

*The mission of the
Olympic Forest Coalition
is to protect and restore
forest and aquatic ecosystems
on the public lands
on the Olympic Peninsula.*



Fall 2011

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If you donate by year-end, your donation to OFCO is tax-deductible under the extent allowed by law. We are enclosing a self-addressed envelope for your convenience. Or, you may donate online on our website: www.olympicforest.org/join.htm

On the Ground with OFCO



President's Column

John Woolley

If you haven't heard from us for a while, it's not because all is quiet on the Peninsula these days. Quite to the contrary, we've been busy with ongoing projects and quandaries, and several new ones. Here's a rundown on a few of them:

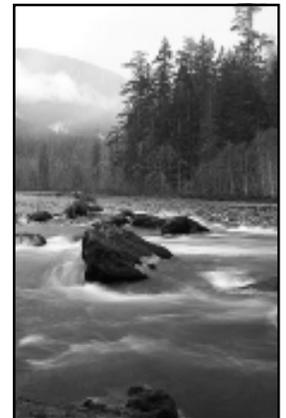
Dungeness River Watershed Action Plan:

Earlier this year, the Forest Service initiated a water quality and habitat enhancement project for public lands in the Dungeness watershed, and requested OFCO's assistance in the process.

Presently, many former logging roads and spurs are contributing to the erosion of the area. Since funding to repair and maintain these roads will not be available, some will be decommissioned unless they have recreational value. User groups will be expected to contribute to funding the necessary maintenance.

OFCCO has been engaged in discussions with the Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) user groups to determine how they want to support access and to seek areas of agreement about which trails can be maintained without damage to the ecosystem. Some OHV users are reluctant to support the decommissioning of any roads that might fit into their loop trail proposals. OFCCO maintains that extensive OHV use is not appropriate in many parts of this steep watershed and considers such use a lack of respect for our natural resources.

The Olympic National Forest (ONF) and other partners have recognized the river drainage as a priority watershed for restoration because of its abundant natural resource values, impacted condition, and current extensive human use. Objectives of the action plan include restoration of natural watershed processes within the Dungeness watershed; the involvement of community in the stewardship of our public lands; the creation of sustainable infrastructure within the watershed; and the development of a framework that fosters future collaboration. The Dungeness watershed encompasses over 129,000 acres.



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Saving Streamkeepers:

Since the early 1990s, OFCO's Board Member and retired scientist Coleman Byrnes has been assisting Clallam County's Streamkeepers in gathering water samples for a data collection program on stream turbidity. Streamkeepers have helped in setting up collection protocols, providing equipment, analyzing data, and assisting with recordkeeping for water quality data in the streams. The program has over 100 volunteers and one County staff person to coordinate and administer it. The data results are filed with the Department of Ecology.

This field season, OFCO has helped to fund this activity with \$5,000 to Streamkeepers for their services to cover mileage expenses. We also entered into an agreement with Clallam County to maintain the monitoring program; we're hoping it will not be a casualty of the budget cuts under consideration by the County.

Dosewallips River Salmon Enhancement:

The Olympic National Forest and the Wild Fish Conservancy are proposing a restoration project to stabilize the river channel and improve fish habitat in the Dosewallips River. Logs jams and wood complexes would be constructed and installed in six separate reaches of the river on Olympic National Forest lands (near the Dose Road washout). According to the Forest Service, habitat restoration in the river is a key element in the recovery plan for the Puget Sound Chinook. Placement of root wads and other debris is critical to promote short- run, as well as long- run, enhancement. District Ranger Dean Yoshina is inviting the public to participate in the NEPA process during public scoping. In the near future, woody debris will be added to the Dungeness and Gray Wolf rivers.



Dosewallips River

Western Straits Action Group (WSAG):

Formed under the OFCO umbrella, this group has met with DNR in Forks in an effort to get access to logging operations that appear to threaten salmon and Marbled Murrelet habitat. After a long process, WSAG's Don Hamerquist now has the key to access the gate to the logging operations, enabling more productive groundtruth outings. Don also organized an on-site meeting with three salmon groups and the Department of Transportation (DOT). At milepost 24 on Highway 112, the Pysht River is on the move north (1951 and 2006) and is threatening the highway and disrupting property lines. Don has been successful in getting salmon interests and DOT to coordinate corrective action.



Pysht River

Elwha River Fish Hatchery:

The lowering of Elwha River dams is creating a great opportunity to study native fish returns to a natural flowing river. Short-term economics is conflicting with an unprecedented opportunity to study native returns. Court appeals are challenging both "enhancement" and "production" hatchery activities.



Please contact us for more information on how to be involved with our projects. We greatly appreciate your financial support.

OFCO Supports ‘No Action’ for Spruce RR Trail Expansion

by Peggy Bruton

On October 20th, OFCO President John Woolley sent a letter to Olympic National Park Superintendent Karen Gustin stating our support for the “No Action” alternative on the project to enlarge and expand the Spruce Railroad Trail around Lake Crescent and in the park’s Sol Duc area.

