rag/piece of material around the rope that is around the trees so the rope does not damage the tree.
3. We then place another highline (for the tarp to be attached to) a few inches above the goat highline. The tarp is then attached to the higher highline. The back edge of the tarp (paralleling the highlines) is then drawn tightly back and downward. The rear part is then secured to the ground with tent pegs. This gives the goats a place to come in out of the rain and wind (no wind coming from behind because the tarp is to the ground in the rear area).
4. The goats are then placed on their highline with the use of Prusik knots, caribeners and their leads. The leads need only be long enough to let them lay down comfortably, yet not reach their neighbor. The Prusik knots allow you to place the goat’s lead in an appropriate area of the highline yet the goat cannot move the knot. The Prusik knot is a climber’s knot that allows you to move it where you want with one hand, yet when it is pulled on (goat’s love to pull on it) they cannot move it. See the following pages for example of the Prusik knot. The caribeners allow for ease of taking the goat off and on the highline. We also advise that a goat not be close enough to the trees to munch on them – a leave no trace ethic for packstock.
5. We always have a highline with us with attached Prusik knots and caribeners for use whenever we need it. Even stopping for a short lunch break, this allows the goats to be easily tethered and out of folks faces while they eat (I don’t know about your goats, but my goats would love to help me eat whatever I’m eating!) as well as keeping them from munching potentially toxic plants or damaging the natural habitat.
6. In the evening, we take the goats a short bit away (about 200 yards) from the camp area and allow them to browse for about 20 minutes, and as goats are browsers, they eat as deer do, munching a little here and there without destroying the natural vegetation. When you get back to camp the goats should get a nice drink of water (we usually have lemonade mix added to the water to entice them to drink well) . In the morning, before our breakfast, we again take the goats off lead and go a way from the camp area and again allow them to browse for about 20 minutes. Again, they should be offered water after this.(We do not allow our goats to freely browse continuously as they are packing on the trail and this browsing in the night and morning allows them plenty of food.)

It’s a beautiful experience to be out in the wilderness, perhaps with a beautiful scenic background and the sun setting or perhaps even rising, and being with your goats, your very best hiking partners. Proper highlining of your goats keeps them safe and allows for a “leave no trace” ethics for the natural habitat.