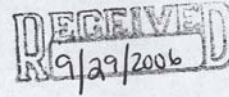


PEPC 190950



September 8, 2006

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Olympic National Park Draft Management Plan

My purpose in writing about the Olympic National Park's Draft Management Plan is twofold: First, due to over 35 years involvement with the Hurricane Ridge ski facilities, I have an opinion about future ski operations there. Secondly, because of my background as a professional forester for the past 48 years, I have comments concerning potential expansion of the Park's ownership at Lake Crescent and Lake Ozette.

HURRICANE RIDGE

It is fortunate that the final 1976 management plan excluded the area at Hurricane Ridge from a wilderness classification. This was purposeful; i.e., to permit modest improvements over time due to expected increased visitor usage. This is certainly occurring as the the popularity of ONP increases, along with an expanding population.

As the first Secretary and Board member of Olympic Ski Lifts, Inc., I was pleased to play a small role in the creation of improved downhill skiing

at Hurricane Ridge by the addition of a Pomalift. Our family and many others have benefited greatly from this facility, certainly a vast improvement over rope tows. The terrain is challenging, and downhill skiers and, more recently snowboarders, hone their skills locally so that occasional visits elsewhere at major ski areas are more enjoyable.

Downhill skiing is an athletic adventure, most normally associated with youthful, fit people who enjoy a workout on snow covered mountains. In my view, it is hard to match the exhilaration of any sport with downhill skiing on a clear crisp day in a beautiful world class setting. This is the kind of experience that needs to be preserved at Hurricane Ridge. It is unique in many ways to what is normally offered at a National Park since Hurricane Ridge is close to an expanding population center providing a relative ease of access. This is important today in an environment of increasing fuel costs that make skiing away from the Olympia peninsula an expensive and time consuming event. Preserving this experience for our youth is very beneficial.



This can only happen if modest improvements are permitted. No facilities can exist, long term, that fail to provide such an opportunity. Skiing at Hurricane Ridge is at a crossroad. Either improvements, such as replacing the Pomalift with a chair lift are permitted, or the potential for operating aging equipment will soon become impractical. This would be a tragic end to the vision of skiers on these mountains over the last 60 years.

One must fully understand the commitment which was made and continues to this day. The support of volunteers to maintain downhill skiing has been astounding. Just as important and critical to operations is the financial support provided by area residents who believe in the value of downhill skiing in the Olympic mountains. It amounts to thousands of dollars every year. Fund raisers are held each year to support operations and enable skiers to ski at a reasonable, acceptable cost. Clearly, this pattern identifies the level of ongoing support by the Clallam County community for skiing at Hurricane Ridge.

So my support for Alternative C could not be stronger. It is the only alternative that provides a future for downhill skiing at Hurricane Ridge. Indeed, it would be tragic to think of a future sparkling winter day when our mountains are “out”, but there is no way to fully enjoy them and introduce this wonderful experience to our children and grandchildren.

#### PARK EXPANSION

It was encouraging for me to read Merrill and Ring's comments opposing the acquisition of their forest lands at Lake Crescent and Lake Ozette. This old, well-established company, wishes to maintain and actually improve the timberland base, on which rests its future, as it has for over 100 years.

Timber does not play the dominant role it did when I arrived in 1960; however, it is and will always be an important part of the economic fabric of this area. It is much too important to ignore or treat as insignificant. This is exactly how I view further expansion plans by ONP; i.e., that goals of the Park eclipse those of private forestland managers.



The reasons given cite all sorts of maladies associated with modern timberland management that, in my view, are invalid. The issues of fish and wildlife have been fully investigated by the appropriate agencies. Protection of these resources is paramount and subscribed to by the agencies most concerned. I would ask, "Where on these neighboring lands have forest practices impacted the National Park to an extent requiring their expropriation?" I have spent many field hours in these locations and find nothing that remotely threatens the National Park or its mission.

The battle over the commercial timberland base was fought long and hard in the late 1930's leading to establishment of ONP. The surrounding communities were told that adjacent timberlands would be available for the perpetual production of timber and the benefits this practice provides from an employment and economic perspective. Since then there has been a continued erosion of the timberland base through wilderness designation, land withdrawals for other purposes, expansion of the Park, and most recently, creation of defacto wilderness in the adjacent Olympic

National Forest. The latter has a substantial long term effect since the current caretaker management policy on this Forest permits crumbling of the infrastructure that has supported forestland management in the past.

No longer is 200-300 MMBF per annum of timber being generated by the ONF, a perpetual harvest guaranteed by professional foresters who calculated these yields carefully for decades. So the promises made in 1938 have not been kept. Communities can no longer rely on the National Forest timber output so important to their economic vitality.

Timber communities on the Olympic peninsula find that their future is almost totally reliant on private timberlands. Now the federal government wants to acquire some of these land and expand the National Park. Is that really in the public interest? Are the reasons given valid?

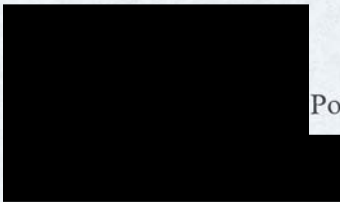
Not only would such a program deny the perpetual future harvest from these lands , but the taxes generated for Clallam County would be lost. These include taxes on the land, an annual income source, and the excise tax generated when timber is harvested. Has this loss been calculated? If so,



over what time horizon? These are valid questions that need answers before acquisition by the Park is even considered.

Acquiring additional timberland for the National Park has another downside as we contemplate the future. Private timberlands are managed with exclusion of fire as an important goal. Not so on federal lands. These are the ones where access is limited and the response time lengthened; thereby, increasing the potential for catastrophic loss. There are very few acres in the Olympics where a fire history is not known. Adding acres to the Park, which would be preserved in a natural state, increases the fire potential on these lands and those adjacent to it. This is an unfortunate reality of federal land ownership today.

In summary, as far as boundary revisions are concerned, Alternative A which recommends no further additions to ONP, is the best choice for the reasons cited.

 Port Angeles, WA 98362