The Park’s preferred alternative calls for considerable widening, expansion of parking and heavy construction for the trail, which will eventually extend from Port Townsend to LaPush. Clallam County prefers considerably greater expansion, citing pressures from biking and handicap accommodation advocates for greater access.

While some environmental groups, including Olympic Park Associates, are supporting (albeit reluctantly) the Park Service’s preferred alternative, OFCO believes the proposal needs more consideration. Woolley’s letter explains: “No action is most appropriate because the amount of development pressure being placed on ONP is considerably beyond the Park’s original intent. Pressures from Clallam County to overdevelop our National Park are very disappointing. Originally, OFCO had intended to endorse the position of the Olympic Park Associates, as it encouraged more reasonable development options based on ONP’s General Management Plan.

“Now, OFCO supports taking more time to analyze the impact of enabling a second paved route along Lake Crescent. ‘No Action’ just might provide the time to come to our senses.”

The public comment period for this proposal ended October 21.



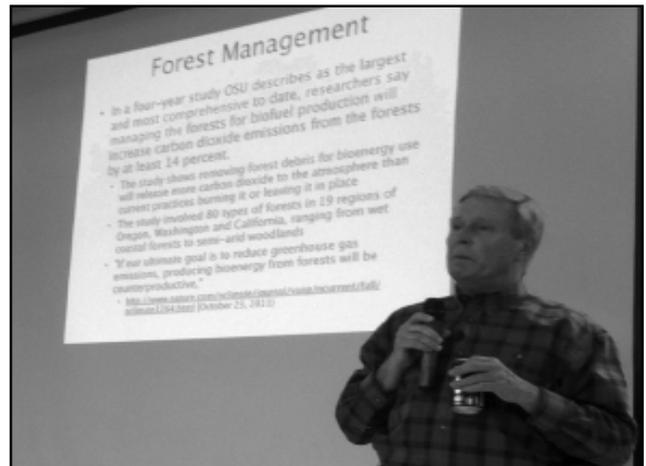
Spruce Railroad Trail

Overflow Crowd Attends Port Townsend’s Biomass Talk

by Bob Lynette, Sierra Club North Olympic Group

Dr. William Sammons, renowned expert on the downsides of biomass burning, spoke to more than 200 residents at a public meeting in Port Townsend on October 26th about the health hazards of biomass burning. Port Townsend is considering a new biomass energy facility.

Dr. Sammons, a board certified pediatrician who specializes in behavioral and developmental pediatrics, has been speaking across the country and internationally about the serious health effects and environmental issues created by biomass incinerators. Sierra Club North Olympic Group, PTAirWatch, Olympic Environmental Council, and OFCO sponsored the meeting.



In summary, Dr. Sammons noted that the worst health hazards are dioxins and ultrafine particulates. The primary fuels used -- wood and construction debris (even if “clean”) -- produce significant amounts of dioxins. The U.S. Institute of Medicine now links dioxin to various cancers, insulin dependent diabetes and nerve and heart disease among people exposed directly or indirectly, and to birth defects in their children. The cancer potency factor is the highest of any chemical EPA has ever evaluated. Many doctors believe that there is no safe level of dioxins. Regulations now in force do not protect us.

Additionally, the projects would more than double the number of ultrafine particles released into the air. Recent research shows that these particulates are a very serious health hazard, as reported in thousands of medical articles in the last four years. Ultrafine particulates increase cases

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And The Battles - Continued from page 5

in their infancy, did not know what they wanted to be when they grew up. So they went at it haphazardly, caving in to political and business interests that held the reins and the funding for those very agencies. Looking at the vast availability of timber throughout the country, and the surge of housing development in a budding nation, the greed to harvest the giant trees that would yield more money and lumber was irresistible, particularly because timber companies could purchase huge amounts of land for as little as \$1.62 per acre.

The destruction of the giant trees on the Olympic Peninsula was devastating. However, this not only affected the trees but the entire ecosystem. Silt and sediment began collecting in rivers and streams due to the indiscriminate methods used. There were no protections for those streams, no buffers, and no concerns about the potential effect on fish, birds, and other wildlife. The effects are quite evident today.

I wish I could say that much has changed – but the one thing that has definitely changed is that we only have a tiny portion of the giant trees remaining on our peninsula. Now the devastation of second growth trees brings on the same drastic results. In our public lands, there are some protections in place such as the Habitat Conservation Plan – a plan that is in effect due mainly to the efforts of OFCO. However, challenges remain for public agencies to adhere to such a plan.

Through campaigns like the Wild Olympics we are, once again, attempting to protect areas for the benefit of present and future generations. The battle cries and complaints remain the same as those heard by John Muir and Rosalie Edge a century ago.



Polly Dyer Old Growth Grove, Dosewallips

An extravaganza of Canada Dogwood Pats Prairie - Road 2877

by John Woolley

ONF Road 2877 extends a bit over three miles, accessing the headwaters of McDonald Creek. The road is passable for passenger cars that can handle a number of potholes. But maintaining this route for recreational driving and access is questionable. Perhaps future logging needs will be the rationale for spending funds on maintenance.

