



Olympic Forest Coalition

April 2007

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

OFCO Announces Major Watershed Restoration Initiative; Your Calls to Rep. Dicks Will Help!

Prolonged underfunding for road decommissioning and maintenance has led to a quiet crisis in the watersheds of Washington's national forests. Resolving this crisis—through a 10-year, \$300 million effort—is the emphasis of a new and ambitious OFCO program in which we are joined by the state Department of Ecology (DOE) and 10 other environmental organizations. Our goal is to engage Congressman Norm Dicks and other members of our delegation, as well as Senators Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell, in securing funding for this massive and time-sensitive effort.

In 2000, the DOE signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Regional Office of the U.S. Forest Service covering all national forests in the state of Washington. This MOA requires, among other things, major road decommissioning efforts on the part of the Forest Service. In 2005, the Forest Service reported to DOE that it would take \$300 million and 100 years at the current rate of funding to fix the problem. Each year, in the meantime, more roads fail. The backlog has become simply overwhelming.

Two-thirds of the problem occurs in the many rivers that empty into Puget Sound and thus the early years' efforts will focus there. This covers the entire Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest and that portion of the Olympic National Forest from the Strait of Juan De Fuca down the east side of Hood Canal (from the Elwha River to the Skokomish River).

It is time for the Forest Service to stop building new roads—whether temporary or permanent—and restore the

troubled watersheds that are so important to our ailing Puget Sound by systematically removing hundreds of miles of old logging roads that are presently falling apart.

Why should OFCO be concerned about failing roads? Here are only a few reasons:

Polluted water emerging from decaying and washed-out forest roads harms endangered and still-dwindling runs of
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Urgent Action!!!!

Contact Rep. Norm Dicks

Initiative supporters who met with Rep. Dicks' aide in late March believe a strong showing of interest in the watershed initiative could win his support. If you live in the 6th District, please call or write the Congressman.

Message: **Restoration of the Puget Sound area's damaged watersheds on national forest lands can't wait.** Salmon habitats face devastation; climate change brings more severe and frequent floods. Delays in restoration will only inflate the current \$300 million price tag. Please support the Washington Watershed Restoration Initiative (see story, above).

Email Rep. Norm Dicks through his Web site, or phone or fax: **Washington D.C.**, (202) 225-5916, [fax] (202) 226-1176; **Kitsap County**, (360) 479-4011, [fax] 479-2126; **Olympic Peninsula**, (360) 452-3370; [fax] 452-3502 **Toll Free** (800) 947-NORM

Realizing the Future on Olympic National Forest

by Jim Scarborough

The U.S. Forest Service has always been a tough nut to crack. Faced with a wide and often contradictory array of statutes, regulations, and societal expectations to comply with, the agency as a whole sometimes exhibits as many different drives and motivations as a Jungian case study. Whereas the Forest Service's logging program is legendary for its domineering, grumpy intransigence, the agency has also long displayed a certain conservation ethic harkening back to Gifford Pinchot's greener thoughts and writings (later fine-tuned and improved upon by the likes of Bob Marshall, Aldo Leopold, and even Mike Dombeck).

The current situation on Olympic National Forest maintains this odd assemblage of personalities and perspectives. On one hand, the Forest Service continues to court trouble in attempts to expand timber sale volumes above and beyond the intent of the Northwest Forest Plan. Recent examples include their near-total dismissal of conservationists' concerns on the large Bear Creek Saddle sale west of Lake Crescent, their proposal to log 115-year-old forest on scenic Mounts Walker and Turner via the Jackson sale, and the emergence of the new Humptulips sale east of the Colonel Bob Wilderness with its 8,000-acre planning area.

But let it be known: good things are happening, too. As this issue goes to press, the Forest Service is faithfully working on a number of important road decommissioning projects across Olympic National Forest. Miles of harmful, decaying logging roads are in the process of being put to bed and revegetated in such wide-ranging locales as Brown Creek in the South Fork Skokomish watershed, Tunnel Creek in the Big Quilcene watershed, Slab Camp in the Dungeness watershed (assisted through OFCO's lead role in a stewardship collaboration group), South Fork Sol Duc River, and, in coordination with the Quinault Indian Nation, Sams River in the Queets watershed.

