



Preliminary Alternatives

Dear Friends,

As most of you know, we have been working on a general management plan (GMP) for Olympic National Park that will provide a vision for the future of the park and guide our long-term decision-making. Although it has been a while since you have heard from us, we have been busy as you can see from this newsletter.

Using your comments from public scoping and the alternatives workshops, and ideas and recommendations from the staff at Olympic, we developed concepts of how the park might look in the future. This newsletter presents three very preliminary alternative visions of the future Olympic National Park. Eventually, we will select a single vision for the park's future, but we are a long way from making that decision. The preliminary alternatives will continue to evolve over the next few months and refined alternatives will be included in the Draft General Management Plan/ Environmental Impact Statement.

While former Superintendent David Morris has moved on to his new role as Peace Corps Country Director in Zambia, Africa, I assure you that we as a park and an agency remain committed to this public planning process.

Thank you for your continued interest and involvement with Olympic National Park.

Sincerely,

Susan K. McGill
Acting Superintendent,
Olympic National Park



Look inside. . .

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PURPOSE AND SIGNIFICANCE STATEMENTS

Purpose and significance statements reaffirm our understanding of Congress’ intent in establishing Olympic National Park as a unit of the national park system, and confirm the importance of the area to the nation’s natural and cultural heritage.

Purpose Statements describe the reasons Olympic was established, as noted in Olympic’s legislative history.

Significance Statements describe the park resources and values that are important enough to warrant national park designation. They describe Olympic’s distinctiveness and help to place it in its regional and national context.

These statements form the foundation for the park and the general management plan.

PURPOSE

The purpose of Olympic National Park is to preserve for the benefit, use, and enjoyment of the people, the finest sample of primeval forests of Sitka spruce, western hemlock, Douglas fir, and western red cedar in the entire United States; to provide suitable winter range and permanent protection for the herds of native Roosevelt elk and other wildlife indigenous to the area; to conserve and render available to the people, for recreational use, this outstanding mountainous country, containing numerous glaciers and perpetual snow fields, and a portion of the surrounding verdant forests together with a narrow strip along the beautiful Washington coast.

SIGNIFICANCE

- Olympic National Park protects several distinctly different and relatively pristine ecosystems, ranging from more than 60 miles of wild Pacific coast and islands through densely forested lowlands to the glacier-crowned Olympic Mountains.
- The ecosystems protected within Olympic National Park contain a unique array of habitats and life forms, resulting from thousands of years of geographic isolation, along with extreme gradients of elevation, temperature, and precipitation. At least 16 kinds of animals and 8 kinds of plants on the Olympic Peninsula exist nowhere else in the world.
- Olympic National Park protects the primeval character of one of the largest wilderness areas in the contiguous United States.
- Olympic National Park protects some of the finest remaining stands of old-growth temperate rainforest in the United States. These forests of ancient and immense trees provide habitat for dozens of smaller plants and animals, including important habitat for a number of threatened species.
- Olympic National Park protects more than 3,000 miles of rivers and streams within 11 watersheds and provides one of the largest remaining tracts of pristine spawning and rearing habitat in the lower 48 states. Nine species of salmon, trout, and char and many other native fish inhabit these waters.
- The Olympic rocky intertidal community is considered to be one of the most complex and diverse shoreline communities in the United States. Olympic National Park and the neighboring Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary protect almost 5,000 square miles of intertidal, island, and ocean habitats.
- Olympic National Park protects the largest population of Roosevelt elk in its natural environment in the world. Decades of protection from human harvest and habitat manipulation have sustained not only high densities of elk, but also preserved the natural composition, social structure, and dynamics of this unique coastal form of elk as found nowhere else.

OTHER IMPORTANT RESOURCES AND VALUES

- Other important resources and values statements help ensure that all important resources and values are considered in the planning process and are protected to the full extent required by law and policy.
- More than 650 archeological sites documenting 10,000 years of human occupation are protected within Olympic National Park.
 - Eight tribes with ties to Olympic Peninsula retain their ongoing connection to the Olympic National Park.

