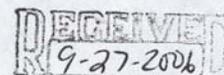


PEPC 190851

C



[REDACTED]  
Port Angeles, WA 98362  
September 26, 2006

Carla McConnell  
Olympic National Park—GMP  
National Park Service  
PO Box 25287  
Denver, CO 80225

Dear Ms McConnell:

Attached are our comments on the Draft General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement, May 2006, for Olympic National Park. We have over the past several weeks reviewed the plan in considerable detail.

By way of introduction, let us explain our experience with and in Olympic National Park:

We moved to Port Angeles in 1972, and have been regular park hikers and backpacker since. During this time we have hiked 85% of the park's trails and done most of the common and some of the not-so-common cross country routes. We have climbed a number of the major peaks. We have hike solo, as a couple, with other adults in small and large groups. We have hiked with families with kids and have lead various youth group hikes—church groups and Campfire groups. We have hiked in all seasons and in all regions of the park.

The past 6 years we have been working as VIP's with the park. Vicki (#793) has been a full time spring to fall volunteer back country ranger. During the same period, Dick (#793Δ) has been a ¼ to ½ time volunteer ranger. We have worked primarily in the northeast region—Klahhane Ridge, Appleton Pass, the Elwha Valley, The Bailey Range, Grand & Moose Lake, Royal Basin, The Cameron Valley, and the upper Dose Valley. We have also spent time in this capacity in the Queets and on the beach. We have performed a wide range of back country work including working with visitors, trail maintenance and repair, back country station work and maintenance, out house movement and construction, as well as patrol hikes.

Our comments are based on the privilege of having this broad range of experiences. Experiences which we have loved and hope to continue as long as God is willing and the bodies are able!

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

## Comments on

### Draft General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement, May 2006

**Overall comment:** The staffs preparing this plan have done an excellent job of reviewing and considering a broad range of options for the future of ONP. In large part the "Preferred Alternative" presents a well thought out reasonable compromise of the many available alternative viewpoints presented. Good work!

There are, however, several areas of the plan on which we would like to comment:

**Demographics:** Clearly the American population is aging—we ourselves are 61 and 62 years old and clearly recognize the changes age brings. In the future, back country use must be made available to the senior population which will be over a fourth of the population. Seniors require good trails, shorter hiking distances between campsites, and likely more stock support for longer trips. To this end, clearly keeping trails well maintained and open for stock will enhance the ability of the older hikers to continue to experience the park.

**Transportation:** Because Olympic National Park has no across park road (not a bad thing in our opinion), hikers must travel the perimeter of the park and then walk into the wilderness. Little if any public transportation connects one entry point with another. Circular hikes are limited, forcing the hiker to make complex transportation arrangements. This summer's huge jump in gas prices was a wake up call: The day of the private car is winding down. The park clearly needs to work actively with the public and private sector transportation systems to improve alternative transportation. Improving mass transportation overall will also improve the wilderness character of the park by decreasing car traffic. Finally, good public transportation will be a huge help to foreign visitors who often do not have access to a car for transportation.

**Trail status changes:** A number of trails are being changed in their status in the "Preferred Alternative" plan. We are particularly concerned about the abandonment or downgrading to "Primitive Status" certain specific trails. Abandoned trails are lost "forever" and in our experience, primitive status trails receive only periodic maintenance and are therefore less easily followed by the less experienced hiker. Specifically of concern are the following:

**Norwegian Memorial to Lake Ozette Trail:** This little traveled trail is listed for abandonment: We think this is a grave error! The trail provides one of the only small windows into an otherwise impenetrable coastal rain forest. Its isolation (boat access or remote wilderness beach access) guarantees the hiker primitive wilderness solitude while hiking through one of the most beautiful coastal cedar

*swamps in the park's costal strip* and certainly the best example of one found on any of the costal trails. Though tough to maintain, it is a trail well worth preserving. Furthermore, with increased protection of Lake Ozette, over time more visitation and use by boat, canoe, and kayak is likely. This trail is a great destination for a combination lake, wilderness forest, and wilderness beach trip. Keep this trail a primitive zone trail.

**South Sand Point to Erickson Bay Trail:** As with the above trail, this is another spectacular hike through the costal rain forest—a forest far different than the more-interior rain forests. It's a great hike to the beach for the campers at Erickson Bay and a beautiful forest hike to the lake for the crowds of hikes at Sand Point area. This trail is scheduled to be down-graded to a primitive zone trail. We feel it should be maintained for easy, safe travel and should be maintained a wilderness zone trail.

**Upper Cameron Basin to Lost Basin to Dose Meadows Trail:** Again this trail is to be changed to primitive zone. This is an important trail and one of the few areas in the park that allows many combinations of trails to make loops. This trail should be maintained actively for travel by the average hiker. One year of non-maintenance and the trail, especially in the Lower Cameron Basin, could be so overgrown as to be lost. Because of its importance in completing loops, this trail should remain a wilderness zone trail although due to Cameron Pass, it should not be a stock trail on the north side of the pass.

**Cat Basin and Trail to the Cat Walk:** Having day hiked the 7-Lakes Basin Loop a couple of times the past 5 years, we have experienced the massive amount of traffic—especially day-hiker traffic—the 7-Lakes Basin Loop gets. The Cat Basin area and trail to the Cat Walk is an important escape from the crowds. This trail system should remain in wilderness status and the trails maintained as regular wilderness trails. The trail to the Cat Walk not only provides solitude, it provides some incredible views and steep wild flower meadows that are a huge contrast to the High Divide. Down grading this trail to primitive (with the less aggressive maintenance standards of primitive trails) can lead to loss of easy access to this area by both overnigheters and hardy day hikers.

**Skyline Trail:** A larger portion of the Skyline trail is scheduled to be moved to Primitive status (Seattle Creek Basin to Lake Beauty). This is not a good idea. The Skyline Trail offers one of the finest moderately long loop trails in the park. It covers lowland rain forest, montane rain forest, and high country all in the same loop. Hikers look for trails like this and should be able to expect a quality trail. Keep the Skyline a wilderness, not a primitive, trail and protect this loop option.

**Old Snyder-Jackson Trail from Flapjack Shelter area on the Bogachiel to the Hoh Road:** Again this trail is being moved from Wilderness to Primitive status. This is not a high-use trail, probably because of its length and being waterless. It is however a connecting trail between the Bogachiel and Hoh drainages and

therefore opens a significant loop trail possibility including two beautiful rainforest trails and the high country of the High Divide /Little Divide areas. With transportation problems referred to earlier, Loop-generating trails such as this should be kept a wilderness status trails to assure they're actively and predictably maintained.

Thank you for reviewing our comments,

  
Port Angeles, WA