Contradictory motives aside, the future of Olympic National Forest will be one of greatly increased prioritization of watershed restoration. There is no greater threat to the Forest's long-term integrity and aquatic health than its several hundred miles of unnecessary, unraveling roads. Climate change factors raise these

stakes further. The Forest Service has thus far shown some progress on this front, but knows which side its bread is buttered. The Bush administration and a previously compliant Congress have directed increased funding to timber sales, at the expense of all other management needs. Yet with the new 110th Congress, there are signs this unfortunate imbalance may be about to change for the better.

Today's Forest Service possesses the expertise to mend much of the damage historically inflicted on Olympic National Forest from overzealous logging road construction, but lacks the resources to do so. Reliable funding is essential to fully achieving watershed restoration objectives, in the form of intensive road decommissioning and making other roads more fish-friendly.

Forest Service personnel should not have to depend upon timber money for their survival, which has often resulted in a cancelling out of restoration gains because of watershed damage associated with logging activities elsewhere. OFCO and our partners will be working overtime to help the Forest Service realize its inevitable future, sooner rather than later.

Kudos

OFCO would like to applaud the Olympic National Forest staff for the good work they have already done on road decommissioning. Even before the Northwest Forest Plan went into effect in 1994, they were leaders in efforts to move from a timber-first forest to one looking at how to best restore the land from the overcutting, with resultant roads, in the past. After a great deal of public involvement, they finalized an Access and Travel Management Plan several years ago that showed they would like to decommission about 1/3 of their current system roads. There are many examples of the excellent work they have done. However, they are greatly limited by lack of congressional funding. Our efforts to provide this funding show OFCO's long-term commitment to work for a healthy forest and aquatic ecosystem on public land.

Quilcene Folks Score Big Win Against ORV Invasion

by Connie Gallant

The citizens of Quilcene, Washington have won a battle against an ORV site proposal in our lovely, rural area, nestled amid the mountains of the Olympic Peninsula. The last thing any one of us wanted was the influx of noise, traffic, and degradation of soil, wildlife, waterways, and our tranquil lifestyle.

About two years ago, after the Department of Natural Resources said it could turn over about 1,000 acres to our county for recreational use, a small group of ORV proponents, in conjunction with our Jefferson County Parks & Recreation Department, obtained a grant from the IAC (Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation) for a feasibility study to establish a site in the Quilcene area. Planning went forward. But it wasn't until last September that the majority of Quilcene residents found out about these plans, and we readily formed the Quilcene Citizens Coalition to oppose the project.

Eleven sites were selected for the study, and two prominent sites were favored by the ORV focus group: Penny Creek and Skidder Hill (Snow Creek). These two sites are in critical watershed and wildlife habitat areas. Despite reassurances from the ORVers that they would be very responsible and would never go off the trails, we were not convinced. A trip to the Tahuya State Forest to watch the ORV action there strengthened our determination that this would not happen in our village. The noise level was incredible; we saw (and photographed) trash on the trails, and videotaped several ORVers riding down a road with a big sign, "No ORVs on this road." One of our county commission-

ers, accompanied by his granddaughter, almost got run over by an ATV. We could still hear the engine noise 2 or 3 miles from the forest boundary. We could just imagine what it would be like in our wilderness environment.

We began researching statistics nationwide on ORV accidents and liability issues. Our sources ranged from medical articles, environmental studies, and government agency reports. The more we searched, the more convinced we became that we could not allow such a project in our county.

We initiated a letters campaign to the commissioners and to the local media in both Jefferson and Clallam counties. We placed ads in the local newspapers, held strategy meetings, and spoke out at county commissioners' meeting. We kept up almost a continuous email campaign to all supporters and residents of the county who, in turn, wrote to the commissioners. We contacted other government agencies that would be negatively affected and obtained their support. We took the commissioners to the proposed areas. We never let up for one moment.