- These tribes are unique in comprising three different language groups.
- Humans have been part of the park ecosystem for more than 10,000 years. The human community that evolved in association with the park ecosystem was part of the most complex hunter-gather societies on the planet.
 - Olympic National Park protects cultural resources that reveal and document the 200-year history of discovery, exploration, homesteading, and community development in the region.

- Olympic National Park preserves an important part of the legacy of the development of the conservation of federal lands.
- Olympic National Park is one of only nine U.S. national parks that is both an International Biosphere Reserve and a World Heritage Site.
- The extensive and complex trail system in Olympic National Park provides routes to many of the park’s natural, cultural, and wilderness opportunities.

DECISION POINTS

Decision Points are the primary questions the general management plan must answer. Based on public and agency issues and concerns, these are a very important part of the planning process. The management plan for Olympic will address the following questions:

RESOURCE PROTECTION

- Using sound science to monitor and manage natural resources, to what extent should Olympic National Park seek to manage natural processes, restore natural systems altered by man, or let altered ecological processes predominate? (Issues relating to this decision topic include floodplains and erosion, stream dynamics, threatened and endangered species and their habitat, restoring extirpated species, and the role of fire.)
- In what ways and to what extent should Olympic emphasize cultural resource protection and interpretation given that the park's enabling legislation stresses natural resource protection?
- What adjustments, if any, could be made to current park and wilderness boundaries to better fulfill the park's mission, purpose, and significance?

WILDERNESS

- Consistent with wilderness values and character, what experiences and resource conditions should occur in the Olympic National Park wilderness? (Examples of experiences and conditions include solitude, a sense of wildness, functioning ecosystems, natural sounds and smells, visitor self-sufficiency and responsibility.)
- Consistent with wilderness values, what facilities should there be in the wilderness? (Facilities include trails, designated camping spots, historic shelters, bridges, and signs.)

VISITOR EXPERIENCES

- How can the park accommodate anticipated visitation increases as well as diverse visitor needs and expectations, while maintaining high-quality visitor experiences and preserving park resources?

(Possibilities include concentrating versus dispersing visitor use, establishing limits or quotas, and providing education and orientation.)

- What types and levels of visitor activities could the park accommodate, while still protecting park resources and promoting stewardship? (Examples of activities include hiking, camping, wildlife watching, photography, downhill and cross-country skiing, boating, surfing, wind surfing, and equestrian use.)
- What are the ways and degree to which the park could provide education and interpretation to park visitors and the general public?
- Without compromising park resources, what types, sizes, and locations of public or private facilities (including mass transportation, bicycles, or other nontraditional transportation options) could be provided to support park activities and visitor experiences? Should they be in or out of the park? To what extent could uses be separated to avoid visitor or operational conflicts?

ACCESS TO AND AROUND THE PARK

- To what extent can there be convenient public road and trail access to visitor destinations without encouraging or causing impacts to natural processes or park resources? (For example, how could problems caused by short-cut trails to the beach, multiple access points into the park, and roads and trails in river valleys be avoided?)

PARTNERSHIPS

- What are the ways and extent to which the park could develop and work effectively with public and private partnerships to protect resources and provide for visitor enjoyment?
- What are the ways and to what extent could the park protect private property rights within park boundaries while preserving park resources and providing visitor enjoyment?
- What are the ways that the park can most effectively work with tribal governments on the Olympic Peninsula to enhance cooperative opportunities for resource protection and pub-

PRELIMINARY ALTERNATIVES

In the National Park Service (NPS) planning process we are required to assess alternative desired conditions and management for Olympic National Park. Each alternative is built around an underlying concept that describes a possible direction.

We used the decision points and suggestions from you and the park staff at the alternatives workshops to develop the preliminary alternatives presented in this newsletter.

