

THE  
**FUTURE**  
OF  
**AMERICA'S**  
**NATIONAL**  
**PARKS**

First Annual  
Centennial Strategy for

# Olympic National Park

August 2007

CENTENNIAL INITIATIVE



## Centennial Vision

Olympic National Park is recognized around the world for its diversity, stunning scenery and remote wilderness character. The park protects three distinct ecosystems from glacier- capped mountains and wild Pacific coast to magnificent stands of old- growth and temperate rain forest. Diversity also reigns on a smaller scale, with a wide variety of plants and animals, including 8 kinds of plants and 15 kinds of animals that are endemic to the area, occurring nowhere else in the world.

Located on the Olympic Peninsula in the northwest corner of the contiguous 48 states, Olympic is within a three- to five- hour drive of over five million people. These people include eight American Indian tribes and other local communities who have strong ties to the park, as well as residents of the diverse and urban Puget Sound region.

With 14 developed visitor areas, four lodges and 16 campgrounds, yet with 95 percent of the park designated as wilderness, Olympic offers a wide range of outstanding recreation opportunities. From hiking, horseback riding and backpacking in the park's wilderness to sightseeing, fishing, beachcombing and camping, visitors find enjoyment, challenge and inspiration at Olympic National Park.

As we prepare for the Centennial of the National Park Service, we envision a restoration of our capacity for visitor service and park stewardship. Over the past decade, the public has seen a 50 percent drop in ranger- led programs as budgetary constraints have led to fewer employees. Similarly, the park's ability to perform routine and preventative maintenance of trails, roads, buildings and other assets has declined dramatically. We look to the Centennial Challenge as an opportunity to restore to the public many of the services and recreational opportunities lost in recent years and to renew stewardship of park resources and assets.

Additionally, several key projects at Olympic present unique and powerful opportunities for stewardship, education and environmental leadership. Among these is the removal of two dams that will restore a free- flowing Elwha River, allowing the return of all five species of Pacific salmon and a restored river and ecosystem. Strong partnerships with the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe, the City of Port Angeles, Olympic Park Institute and others will not only restore the ecosystem, but will engage children and adults in outdoor experiences, online education and other ways to learn about habitat restoration, conservation and national parks.

## Goal One: Stewardship

### Improve Condition of Park Assets and Resources

Rehabilitate high-priority historic buildings to good condition, and help communities to preserve their history through programs like Preserve America.

Many of Olympic's historic structures are important to local communities and park neighbors, as well as being important regional resources. These structures reflect local homesteading and settlement as well as the development of federal land management conservation efforts. As the National Park Service Centennial approaches, we will work closely with neighboring communities to rehabilitate the park's historic buildings.

Restore native habitats by controlling invasive species and reintroducing key plant and animal species.

Removal of two dams on the Elwha River – our nation's largest dam removal to date – will restore the river to its natural free-flowing state, allowing all five species of Pacific salmon and other anadromous fish to once again reach habitat and spawning grounds. The Elwha watershed is the largest in Olympic National Park; restoration of salmon to the over 70 miles of river and tributaries will return vital nutrients to the watershed and will restore the entire ecosystem. For the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe, this project will bring cultural, spiritual and economic healing as salmon return after a century's absence and flooded sacred sites are restored.

Olympic National Park, in partnership with the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) is proposing to reintroduce the fisher (*Martes pennanti*) to the park. This small, sleek mammal, related to weasels and wolverines, is native to the lowland forests of Washington, but is believed to be extirpated from the state. Studies show that Olympic National Park is the best place in Washington to begin fisher restoration. The NPS and WDFW will release an environmental assessment for public review in August 2007.

Improve high-priority assets to acceptable condition, as measured by the Facility Condition Index.

Olympic National Park has 637 NPS-owned and operated high priority assets, with 71 percent rated in good condition. Through the Centennial Initiative we will increase preventative and recurring maintenance to ensure that assets in good condition remain in good condition. Nine seasonal maintenance positions will be restored, allowing for restrooms

and other public use areas to be cleaned more frequently, bringing a higher standard of care and greater visitor satisfaction. Olympic is developing a 10- year project funding plan for its highest priority assets to address backlogged maintenance for assets with fair, poor and serious conditions. The park's goal is to increase the number of high- priority assets in good condition to 82 percent.

### **Improve the natural resources in parks, as measured by the vital signs developed under the Natural Resource Challenge.**

Olympic will take the following actions to improve its natural resource conditions.