Pats Prairie sits between the headwaters of McDonald and Pats creeks. Grassland dominates the view, and cut grass sedge thrives. This year the prairie was still very wet when we visited during July, requiring rubber boots for serious wandering in the tall green grasses.



Indian Paintbrush at the trailhead were very fresh and notably a bit different, as is often the case. Wild Strawberries flowers indicated a late spring, and Canada Dogwood blossoms make for a lasting memory. The photographer could hardly wait to get out of our vehicle.

The trail access is quite a contrast from the old days when a faint route guided access into the dark forest that borders Pats Prairie. Now, the trail has been cut to give one a confident access to the east end of Pats Prairie. At the west end, where the trail starts, the prairie drains north into a fork of McDonald Creek. While on the trail, through the forest, the lush green meadow is an enigma, just off trail to the south, beyond some very giant Skunk Cabbage. Have patience, as access to the greens is available farther along the route.

Sitka Spruce, of good size, along with cedar and western hemlock compose most of the forest, though at trails end, apple trees appear among the alder. It seems there was a Pat who tried to make a home on the Prairie. A Pileated Woodpecker alerted us to his presence, but for the most part we heard nothing but the breeze. The clouds move over us; we don't see Blue Mountain this day.

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Canada Dogwood - Continued from page 6

Rhododendrons are just breaking into flowers. A green mountain to the south has some appeal. It was likely logged over from older times, and the ridge running summit offers a curious destination for those seeking the obscure.

From the vicinity of that apple tree on the east end of the prairie, a very faint route extends down Pete's Creek and could be accessed from Road 2875-040. Maybe, we'll do that later.

Hiking Silver Lake

by Nancy Woolley

Near the very end of FS Road 2870 at the crossing of Silver Creek is the way trail to Silver Lake. The trail is not an easy one, and has long been the shortcut route to Silver Lake for Sequim folk. The long drive up the Dungeness will eventually be shortened by 1.5 miles as the last part of the road is planned for decommission. The hike will then start near the current Tubal Cane parking lot. We visited this area earlier this year.

The 2870 road crosses Silver Creek about .5 miles before it ends in a recovering clear cut from the sixties. When we arrive, there are 5 vehicles at the trailhead. John and I immediately meet the owner of Sequim's two big bookends motels and his accountant, who are waiting for a ride after backpacking for an overnight at Silver Lake, starting from the Sink Hole Trail on the east side of Mt. Townsend. We mentioned we were checking on recreational use, including evidence of dog use. Their reply was that every user had dogs with them and that dog scat was regular on the trail, prompting him to comment that seeing it was no better than encountering human. I thought he had a good attitude for someone in hospitality and motels.

The Silver Creek way trail is a spectacular hike though classic north facing forest, and the creek side is vibrant green. The transition from open creek side to a dark mature Douglas Fir forest is dramatic, some of the not tall mature firs are 40 inches diameter at breast height (dbh). Constantly watching one's footing, a lush streamside meadow allows for respite by calm waters. Three young men catch up with after a couple of rough climb overs of

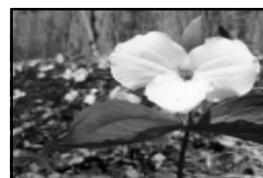


fallen trees. They are former students from Sequim High School, each has a large dog. One is mastiff, quite beautiful, as are the other two large dogs. I ask if they brought doggy bags as there are starting to be a number of dogs visiting the lake.

We walk into the slope forest, the noise of gushing white waters fills one's ears. Another meadow and level stretch is most welcome. I can't help but feel that we are in National Park quality country - and we are in the sense that we are hiking in a designated Wilderness Area. Finally, the steep forest part of our route starts, and I see others ahead climbing slowly. Two of them are older day hikers, with three others who plan to camp at Silver Lake. Four male hikers, two retired, two not retired SHS teachers are coming down, completing their loop hike from climbing the Little Quilcene Trail up to Mt. Townsend and returning the Silver Lake Trail and way trail to their vehicle. They started their loop by walking down the 1.5 miles of road to the lower trailhead up Dirty Face Ridge. Closing the 1.5 miles of road would have made no difference for their loop hike.

After about two miles, the trail crosses the creek and steeply climbs to a ridge flat, where orange ribbons guide the way through the snow and wet land to the official Silver Lake Trail. Good footing enables a pleasant hike up a switchback or two to subalpine blooming flowers and the snow surrounded lake. Four groups of folks are at the lake: A full tunic friar and friends sitting on rocks across the waters, three young men with their dogs coming down from the snowy saddle, another group of rock sitters on the east side, as well as the five-some just arriving for an overnight. Only the open rocky site was free of snow. High use is a concern.

Exploring the small ridges for privacy, we lunched above the Lower Silver Lake amidst spectacular lupine, sandwort, western anemone, and phlox. The shear mountain views are like Yosemite on the west, while the views to the east are colorful rock slopes, snow shoots and dark forest above. We went through an old camp mess of abandoned tarps and what-not in a forested hollow on the little ridge between the lakes. Stepping into a dark grove, we disturbed a Hermit Thrush, seeing him nearly face to face. The season is getting along, even though trailside flowers are still the early blossoming yellow violets and trilliums.



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