Preliminary Alternatives:

Alternative A
Current Management

Alternative B
Resource Protection Emphasis

Alternative C
Visitor Opportunities Emphasis

The alternatives consist of different management prescriptions, which specify alternative desired resource conditions or visitor opportunities:

- **PARKWIDE PRESCRIPTIONS** (table 1, page 4), which differ by alternative, and
- **AREA-SPECIFIC PRESCRIPTIONS** (pages 5-21), which also differ by alternative. The maps have alternative applications of various zones defined by the prescriptions in table 2 beginning on page 22.

Preferred Alternative The National Park Service has not yet designated a preferred alternative. The preferred alternative will be designated in the *Draft General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement*, (draft GMP/EIS). It could be one of the preliminary alternatives or it could be made up of parts of two or more of the preliminary alternatives. Information received from the public review of the draft GMP/EIS will aid the NPS in refining the preferred alternative.

TRAIL CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

Trail Classification System The proposed trail classification system for Olympic National Park is based on the intended purpose of the trail, type and volume of use and terrain.

Trails include seven classes:

(1) nature, (2) all-purpose, (3) multipurpose bicycle, (4) secondary, (5) foot, (6) primitive, and (7) way. Some trails would be universally accessible.

Definitions for the seven proposed use classes of maintained trails are described to the right:

GLOSSARY OF TERMS FOR TRAIL TYPES

Nature Trails These trails would generally be paved (outside of wilderness) or gravel surfaced and would be designed for large numbers of relatively inexperienced users. Stock would be prohibited except for occasional administrative use, or when a nature trail was the only trail available for stock to access all-purpose or secondary trails.

All Purpose Trails These trails would be through-routes or loop routes; they would be open to hikers and stock and would be maintained to a standard for stock travel.

Multipurpose Bicycle Trails Located outside of wilderness, these trails would be open to hikers, stock, and bicycles and would be maintained to all-purpose standards.

Secondary Trails These trails would be open to hikers and stock and would be maintained to a standard for foot travel. These trails would be designed only for experienced horses and riders.

Foot Trails These trails would be open to hikers and would be maintained to a standard for foot travel. They would be closed to stock, except for occasional administrative use.

Primitive Trails Primitive trails, for hikers only, would be for high elevation or low-use area access. Primitive trails would include both constructed trails and trails established by continual use. These trails would have minimal improvements enough to protect the resources. Occasional maintenance would be performed, as time and budget allow, to keep routes open and protect the resources.

Way Trails Paths or routes that generally receive no maintenance. Ongoing travel keeps these trails established.

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National Park Service
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*Thank you for
your continued interest
and involvement with
Olympic National Park!*

If you have any questions or comments,
please contact:

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GMP PROCESS		
STEP	PLANNING ACTIVITY	WHAT YOU CAN DO
1	Project Startup. Assemble planning team and design the process for carrying out the project. (2001)	
2	Identify the Planning Context. Reaffirm the purpose, significance, and mission of the park, determine issues and concerns, and gather and analyze information. (2001)	*Read newsletter and send us your comments. *Attend public meetings.
3	Develop Alternatives. Develop a reasonable range of alternative future conditions and management. (2002)	*Attend alternatives workshop.
4 We are here	Publish Alternatives Newsletter (2003)	*Read newsletter.
5	Prepare and Publish the Draft GMP/EIS. The draft document will be distributed for public review. It will describe the planning context, management alternatives, and impacts. (2004)	*Read draft plan and send us your comments. *Attend public meetings.
6	Revise and Publish the Final GMP/EIS. Appropriate changes will be made to the draft document based on public comments, environmental analysis, and other information. The final GMP/EIS will be distributed. (2005)	*Read the Final GMP/EIS
7	Publish Record of Decision. (2005)	
8	Implement the Plan. After a record of decision is issued, the management directions in the plan will be carried out as funding allows. (2006 and beyond)	