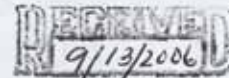


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Comments on the May 2006 General Management Plan
Olympic National Park

The 1938 enabling act that created Olympic National Park states that it is "dedicated and set apart as a public park for the benefit and enjoyment of the people." This mandate should not be lost in the cloud of environmental technicalities.

There is a mandate to protect the natural environment: ecosystem, wildlife, fish, etc., and the 1988 Wilderness Act designated 95% of the 922,651 acres as wilderness. That leaves 46,132 acres as non-wilderness,

With these two concepts in mind I have the following comments:

1. I support Alternative C with the following modification. Other than some vague general language I was not convinced that the boundary adjustment of some 56,000 acres in the Lake Ozette area of land (much of which I understand to be productive DNR timberland) is justifiable or necessary. The vast reduction of harvestable timber on the Olympic Peninsula has already had a devastating effect on the local economy. However, ignoring the local economy, I don't find such broad statements as: "to carry out the park purpose, address operational and management issues, protect the park resources," convincing or justifying for the acquisition of such a vast amount of land. Additionally, we are constantly reminded that the park lacks sufficient financial resources to manage its present acreage. How can it financially manage an additional 56,000 acres?
2. Under Alternative C the Deer Park road would be paved and open year-round. Certainly eliminating some of the dangerous corners, widening the road in critical areas, and extending the season that the road is open are desirable. However, paving while it may be desirable, should only be considered if it can be justified economically when compared to maintaining a dirt road. The condition of the road and its closure for months has long been a local complaint.

3. Obstruction Point Road: I did not note any specific mention of this road's condition, but I think it desperately needs attention. While I recognize that there is an overriding management desire to maintain the environment and ecosystem in an undisturbed state, this is no justification to allow this road to remain in its present dangerous condition. There are several stretches on this busy road (I counted 59 vehicles at the trailhead on one Saturday several years ago) that are just waiting for a critical if not deadly accident to occur. The road should be improved and widened in these critical stretches.
4. Wilderness and trails: The 1988 Wilderness Act defines wilderness as "federal land retaining its primeval character and influence without permanent improvement or human habitation." A trail passing through a wilderness is not a permanent improvement or human habitation. Alternative D proposes three wilderness zones: trail, primitive, and primeval and would reduce visitation in the trail and primitive zones "slightly" and increase it in the primeval. While Alternative C proposes more trails in the wilderness trail zone, I think it is a mistake to reduce trail access in the wilderness even "slightly" (whatever that means). While more trails in the wilderness trail zone might at first be interpreted as a reduction in wilderness experience, in reality it will increase the wilderness experience because more trails means less hikers on each trail. With increased visitors in the future, reducing or even maintaining the present number of trails will only crowd more people on existing trails, and diminish the wilderness experience. In the allocation of the three wilderness zones please remember the park was created for the "benefit and enjoyment of the people."
5. No new trails have been created in years. There are many areas in the so called wilderness trail zone that could be opened to allow visitors to enjoy a wilderness experience. The excuse is always there is no money to even adequately maintain existing trails, yet there seems to be money for other projects – I know funds are earmarked or come by way of grants etc. If so why isn't more money allocated for trails?

Since the park is supposed to be 95% wilderness, trails should be entitled to a high priority.

6. Mountain Goats are a stately attraction and add to the wilderness experience. Friends have shared majestic photos of them in the Olympics. The claim that they are not native, which may be incorrect, and they must be removed to protect some obscure indigenous plant is bogus. On balance the goats add far more to the wilderness experience and to the "benefit and enjoyment of the people" than an inconspicuous plant that may in time adapt to the goats. I have heard some very disturbing accounts of the cruel and inhumane treatments afforded the goats the last time the park engaged in its exodus operation.



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