- Working with area tribes and other partners, Olympic will improve the condition of park waters, ensuring that all waters meet Clean Water Act standards.
- The park will develop a program to monitor and maintain a viable population of the Olympic marmot, an endemic species unique to the Olympic Mountains.
- The park will work with partners to complete and implement a recovery plan for Ozette sockeye salmon, listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act and will support recovery efforts for all listed species in the park.
- Olympic will develop a sustainable long- term ecological monitoring program, fully integrated with similar programs of interested partners on the Olympic Peninsula. Results will be shared with educators, researchers, local residents, and neighboring land managers.
- The park will identify the effects of climate change on park resources and work with partners to address them.
- With partners, Olympic will complete a status review of the park's glaciers.
- The park will engage area tribes, communities and the public to develop a wilderness management plan.

### **Complete all cultural resource inventories for designated priority resources.**

Global climate change poses a threat to park and tribal coastal archeological resources. Cultural resource inventories will be completed for all coastal and river areas threatened by sea level rise.

## **Restore river habitats by partnering with area tribes**

We will work closely with area tribes to restore natural river processes in selected park rivers, including the Quinault, Queets and Hoh. As proposed in the park's Draft General Management Plan, this could include relocating park roads away from river meander zones if feasible.

## **Encourage children to be future conservationists**

Educational curriculum, site visits and online materials about Elwha ecosystem restoration will encourage children to become conservationists. By connecting students and teachers to this project, the park will engage the next generation in thinking and acting creatively to conserve and protect natural and cultural resources.

The park and its education partners have already developed and distributed Elwha curriculum to over 100 area educators. Park partner Olympic Park Institute has incorporated Elwha education into its curriculum and now offers students the opportunity for hands-on field science, learning about the watershed's cultural and natural history while collecting data about the river. Within three years, this partnership will engage approximately 1,100 students and 200 teachers each year in Elwha restoration learning.

Through a recent National Science Foundation grant, the park and partners will increase participation of Lower Elwha Klallam and other Olympic Peninsula youth in the geosciences as they learn in and about the Elwha watershed.

With this growing cadre of partners, the park will ultimately provide a national-level education program about Elwha restoration.

# **Goal Two: Environmental Leadership**

## **Reduce environmental impacts of park operations**

Reduce the environmental impacts of park operations on air and water quality.

Olympic will continue to reduce the environmental impacts of park operations by using sustainable building materials, reducing dependence on fossil fuels, conserving water in public buildings, and other efforts.

Impacts to water quality will be reduced by installing waterless urinals and water-saving toilets in all public restrooms and water-conserving showerheads in all park housing units. All front country privy restrooms will be replaced with universally accessible vault toilets.

Olympic will continue to convert its motor vehicle fleet to hybrid and flex fuel vehicles (capable of using either regular gasoline or E85 ethanol) and will increase its use of biodiesel fuel.

Sustainable building materials are used as routine maintenance and repairs are completed. Longer lasting metal roofs will replace shakes and shingles on all non- historic buildings. All wooden picnic tables will be replaced with recycled concrete tables.

Olympic will complete a parkwide energy use evaluation to determine how to maximize our energy efficiency and most effectively reduce energy use.

### **Engage partners, communities and visitors in shared environmental stewardship**

Restoration of the Elwha River and ecosystem is possible thanks to past, present and developing partnerships between the National Park Service and a diverse and growing number of partners. Working with the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe, and other local, regional and national partners, will not only accomplish dam removal and river restoration, but will also educate and involve local communities and visitors in restoration and stewardship of the Elwha River and ecosystem.

Targeted volunteer and service learning opportunities will engage youth and adults in environmental stewardship projects, including Elwha restoration, propagation of native plants for use in habitat restoration projects, non- native plant control and others. We will also develop programs to involve citizens in species inventory projects and ecological monitoring in the park.

We will share stewardship of park rivers by working closely with area tribes to restore natural river processes in selected rivers, including the Quinault, Queets and Hoh river systems.

Olympic's concession partners are already engaged in environmental stewardship. In coming years, we will work together to continue and expand these programs.

## **Goal Three: Recreational Experience**

### **Encourage collaboration among and assist park and recreation systems at every level – federal, regional, state, local – to help build an outdoor recreation system accessible to all Americans**

Rehabilitate over 2,000 miles of trails within or connected to national parks, including trails accessible to those with disabilities.

