

OFCO NEWS

Newsletter of the Olympic Forest Coalition

July 2003

Update

Saving the Dosewallips River:

USFS to Decide on Dosewallips Road Washout Repair; Join OFCO and Friends to Hike Up a Potential New Trail

by *Bonnie Phillips*

The Olympic National Forest faces a major decision over the next several months: whether to rebuild or reroute the road up the Dosewallips River after a major washout, or to close and decommission the road, turning it into a hiker's paradise and closing the gap between two major Wilderness areas, the Buckhorn Wilderness to the north and the Brothers Wilderness to the south. You still have an opportunity to influence this decision and participate with OFCO on a hike along the closed road *cum* trail—go for the day (Saturday, August 9) or a backcountry weekend (Saturday and Sunday, August 9 and 10).

The history of the 2002 flood and the two road re-building alternatives in the Olympic National Forest's draft Environmental Assessment have already been discussed, in the May 2003 OFCO Newsletter. More detailed information can also be found on our web site: www.olympicforest.org. What is exciting now is that OFCO and other friends of a wild Dosewallips River have an opportunity to expand on one of the alternatives the agency is studying: Called Alternative B, this option would decommission the road at the washout and provide an opportunity for a 5.5 mile scenic trail into the Olympic National Park.

There are clearly recreational trade-offs in any decision to repair the road or decommission it. The major issue for OFCO is that both road repair

options are decidedly harmful for threatened salmon and the aquatic ecosystem of this premier river.

What Would Be Lost Recreationally If the Road is Decommissioned: Prior to the washout, there were two campsites for which the road provided access: Elkhorn Campground on the Olympic National Forest (20 sites for motorized vehicles and tents) and the Dosewallips Campground in the Olympic National Park (30 sites for motorized vehicles and tents) at the end of the road. Since the washout, neither campsite is accessible by motorized vehicle. But hikers can still get past the washout. Parallel parking along the road is common and currently appears not to be a safety issue.

Even before the washout, only cars and light pick-up trucks could make it to the Dosewallips Campground because of the very steep grade approaching this point. One of the two alternatives proposed to rebuild the road, the overland route, would also make the Elkhorn Campground unavailable to any vehicle other than cars and pick-ups, again because the road would require a very steep grade at one point. People hiking into the Park would have to walk an extra five plus miles.

What Would Be Gained Recreationally and Ecologically by Closing the Road: The Forest Service offers another option, Alternative B. The Elkhorn Campground would be closed and dis-

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mantled, but backcountry camping would be available; riprap along this section of the river could (and should) be removed, thus aiding the natural restoration of the river. Restoration of natural hill slope hydrology above the washout through ripping and re-contouring of the road grade would be anticipated; reduced vehicular harassment would benefit the valley's imperiled Roosevelt elk herd.

More than five miles of trail would be available along the decommissioned road. While the pattern of usage would indeed change, the area's recreational qualities would be enhanced, not limited, via road termination. The land above the washout amply possesses the recreationist's desire for ruggedly primitive scenery (including old-growth), arguably more visually impressive and enjoyable than the area up-valley of the present Dosewallips trailhead (in the Park, where trees are smaller). There are many spectacular views of the river all along the route, and some splendid small waterfalls across the road. Once inside the Park boundary, the non-motorized visitor may experience the thrilling Dosewallips Falls and its gorge, which is nearly impossible to enjoy and clearly dangerous when automobiles are rushing to and fro along the narrow road.

The Olympic Forest Coalition suggests that the Forest Service also study the possibility of reestablishing the old Dosewallips trail between Lower Jumpoff and Upper Jumpoff on the south side of the river, thus creating a very attractive loop trip in combination with the road-to-trail conversion. Creation of a "Dosewallips Falls Loop" would not only garner rave reviews from outdoor aficionados, but might enhance economic opportunities for Brinnon. More importantly, however, it would demonstrate commitment to the vitality of the natural world, and the vulnerable species within it.

The trail could also be handicapped accessible. Two OFCO Board members, one who must use a wheelchair for more than a minor walk, got the wheelchair past the road washout and walked and wheeled the first mile, to the Elkhorn Campground. Someone with moderately strong arms could independently wheel her/himself or get a little help from a friend (especially in one rather steep section). A great many possibilities for a recreation alternative came to mind even during this simple hike.

