

Olympic National Park
600 E. Park Avenue
Port Angeles, WA 98362
January 31, 2018



Dear Friends,

The National Park Service (NPS) is requesting your input in developing an Environmental Assessment (EA) for a revised Wildland Fire Management Plan for Olympic National Park (ONP). Your participation is vital to our planning process. There are many ways to be involved, including attending one of the in-person public scoping meetings and submitting electronic or written comments. The comment period will open on February 1 and close at midnight Mountain Time on March 2.

Public Scoping Open House Schedule

QUILCENE	AMANDA PARK	PORT ANGELES
Thursday, February 15, 2018 5:30 pm- 7:30 pm Quilcene Community Center 294952 US Highway 101 Quilcene, WA 98376 Phone: (360) 765-3321	Tuesday, February 20, 2018 4:00 pm - 6:00 pm Timberland Regional Library 6118 US Highway 101 Amanda Park, WA 98526 Phone: (360) 288-2725	Thursday, February 22, 2018 5:00 pm - 7:00 pm Port Angeles Senior Center 328 E 7th Street Port Angeles, WA 98362 Phone: (360) 457-7004

Background

The current Fire Management Plan (FMP) for ONP was approved in 2005. Since that time there have been significant changes that affect the validity of the plan. These changes include the development and implementation of the park’s 2008 General Management Plan, updates to federal wildland fire policy/guidance, and an increase in the frequency of large fire occurrence that has helped inform management strategies and ecological benefits of fire within the park. In 2012, a NPS interdisciplinary team conducted a review of the 2005 FMP and recommended that the FMP be updated to incorporate those changes. The FMP revision was delayed to allow a Wilderness Stewardship Plan/Environmental Impact Statement (WSP/EIS) to move forward to identify fire management activities within the designated wilderness areas in the park. In 2017, after two of the busiest fire seasons in park history, it was determined that an updated FMP could no longer be delayed and a decision to revise the FMP was made.

As such, an EA is being prepared for the update of the park’s programmatic FMP in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) (40 CFR §1508.9), and the NPS Director’s Order (DO) 12 Conservation Planning, Environmental Impact Analysis, and Decision-Making (2015). NEPA requires that every federal agency conduct an analysis of impacts for “major Federal actions significantly affecting the quality of the human environment,” along with reasonable and feasible alternatives to those actions. Agencies are required to make informed decisions based on analysis conducted under NEPA and input obtained from the public and interested stakeholders. This EA

provides for review of the alternatives relative to the implementation of the Park's programmatic FMP, a planning and operational document that ensures the protection of life and property and sensitive natural and cultural resources, while advocating for the perpetuation of natural ecosystem processes in the park.

Purpose and Need for Taking Action

The park's purpose in taking action is to update the FMP in order to meet the most current NPS and federal policies. The need for taking action is to have a plan that provides park managers the most current direction and guidance to assist when making decisions related to wildland fire activities.

Decision to be Made

The NPS Pacific West Regional Director will use the findings of this EA along with substantive comments on the EA submitted by the public during review period, to decide which alternative to adopt and whether the preferred alternative has the potential for significant and adverse environment impacts. The Regional Director's decision is documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) which concludes the NEPA process. If the NEPA process determines that the selected alternative has the potential for significant adverse impacts that cannot be effectively mitigated to a level below significance, the NPS must then begin the process to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement or decide to take no further action.

Preliminary Alternative Concepts

Based on input from internal scoping, preliminary consultation with permitting agencies, examination of recent fire history and trends, as well as monitoring data and current research, the NPS proposes two alternatives for examination in the EA. The no action alternative would maintain the current strategy as outlined in the 2005 FMP. Alternative B would provide updates to the FMP that would:

- Bring the FMP into conformance with current NPS wildland fire policy directives and standards set forth in DO-18, its companion guidance document, Reference Manual 18 (RM-18) and NPS *Management Policies 2006* addressing wildland fire management and resource protection.
- Provide the park with the flexibility to manage fire in accordance with current federal wildland fire management policies and guidance adopted since the publication of the 2005 FMP.
- Improve overall management of planned and unplanned ignitions, and non-fire fuel treatments to reflect wildfire experiences of the past decade.
- Fully acknowledge wildfire as an ecological process within the park.

Main Program Elements	Alternative A (No Action)	Alternative B
Fire Management Units	Three units: Exclusion, Conditional, Fire Use	Two units: Non-Wilderness, Wilderness
Wildfire Management to protect listed species habitat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximum of 200 acres/year in northern spotted owl and marbled murrelet habitat, and 600 acres once per five years in combined Conditional and Exclusion FMU • Maximum of 500 acres/5 years outside northern spotted owl and marbled murrelet habitat in combined Conditional and Exclusion FMUs • Conduct additional consultation with USFWS and environmental analysis if wildfires exceed the acreage limits 	The NPS anticipates an average of 1200 acres of wildfire/year based on current conditions and recent fire history. This strategy allows for naturally caused wildfires to be managed as a natural process within designated wilderness areas in collaboration with interagency cooperators. This action would promote a more resilient landscape and reduce the potential for a catastrophic wildfire that could severely alter the habitat of federally-listed species.
Manual and Mechanical Treatment	Maximum of 200 acres/year	Maximum of 100 acres/year
Prescribed Fire (pile burning, debris disposal by fire, broadcast burning)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 200 acres/year of pile burning • Maximum of 75 acres over 5 years of debris disposal by fire • Maximum of 125 acres over 5 years, with no more than 65 acres in any one year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximum of 20 acres/year of pile burning and/or debris disposal by fire • Broadcast burning would require further compliance and consultation • Prescribed fire in wilderness would be dependent on the decisions made in the WSP/EIS and may require additional compliance
Wildland Decision Support Process	Wildland Fire Decision Support System	Same as Alternative A
Prevention	Public education	Same as Alternative A
Wilderness Minimum Requirements Analysis (MRA)	Programmatic compliance for initial response to wildfires and individual MRAs for each mechanical or prescribed treatment	Same as Alternative A
Minimum Impact Suppression Tactics	Tactics would continue to be used on all fire management activities	Same as Alternative A
Resource Advisors	Consider for all fires over 10 acres	As determined in WFDSS Decision

Tentative Timeline and Where We Are in the Process

Steps of the Planning Process	Tentative Timeline	How you can be involved
Conduct internal scoping, define purpose and need, and develop preliminary alternatives	Summer/Fall 2017	
*Conduct external scoping	Winter 2018	Attend public meetings and provide your comments and ideas about the preliminary alternatives.
Analysis of public comment	Early Spring 2018	
Refine alternatives	Spring 2018	
Identify environmental impacts and select/develop preferred alternative	Spring/Summer 2018	
Prepare draft plan/environmental document	Summer/Fall 2018	
Public review of draft plan/environmental document	Fall 2018	Attend public meetings and provide your comments about the Draft EA.
Analysis of public comment	Fall 2018	
Prepare final plan/decision document	Fall 2018/Winter 2019	
Release final plan/decision document to the public	Winter 2019	

*Current step in the planning process.

How to Comment

1. Submit comments electronically at: <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/FMPscoping>
2. Submit comments in-person at one of the three public meetings.
3. Submit written comments by mail:
 Superintendent Sarah Creachbaum
 Olympic National Park – FMP Scoping
 600 East Park Avenue
 Port Angeles, WA 98362

Comments submitted by phone or email will not be accepted. Comments submitted by individuals or organizations on behalf of other individuals or organizations also will not be accepted.

You should be aware that your entire comment – including personal identifying information such as your address, phone number, and email address – may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.