

Dosewallips Washout Grows

by Tim McNulty, Olympic Park Associates
December 2007

As late autumn rains swell the Dosewallips River, the elk hunker down, and salmon and steelhead continue their upriver migrations. But the multi-agency report on the fate of the Dosewallips Road has once more experienced delay. Apparently, there is no easy way to present three bad choices for road management while refusing to consider the only one that makes sense: convert the road beyond the washout to a trail.



photos by Nancy Woolley

The Forest Service, National Park Service, and federal highway administrators have already announced that the draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) on repairing the Dosewallips Road will not look at the option of trail conversion. The rock and hard-place options the agencies have left are reconstructing the road through critical spawning habitat in the river or building a bypass road up an excessively steep side hill and through a spectacular grove of ancient forest (which has come to be known as the Polly Dyer Grove).



*Polly Dyer (in foreground), Bonnie Phillips and Tim McNulty
visiting the Polly Dyer Grove*

Both options would access two primitive campgrounds (that are well-used now by hikers and bicyclists), and two trailheads. Neither option makes much sense. But both reflect a Bush administration obsession with motorized access coupled with an utter disregard for the environment, wildland protections, or federally listed species. Threatened chinook salmon, steelhead, northern spotted owls and marbled murrelets all come into play in this decision.

Unfortunately, what won't come into play in the DEIS is a sustainable solution for the Dosewallips Valley, one that would involve a new trailhead, parking area, and planning for a downvalley campground. A similar solution for the Carbon River Valley at Mount Rainier received strong support from park users and local communities. The Dosewallips Road DEIS is now expected in January. Olympic Park Associates, OFCO, and other organizations are committed to a sensible and sustainable solution for this stunning wild river valley.

Upon release of the Dosewallips DEIS, OFCO will be alerting each of our members with updated info on what's at stake and how to officially register your much-needed comments for the record. It's crucial that we do everything in our power to prevent degradation of the Dosewallips River and irresponsible road construction through the Polly Dyer Grove. There is a better way—by converting the upper road to a trail.

To request a copy of the DEIS, in CD or print format, please email:

Tim Davis, US Forest Service

comments-pacificnorthwest-olympic@fs.fed.us