What you can do:

- **Write Olympic National Forest**

about your concerns. Support Alternative B, which provides for road closure at the Dosewallips road washout and a road-to-trail conversion above the washout. Ask them to investigate the Olympic Forest Coalition-proposed idea of a Dosewallips Loop Trail that could further benefit the local community and economy. For more information or to make comments, contact: David Craig, District Manager, Olympic National Forest, Hood Canal Ranger District, PO Box 68, Hoodspport, WA 98548, dcraig@fs.fed.us.

- **Visit the Dosewallips River Road.**

This is a lovely destination for a day trip. The turnoff to the Dosewallips River Road is a little over one hour's drive from Olympia. Once on the Road, drive about 10 miles to the road washout. You can walk beyond the damaged road and check for yourself what kind of hiking opportunities there would be with a decommissioned road.

- **Stop in Brinnon (the local community) and make a purchase.** On the way in, or on the way out, stop in Brinnon and buy something from the local merchants; show that you support local communities adjacent to recreation opportunities. OFCO Board members recently dined at the Halfway House in Brinnon, just south of the river; the food was excellent.

- **Join the Olympic Forest Coalition on a Field Trip to the River Road.**

On Saturday and Sunday, August 9 and August 10, we are planning two options for interested people. One is a day hike on Saturday; the other is an overnight hike, camping in the Olympic National Park. If you are interested in this hike or more information on the Dose Road, contact Bonnie Phillips, 456-8793 (Bonnie@olympicforest.org). She will be sending out information on when and where to meet the day of the hike. Please join us!

- **Please Donate Money: Help us Fight for this Alternative.** As a grassroots, volunteer group
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Dismantling the Northwest Forest Plan, Chunk by Chunk: **Latest Casualty Is Protection for Fish and Aquatic Ecosystems**

In the latest attempt to dismantle the Northwest Forest Plan, the U. S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management produced a draft supplemental environmental impact statement (DSEIS), which they claim would “clarify” confusion in the documents for the Plan. Instead of “clarification,” the agencies are seeking one more avenue to gut the Aquatic Conservation Strategy (ACS).

The ACS is a major part of protecting the forest ecosystem within the Northwest Forest Plan. The Bush Administration and the timber industry want to emasculate it because the district and circuit courts have upheld the clear language in the Plan.

The specific issue here relates to the question of whether or not a management activity must meet the nine ACS objectives at the **project** level. Several years ago, the National Marine Fisheries Service (now NOAA Fisheries) maintained that they could, instead, give a blanket biological opinion on a management activity’s compliance with the Endangered Species Act, without examining what was happening at the project level. Environmentalists sued, and the court agreed with them. The intransigence on the part of both the Clinton and Bush

Administrations has led to injunctions on timber sales throughout the region that would affect salmon habitat.

Now the Bush Administration has chosen to “fix” this problem by no longer requiring that the ACS objectives be met at the project level. What difference does this make? We have our own example on the Dosewallips Road Washout. In the current Alternative C, now under consideration by the Olympic National Forest, four out of nine objectives are **not** met at the project level; choosing this alternative would not be legal. Under the new proposal, however, it wouldn’t matter whether objectives are met (or even evaluated!) at the project level, and this alternative could go forward (although there are additional legal issues involved.)

With salmon species at greater risk than ever, climate change raising additional concerns for road washouts and flooding, and funds to decommission roads at a minimum, we need more, not less, protection for our aquatic ecosystems. To read comments to the DSEIS submitted jointly by OFCO and the Olympic Park Associates, please check our web site at www.olympicforest.org.
-- Bonnie Phillips

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we depend on individual donations completely for our efforts. As a volunteer group, our expenses are at a minimum—but we need money to produce handouts, other materials, photos, etc. for our summer outreach program and pay for attorney representation if necessary. **OFCO is a 501(c)(3) organization; all donations are tax deductible. Send checks to Bonnie Phillips, Olympic Forest Coalition, 606 Lilly Road NE #115, Olympia, WA 98506.**

*Forest Watch Needs
You!*
See p. 5 for details.
www.olympicforest.org.

OLYMPIC UPDATE

OFCO and Olympic National Forest Negotiate Settlement on Snow Salmon Timber Sale Appeal

OFCO reported our appeal of the Snow Salmon Timber Sale in our May issue. Thanks to OFCO chair Jim Scarborough, Kevin Geraghty (who joined our appeal as an individual), and Susan Jane Brown, our attorney, we believed we had put together a very solid appeal.