On February 26th, the three Jefferson County Commissioners voted 3-0 against having an ORV site anywhere in our county. Our local environment and our tranquility have been preserved --decisively demonstrating that people power works.



OFCO Policy Statement ORV Use on Federal & State Lands on the Olympic Peninsula

Passed by Board of Directors on December 3, 2006

Off-road vehicle (ORV) use on public lands, such as the Olympic National Forest and Olympic Region of the State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) where OFCO accomplishes the bulk of its work, has long been a contentious and controversial issue. ORV's, which include all-terrain vehicles, motorcycles (dirt bikes), and certain other vehicles with internal combustion engines designed for difficult terrain, are the source of a host of ecological and social problems. Among these problems are: 1) destruction of native flora through crushing, soil compaction, and spread of noxious weeds; 2) devastation of aquatic and riparian habitats on unregulated ORV routes; 3) harassment of native fauna and alterations of migratory patterns; 4) noise impacts upon other human users of natural areas, including traditional hunters, equestrians, hikers, and naturalists; and 5) an overwhelming tendency, with some exceptions, for ORV users to defy legal statutes and regulations; which in turn 6) results in unnecessary taxpayer expense via agency attempts to repair or mitigate ORV damage. Neither the U.S. Forest Service nor State DNR has the funding to provide even minimally acceptable law enforcement.

Lax management plans, irresponsible ORV use, and infrequent enforcement have resulted in numerous "renegade routes" across the Olympic National Forest and DNR-managed lands in the Olympic Region. Transportation planners, biologists, and law enforcement officers on public lands now recognize they are vastly outnumbered and badly

(Cont. next page, ORV Policy)

(Watersheds, continued from page 1)

salmon that need cold, clear water to thrive and reproduce. These degraded waters harm the gills of salmon and trout, while fish eggs smother when silt settles into favored gravel beds. Furthermore, deteriorating, unmaintained and poorly designed roads contribute sediment-laden runoff, making streamcourses wider, shallower and more susceptible to warming by the sun. Record storms, influenced by the changing climate, only make matters worse. And as time passes, the price tag on fixing these harmful roads goes up and up.

Details of our new campaign are being developed as we go to press. Check our Web site, www.olympicforest.org, periodically for more information. Our summer issue will include additional info on this year's efforts.

OFCO has assumed the coordinating role between DOE Director Jay Manning and his staff and the 10 other environmental organizations which include: The Wilderness Society; Cascade Chapter, Sierra Club; American Whitewater; Pacific Rivers Council; Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility; Alpine Lakes Protection Society; North Cascades Conservation Council; Washington Wilderness Coalition; Pilchuck Audubon Society; and The Mountaineers. Bonnie Phillips and Kevin Geraghty, OFCO's major contacts for this program, may be reached at bonnie@olympicforest.org or kevin@olympicforest.org.



Bear Saddle Timber Sale Legal Challenge Still Being Weighed

In our December 2006 newsletter, we announced our formal appeal of the sprawling Bear Saddle timber sale on Olympic National Forest, west of Lake Crescent and north of the Sol Duc River. As you recall, this 2300-acre sale is rife with miles upon miles of logging road construction and reconstruction, much of it in sensitive riparian areas near already-degraded streams. Thinning prescriptions would simplify and homogenize the naturally diversifying forest there, and insufficient attention has been devoted to likely disturbance of threatened marbled murrelets and northern spotted owls.

As expected, the regional office of the U.S. Forest Service in Portland has dismissed our detailed appeal. As this issue goes to press, however, we are consulting with our attorney on the potential for an impartial hearing on these significant concerns in federal court. OFCO will announce this decision to our membership at the earliest opportunity.

(ORV Policy, continued from page 3)

under-funded to properly manage out-of-control ORV use. Until recently, public agencies such as the U.S. Forest Service and Washington State Department of Natural Resources have largely neglected the explosion in ORV use. However, in November 2005, the Forest Service released new regulations intended to confine ORV use to designated routes throughout the national forest system. While undoubtedly a positive step forward, these regulations fall far short of what is needed to improve the situation, as evidenced by inadequate discouragement of renegade routes, no funding for agency planning and enforcement of the rules, and no requirement for agency monitoring, among other issues.

