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**Hood Canal Environmental Council**

September 25, 2006

PO Box 87  
Seabeck, WA 98380

Olympic National Park – GMP  
National Park Service  
Denver Service Center – Planning  
P.O. Box 25287  
Denver, CO 80225

**RE: Comments on ONP Draft General Management Plan**

Attention: Cliff Hawkes:

The Board of Directors of the Hood Canal Environmental Council (HCEC) respectfully requests that the National Park Service consider the following comments on the Draft General Management Plan (GMP) for Olympic National Park. Our organization is particularly interested in the future management of the eastern portion of the park, as it may directly or indirectly affect the ecological integrity of the Hood Canal watershed. Therefore, we are submitting some area-specific, as well as general, comments.

It is clear that the Preferred Alternative in the Draft GMP represents an attempt to mesh natural resource protection with recreational opportunities. Positive elements contained in Alternative D include recommendations for establishing coastal marine intertidal reserves, expansion of park boundaries, wilderness suitability studies, and Wild and Scenic River designation for the Elwha River. While these are commendable steps, other proposals are inadequate to protect this internationally known wilderness.

One of our chief concerns is the proposal to enlarge most front country development zones and to expand/intensify visitor activities within these areas. In particular, the development and day-use zones in the Staircase/North Fork Skokomish area should remain as they are at present to protect the area's important fish and wildlife habitat and wilderness character. New visitor facilities should be located outside the park boundaries.

The HCEC supports river protection zone designations for the park's rivers, as proposed in Alternative B. This would go a long way toward restoring viable populations of federally listed threatened and endangered salmon stock. For example, the proposal to relocate and rebuild the Dosewallips River road would negatively impact critical salmon habitat for federally threatened Puget Sound chinook, one of three threatened species in Hood Canal. We believe that the Draft EIS due to be released soon will show that reopening this road will cause irreparable damage to fish habitat and river processes. It would also involve the incursion into the Buckhorn Wilderness Area,

in direct violation of the Northwest Forest Plan. In addition to river protection zone designations, we fully support Wild and Scenic river designation for the other twelve eligible rivers, including those on the park's eastside.

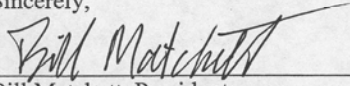
We strongly object to the proposal to designate use levels of wilderness areas without providing specific reasons. All wilderness-related decisions should be deferred until a comprehensive wilderness management plan is completed.

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The Draft is also notable for its omissions. One is the absence of a recommendation to reintroduce extirpated species back into the park. We strongly urge the National Park Service to include a proposal to bring the wolf and fisher back into the Olympic National Park in an effort to bring about a more balanced ecosystem. We request that a wilderness management plan and ecosystem study be prepared, as requested by the Olympic Park Associates and other organizations.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on this very important matter and to participate in the decision-making process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Bill Matchett", is written over a horizontal line.

Bill Matchett, President  
Hood Canal Environmental Council