

PEPC 190909

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To: NPS

Subject: ONP Draft General Management Plan

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**SEP 15 2006**

**DSC-P**

Olympic National Park General Management Plan  
National Park Service  
Denver Service Center  
P.O. Box 25287  
Denver, Colorado 80225

I am writing to express my opinion about three issues covered in the Olympic National Park General Management Plan. First, I feel that the risks associated with limiting motorized boat usage on Lake Ozette outweigh the benefits. Second, I think that discouraging people from visiting the Olympic Hot Springs hurts the park. Third, I believe that the park could be using its money more appropriately than as stated in the plan. For these reasons I support Alternative A.

#### Motorized Boating on Lake Ozette

I have been visiting Lake Ozette since I was less than a year old, and have spent a ton of time there. Much of my childhood was spent camping on the lake. Without the use of motorized boats, this probably would have been impossible. Very few people would want to bring their small children to this large lake in a canoe or kayak. Because it has been such a big part of my life, I feel very strongly about the well being of Lake Ozette. I think that having people feel this way about the lake is important, because otherwise who will take care of it? In order to foster this stewardship in people, not just young people but also older people, disabled people, and even people who just aren't very adventurous, we need to keep the lake accessible.

That said, motor boats on Lake Ozette are pretty rare. On a summer weekend with good weather, one might see 4 or 5 boats. During the week however, or in the spring, winter, and fall, one can spend the whole weekend camping without seeing a motor boat. Because of the extremely low number of boats on the lake, I do not see what the park hopes to gain by removing boats completely. I'm sure that the environmental impact of the current number of boats is very low.

One point in the GMP particularly concerns me. In the "Ozette Alternatives Summary", I find the following statement: "Motorized boating might be restricted to avoid conflicts with other users." From first hand experience, I firmly believe that motorized boating is often critical to the safety of other users. As I have already stated, I have spent a lot of time at Ozette, and often there are no other motor boats. In this time, my family and I have personally rescued a number of other users with our motor boat.

Once, my mother, sister and I were camping, and saw flairs going off across the lake. It was late at night, after dark, but my mother climbed into the boat and went to see what was wrong. The people setting off the flairs had arrived at their camp site with some of

their stuff but then the battery on their boat had died, leaving them stranded. We gave them some supplies and helped them get to the ranger station in the morning to get a new battery.

Another time, we were camping at Ozette near the end of the summer, and the weather turned into a crazy wind storm. Signs at the Swan Bay boat launch warned of gale force winds. We were returning to the boat launch when we saw signals from Garden Island. A man and woman with a small baby had somehow managed to get out there in a canoe, and now were trapped by the storm. We helped them get back to the boat launch.

Just about a month ago, we were at Ozette for a beautiful weekend. We drove out motor boat to Tivoli Island to walk around and met a family camped there. They told us that one member of their party had left hours before in a kayak to take someone back to the boat launch, and hadn't returned yet. They asked if we would run down there and see if we could see him after our walk, and we agreed. Luckily, in this case the man had returned by the time we came back to our boat, and our rescue efforts weren't needed. However, the family of the missing person felt better knowing that something could be done, and if something had happened, a motor boat would have been necessary to rescue the man, to bring him back to the island, or even just to alert the family of what happened.

Clearly, motor boat usage is often very helpful to other users. The above examples are only a small set of similar situations I have been through. Because of the importance of access to the lake, and because of the low impact caused by the small number of motor boats, I feel that it is very important to allow, and even encourage, people to use motor boats on Lake Ozette.

### Olympic Hot Springs

The Olympic Hot Springs area is one of the most unique and remarkable places to visit in the entire park. Only a handful of natural hot springs exist in the entire country, and very few in Washington. The experience of walking into the mountains and climbing into a "puddle" of hot water with breathtaking views is unlike any other, and is enjoyed annually by many visitors.

What does the park hope to accomplish by removing the pools?

Perhaps they hope to reduce irresponsible use. However, I don't believe this is a problem. The hot springs are generally kept fairly tidy, since many people visit on a regular basis and care a lot about the area. I have probably been to the hot springs 30 times, and never encountered more than a couple of pieces of litter. I have never witnessed or even heard of any serious accidents happening, and have generally encountered responsible users who appreciate the area.

Perhaps they hope to protect wildlife in the area. However, I don't think wildlife is significantly affected by the pools. The hot springs take up a very small area, much smaller than a normal campground. For the most part, users just sit in the pool and then



leave. Occasionally I'm sure there are rowdy bunches, but not any more than in any backwoods area, and hopefully the park doesn't intend to eliminate all backwoods camping.

Perhaps they hope to return the area to some previous state. However, I think the environmental impacts of the construction to remove the pools would be greater than just leaving them there.

Perhaps they hope to decrease the number of visitors, reducing the amount of money collected in admissions and ultimately lowering the total funds available to them.

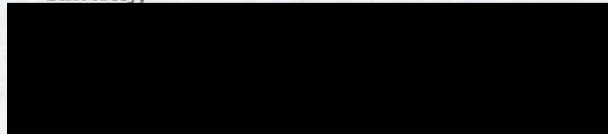
Or perhaps they simply hope to send a message that the park is not a place for people. For the good of the park, I do not think this message is wise. People do not want a park they cannot enjoy. The park needs the support of the people.

#### General Use of Park Funds

Many areas of the park could use better maintenance. Trails and roads need work; shelters are unusable or have been completely removed; campgrounds need improvement. If the park has so much money that it is considering buying huge chunks of land from timber companies, why has it not done these other improvements? What other areas will be neglected when large amounts of the budget are allocated to buying new land? If the park hopes to acquire costly land, I think it should first demonstrate that it is sufficiently taking care of the land it already owns.

In conclusion, I think that action to limit use of the Olympic Hot Springs or Lake Ozette is unwise. I think funds could better be used for other things than buying more land. I have only spoken about two areas specifically, and I know the plan covers many areas. However, I have no reason to believe that the plans laid out for other areas are any more wise or useful than those for Ozette or the hot springs. Indeed, what I have read of the draft Management Plan leads me to believe that no action is better than the proposed action for almost all areas included. For these reasons, I strongly support Alternative A, the no action alternative.

Sincerely,

A large black rectangular box redacting the signature of the author.