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Olympic National Park G.M.P.
National Park Service
Denver Service Center
P.O. Box 25287
Denver, CO 80225

Park Service:

I oppose the Draft General Management Plan, alternatives B, C & D for the Lake Ozette area and support the no change option, alternative A, for reasons itemized below. Furthermore, I object to the methods and tactics used by the Olympic National Park staff in dealing with the public and in managing the "public meetings".

First, I'd like to address the techniques used with the public and property owners in trying to "sell" the huge changes planned for the Ozette area. Then I'll speak to the reasons the actions do not serve the public interests.

"When can she back away from the deal?" Asked Bill Laitner, the Olympic National Park Superintendent of Rick Wagner, the National Park's NW District's chief property buyer. They had been "double teaming" an Ozette land owner and the question was so gently tossed into the air that you'd have thought Rick was going to hit it out of the park, his smile was so big when he said "Any time she wants. Any time she wants." Rehearsed? Obviously. Truthful?

When trying to prove that the National Park Service can only buy from willing sellers, Rick Wagner referred to a document that only vaguely relates, citing the ideal that good relations should be sought while acquiring land. The owners deserve more protection.

Some, like me, had come seeking a public hearing, where they might say their piece. One elderly gent at the Seattle meeting even produced a crumpled newspaper clipping of the notice that said "Public Hearing".

It was not going to happen that way. At least not if Bill Laitner, the Olympic National Park Superintendent had anything to do with it, and he did.

Laitner privately told of a meeting he attended in the 70's about the Everglades where he was glad to have gone incognito (without his uniform) as he felt as if his safety might have been at risk if the unruly crowd had known he was a National Park employee.

That meeting might have planted the idea of mis-direction, and going incognito (and commenting?) could have been the start of the draft General Management Plan process, as it was infused with controlled and contrived circumstances. The process was designed to have the public feel as if they have been heard with no danger of either an out of hand crowd, or any "inappropriate" public input being incorporated into the final plan.

Orchestration, planning, controlled meetings? If the Park Service can break the public into 10 to 15 different displays during the meetings, the people will never hear each other opposing NPS plans and sales training and strategic preparation can be used on them (two at a time if necessary) to change their minds. The Park Service staff proved they were good at it, too. Very good.

Public input has been manipulated from the beginning. From years ago, when the scoping letters of the Ozette residents were not incorporated into the draft plan, to the final "public meeting" in Seattle where a private group put their literature on the table next to the National Park brochures with the prior approval of the Olympic National Park Superintendent, it's been clear. Not amazingly, this group's scoping letters concerning Ozette were adopted wholesale into the draft plan. Coincidence?

At the Sekiu meeting, both Bill Laitner, the Olympic National Park Superintendent and Barb Maynes, the information officer for the Olympic National Park actively maintained that every comment submitted to them might be published in the final version of the plan, along with each respondent's name and home address. What reason could they have for misrepresenting what "part of the public record" means or how "subject to release under freedom of information act requests" actually translates into English? Clearly they could not practically, nor morally, print everyone's name and address in the final plan, but this is what they said, and they cited the ruling that made it so (even though it didn't). Yes, a properly filed request for the names and addresses will result in the information being released. "Printed in the book"? Apparently this was an intimidation technique to keep people from commenting. Would you want your home address printed in thousands of public documents?

Chief ranger, Tim Simonds, while discussing the receipt of a "Do Not Trespass" notice from an Ozette resident, was asked if he had several "Do Not Trespass" notices from other residents. He responded "Not that he was aware of." Since the existence of said notices is common knowledge amongst the residents, most took the statement to mean that he was not good at his job. On the contrary, I think the comment is precisely what his job requires of him, but was it a carefully crafted statement based on the "plausible deniability" technique? Apparently, Ranger Simonds' expertise in the range of law enforcement may extend to public relations as well.

These examples are from only two of the eight "public meetings" held and from the experiences of a limited number of individuals, but we can infer what kinds of activities went on at the other meetings. Questionable techniques were being utilized.

Now let me address why alternatives B, C & D that change the boundaries around Lake Ozette and the use of the lake and its surrounding area should not be implemented.

The addition of 12,000 acres of mostly clear-cut will not improve anyone's experience to the Ozette area, except perhaps the corporate owners of the timber companies that might sell newly clear-cut land at advantageous prices to the National Park Service.

The draft management plan sites potential development on the lands currently adjacent to the park that should be acquired. No one else seems to know anything about this proposed development, not even the property owners themselves.

The National Park Service sites potential logging that might harm the watershed. Since the announcement of the potential boundary adjustment, all private timber lands that can be logged are being logged. The very thing the proposed addition suggested it will prevent, it has caused.

Much of the Ozette area was homesteaded over one hundred years ago and some of the homesteads are still inhabited by the descendants. About 90% of the proposed boundary adjustment encompassed area has been clear-cut. None of these areas can ever meet the technical criteria of a wilderness area, why "acquire" them for a wilderness area?

The proposed wilderness designation for Ozette will substantially restrict some uses of the lake and unfairly burden landowners that were told during the 1980s, in the agreement with the National Park Service, that their rights would not be curtailed.

Furthermore, the proposed boundary adjustment will adversely affect area landowners, both inside and outside the proposed boundary adjustment. Most Ozette residents and landowners are familiar with the techniques of the park service. Is it intimidation when they trespass and surprise you in your bathrobe? Is it when they imply that if you don't sell to them that you'll be sorry? One local has suffered through both his grandparents and his parents having had land taken by the Olympic National Park. One landowner, that also had dealings with the Olympic National Park 25 years ago, recently had this to say, "The park service is as larcenous as ever, but they are more polite than last time."

Is this an improvement? Should we be glad that the National Park Service has gotten so expert at holding "meetings" and progressed to the point where the public has the wool completely pulled over its eyes?

We can only hope that they are good people (probably) and that they are doing the right thing (probably not). We can only hope, because it's clear that the general public will have no "say" in the final plan, unless that "say" conforms to the National Park Service's desires.

Hence, my pleas for sensible action have been forwarded to my elected national politicians, so they can control the National Park Service's errant behavior.

Do not implement alternatives B, C or D at Lake Ozette.

Thank you,

A black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of the sender.

Seattle, WA 98165

cc: Senator Patty Murray
Senator Maria Cantwell
Representative Jim McDermott
Representative Norm Dicks