Olympic National Park has over 600 miles of trails that in 2006 provided access for 76,000 overnight stays in the park's backcountry.

Seventy- six percent of the park's trail assets are currently in acceptable condition. The President's Centennial Initiative calls for restoring nine seasonal maintenance employees to the park. These employees, along with proposed restoration of the park's core operations, will provide for routine trail maintenance and repairs and allow us to increase to 81 percent the number of trail assets in acceptable condition. Contributions of park partners and volunteer groups will continue to be vital in trail clearing and maintenance.

As proposed in the park's draft General Management Plan, the park will increase the number of universally accessible frontcountry trails now provided and will work with area communities and partners to connect park trails to regional and community trail networks.

### **Establish volun-tourism excursions to national parks for volunteers to help achieve natural and cultural resource protection goals**

Increase annual volunteer hours by 100 percent ...

Olympic will expand and enhance its already successful volunteer program, which has recorded 70,000 annual volunteer hours in recent years, by increasing both the annual number of organized volunteer groups and annual volunteer hours by 10 percent.

Of particular emphasis will be targeted outreach to new volunteer groups, including high school aged youth, tribal partners and other historically underrepresented groups.

We will engage youth and adults in Elwha restoration by offering volunteer and service learning opportunities for non- native plant



removal in the Elwha Valley and native plant propagation at the Elwha greenhouse.

### **Focus national, regional and local tourism efforts to reach diverse audiences and young people and ...**

Increase the number of visitors that attend ranger-facilitated programs such as campfire talks, hikes, and school programs.

The Centennial Initiative calls for restoring 18 seasonal interpreters at Olympic National Park, which will allow for double the number of ranger-facilitated programs currently offered.

Expanded hours and seasons at Olympic's three major visitor centers and eleven information stations will provide visitor services for an estimated 230,000 additional visitors. Reinstating ranger-led programs will allow another 65,000 visitors each year to enjoy this experience as they learn about the park and its resources.

We will improve communications with neighboring communities around the park by increasing staff participation at local events and attendance at civic group meetings.

## **Goal Four: Education**

### **Impart to every American a sense of their citizen ownership of their national parks**

Increase visitors' satisfaction, understanding, and appreciation of the parks they visit.

Through the Centennial Initiative, Olympic will restore 18 seasonal interpreter positions, nine seasonal maintenance positions and ten seasonal and two subject-to-furlough law enforcement positions.

Seasonal employees, often called the "backbone of the National Park Service" will provide a host of services for park visitors, including routine maintenance, ranger-led programs, trip planning and safety information, routine patrols and emergency services. By restoring the variety, amount and quality of services we provide to visitors and park neighbors, we will help them enjoy, understand and better appreciate Olympic National Park.



As envisioned in the draft General Management Plan, Olympic will work closely with area tribes and other partners to develop new and expanded visitor services, facilities and recreational opportunities.

We will create new ways for visitors to learn about Olympic by expanding the park's website and including interpretive podcasts and web- video to reach visitors around the world.

The park will also work with a growing cadre of partners to develop a comprehensive, national- level education program about Elwha ecosystem restoration.

## **Goal Five: Professional Excellence**

### **Model what it means to work in partnership**

Elwha River and ecosystem restoration is a model of strong and effective partnerships. Not only will these partnerships accomplish the largest dam removal project in our nation, they will restore a free- flowing river and ecosystem. Other partnerships are educating and involving local, regional and national communities in restoration and stewardship of the Elwha River and ecosystem

We will work closely with the eight tribes of the Olympic Peninsula to develop a government to government agreement. The park will continue to seek ways to develop partnerships with the tribes for collaborative resource management, including river restoration, and to provide visitor opportunities.

### **Promote a safety and health culture for all visitors and employees**

Olympic will continue to use a variety of techniques including a behavior- based safety program, regular safety training, job safety analyses and others to promote a safe and healthy culture for its employees. Safety information will be provided to visitors through brochures, exhibits, web pages and personal contacts with park staff.

With the addition of 18 interpretive rangers, along with nine seasonal and two subject- to- furlough law enforcement rangers called for in the Centennial Challenge, basic visitor safety and information will be improved and emergency response times will be shorter.

**Make national parks the first choice in philanthropic giving among those concerned about environmental, cultural and recreational values**

Improve communications and marketing capacity to increase public understanding of our mission, opportunities, and benefits.

We will continue to work closely with our partner, the Washington's National Park Fund to help them meet their fundraising goals in support of parks.