With these factors in mind, until such time that agency officials implement robust ORV regulations to ensure that the public's lands and waters are not degraded in any shape, form, or manner; in combination with sufficient law enforcement presence, severe penalties for user violations, and funding for annual monitoring, OFCO urges that these machines be banned in their entirety on the Olympic National Forest and the Olympic Region of the DNR. This ban would cover all acreage under the auspices of these two management entities, and would include all trails, roads, and other terrain.

Climate Change: What Lies Ahead for Olympic Peninsula?

by Bonnie Phillips

What does OFCO's mission, "protect and restore forest and aquatic ecosystems," really mean at a time when research is pouring out about changes in climate—and thus changes to forests and the fish and wildlife that depend on these forests for their existence? How do we manage for the unknown as we move out of the historical range of variability?

OFCO and the Olympic Natural Resources Center opened the dialogue in our joint co-sponsorship of "Climate Change: Implications for Olympic Peninsula Forest Ecosystems" held on February 23. We put together an impressive array of scientists and managers to take on the big questions. What do we know, what can we predict with some certainty, what don't we know, how do we begin to manage forest ecosystems for resiliency?

The messages from speakers at the Climate Change conference were numerous. The most telling fit right into OFCO's mission. Climate change is bringing more severe and frequent storms, thus adding to the unraveling of watersheds based on past forest management and the huge road system built during the years of heavy logging. Scientists also say that the most resilient forests will be those that are naturally regenerated, not managed plantations. OFCO challenges all sales that log naturally regenerated stands—both from past fires and wind storms. Learning about what to expect in the future makes our mission even more important.

I became interested in climate change and forests in the late 1980s and carried that interest with me as a forest advocate and while in graduate school at the Evergreen State College. I was fortunate to have an assistantship that allowed me to do research and to organize a big conference on all aspects of climate change, in February 2005. But I wasn't satisfied because I was itching to understand what the mission statement of my organization really meant when we may be saving habitat for critters that may no longer live in that habitat.

The most important part of this event, however, was not the range and depth of our speakers—but the incredible diversity of the participants. We were joined by the Mayor of Forks, who welcomed us; Commissioners from Clallam and Jefferson Counties; representatives from the U.S.

Forest Service, U.S. National Parks Service, State Department of Natural Resources, timber industry, and four tribal groups; educators, students, environmental advocacy organizations; and many others. It was clear to me that this was only a first step in a long journey we'll be making together as we seek the best decisions for the land, for the people, and for all who share this priceless ecosystem called the Olympic Peninsula.

To get a full flavor of this conference, visit our website at www.olympicforest.org. You will find a link to all of the Power Point presentations—and also to a "streaming video"—so you can view all of the presentations from your computer.

Timber Group Sues to Lift Protection for Rare Marbled Murrelets

by Jim Scarborough

The American Forest Resource Council (AFRC), a timber industry front group whose mission is to extract as many trees as possible from our public forests, has filed a lawsuit against the federal government in an attempt to lift Endangered Species Act protections from the marbled murrelet. This mysterious seabird, in the same family as puffins, nests in older forests in Western Washington. It is now hanging on by a thread in the lower 48 states and, according to the U.S. Geological Survey, is also on the decline in coastal Alaska and British Columbia.

The murrelet's legally threatened status is the primary reason why the Forest Service no longer designs old-growth timber sales on the Olympic National Forest. Delisting the murrelet would cause tremendous upheaval in the management of national forests across the Pacific Northwest, and could well usher in another chapter in the so-called "war in the woods." OFCO will be monitoring this situation closely. There is great concern that the Bush administration quietly invited this lawsuit for the purpose of later "settling" with AFRC out of court, by way of subsequently delisting the murrelet.

Olympic Forest Coalition
c/o John and Nancy Woolley
1606 East Sequim Bay Road
Sequim, WA 98382

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