On June 11, OFCO met with Olympic National Forest personnel to negotiate the appeal of the sale. The meeting was, by and large, a productive one. Based on the discussion, the agency appears to comprehend, if not fully agree with, OFCO's concerns regarding both the adverse affects of temporary roads and risks of simplifying naturally diversifying

second growth stands via thinning. At the meeting's conclusion, the agency agreed to drop three additional units from the sale (one of which would have been the primary offender in compromising the integrity of the Mount Zion roadless area) in exchange for withdrawal of the appeal.

The elimination of these units will reduce the acreage of the sale by roughly one-third, while reducing road construction by 2.9 miles. Additionally, as part of the agreement, the Forest Service has invited our co-appellant, Kevin Geraghty, to participate in treatment planning for a fourth unit, which features sensitive botanical characteristics. --BP

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forest conditions. The Forest Watch Field Program was created to organize volunteers interested in this endeavor. The information gathered in the field program will be compiled into a database identifying the condition of as many temporary roads as possible. This information will then be utilized to collaborate with a variety of agencies to promote a healthier forest.

The possibilities of the field program are endless. With continued support from volunteers and government agencies, we can identify and remove culverts, control invasive species and confront other problems in the Olympic National Forest.

The Forest Watch Field Program will hold a series of field trips in September. While the primary focus is research and documentation, these events will provide a great recreational opportunity as well. Each group will be given a few temporary roads to investigate, based on their hiking ability. Some of these roads may be quite rugged and grown over while others may provide a pleasant walking surface through the woods. Volunteers can explore at will and are encouraged to take their time with all the

beautiful sights and sounds of the forest. Interested individuals or parties may participate for a few hours a day or a weekend. Additional trips may be planned based on the availability of the Forest Watch staff. Whatever your skill level may be, we welcome you as a Forest Watch Volunteer.

*Observations?
Experiences in the
Forest?*
Share your info and
ideas with
OFCO
www.olympicforest.org

An Invitation: Combine Fun With Critical Research in the Forest; Forest Watch Needs You

by Rick Darnell

I would have to say there is nothing more enjoyable than walking through the forest, listening to the sounds of a Pileated woodpecker combined with the trickle of a cool mountain stream: a symphony of sight, smell and sound that could be lost forever without careful management.

Forest Watch was created to ensure that demands on the Olympic Peninsula do not imperil this precious resource. By collaborating effectively with the U.S. Forest Service, Forest Watch has been able to address some important ecological issues. But with 632,300 acres of public land, effective monitoring requires a hefty team. OFCO's Forest Watch Program has provided a means of both mobilizing citizens while enjoying the outdoors. By simply walking through the woods with friends and family, volunteers can provide the essential information needed to make effective management decisions. The camaraderie and experience will be sure to last a lifetime.

For over a century our nation has looked to the Olympic Peninsula's forest to nourish its growth. These forests helped build our schools, homes, and businesses and contributed to the mobilization of more than one unfortunate war. As citizens of Washington State we can be proud of the many accomplishments our forests helped secure. But all the activity has taken its toll on the forests.

As most citizens of Washington know, the wildlands of our state are in desperate need of attention. With laws and forest plans designed to mitigate the excessive impacts compiled throughout the many years, the forests of Washington State are on their way to a healthier future. But to realize this vision, the help of private citizens is needed. The Olympic Forest Coalition (OFCO) has addressed this

Join Forest Watch! Sign Up Now For a September Field Trip

For more information please contact Rick Darnell (Forest Watch Coordinator) at rick@olympicforest.org or visit our website at <http://www.olympicforest.org/>, or call Peggy Bruton, 360 866-7165.

Forest Watch Field Trips for September 2003:

- **Sept. 6-7 Hood Canal District South**
- **Sept. 20-21 Pacific Ranger District North**
- **Sept. 27-28 Pacific Ranger District South**
- **Oct. 11-12 Hood Canal District North**

issue by creating the Forest Watch program, designed to help achieve this vision of a healthier forest.

Among the first goals identified was reducing the excessive impacts of logging roads in the National Forests. With assistance from the Olympic National Forest Service staff, the Forest Watch program has begun the arduous task of identifying and understanding specific roadways that cause this unnecessary harm. The initial focus is on temporary roads. The Forest Watch program plans to catalog these roads and assess positive or negative aspects of each in terms forest health.

To gather the extensive information required, volunteers will be needed to explore and document

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Please Join OFCO's
Forest Watch
www.olympicforest.org
 Sign up for a
 Fun/Work Trip in
 September or October
 See Schedule on p. 5

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