



FIELDREPORT

Northwest Region | Autumn 2013



Taking Care of Our Best Idea

By Representative Derek Kilmer

As someone who was born and raised on the Olympic Peninsula, I have a great appreciation for how access to the natural wonders of the Pacific Northwest shapes us. The main jewel of our region's natural treasures is Olympic National Park.

Proclaimed as one of the first ever national monuments through the 1909 Antiquities Act and then designated as a national park 75 years ago, Olympic National Park is one of the most beloved and visited national parks in the country.

The park combines three different landscapes into one experience—an extensive old-growth rain forest, alpine mountains topped with glaciers, and miles of untarnished Pacific Ocean coast. In recognition of these areas, the World Heritage Convention designated Olympic National Park a World Heritage Site and the United National Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization heralded the park as an International Biosphere Reserve.

And it's right here in our backyard.

It can be easy to forget just how lucky we are to live near Olympic National Park.

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Tough Times for the Parks, But New Opportunities on the Horizon

By David Graves

Mount Rainier's Ohanapechosh Visitor Center is closed. Olympic's Obstruction Point road never saw a plow, and remained closed until it melted out in late July. And Crater Lake's Lost Creek Campground is closed to this day.

Getting out and enjoying our national parks this summer became a little more difficult than usual due to the impacts from sequestration. The 5% across-the-board cut hit national park budgets especially hard considering three previous years of reduced funding. For example, Mount Rainier National Park has absorbed cuts totaling more than \$500,000 since 2010—all before the sequester. The National Park Service budget is already a sliver of federal expenditures—comprising 1/14th of 1% of the national budget. Furthermore, in today's dollars, the budget of the National Park Service is \$465 million less, or 15% below what it was 10 years ago. This is not sustainable.

However, it's not all gray skies for the national parks. In early June, National Parks Conservation Association helped Congressman Dave Reichert obtain the signatures of 223 members of Congress on a letter to the President expressing interest in collaborating on a centennial initiative for national parks. The letter showed broad bipartisan support for revitalizing our

national parks leading up to the centennial of the National Park Service in 2016.

Also, on June 14, 2013, the House of Representatives passed the National Defense Authorization Act, which included an amendment to create the Manhattan Project National Historical Park. This newest park unit includes areas in Oak Ridge, Tennessee;



Los Alamos, New Mexico; and our very own B Reactor in the Hanford Site, near Richland, Washington—all of which tell the story of the building of the first atomic bomb. NPCA has worked for several years with Congressman Doc Hastings and members of Congress from Tennessee and New Mexico to make this park a reality.

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Top: Roosevelt Elk grazes in the lush Olympic National Park. ©Tashka/Istockphoto. **Above:** The B Reactor at the Hanford site, near Richland, Washington. Public Domain

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TELL US WHAT YOU THINK!

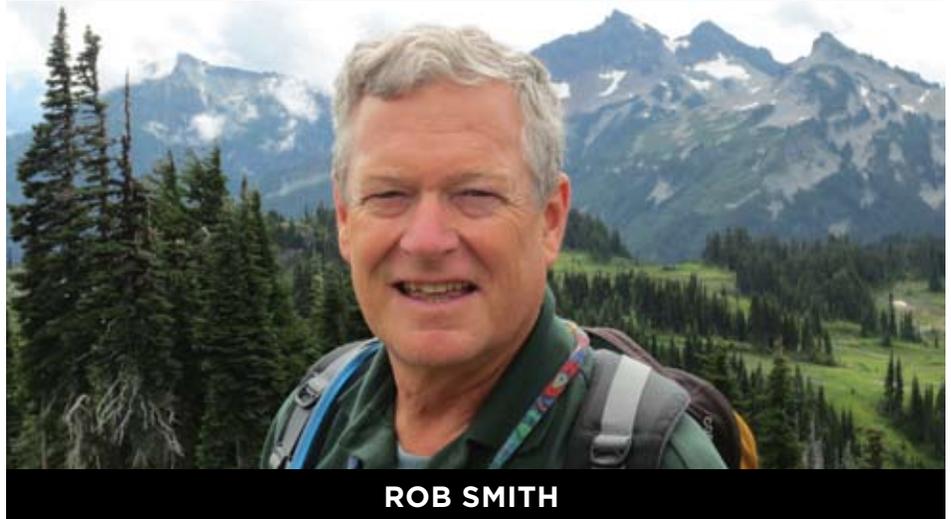
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REFLECTIONS FROM THE REGIONAL DIRECTOR



ROB SMITH

One of my most vivid outdoor experiences was a three-day hike along the shore of Olympic National Park when I was a teen living in Seattle. My high-school classmates and I walked for miles as the tide allowed, saw no one else outside of our own group, and stayed up all night in the rain with a fire so hot it consumed driftwood logs we pulled out of the pounding surf. It was fabulous.

Getting into the outdoors was just something we did, as most everyone did, growing up in Oregon and Washington. Our family was always going to explore some new place, and frequently they were units of the National Park System. Since moving away for many years before returning to the Northwest, I'm reminded of how important those kinds of trips are and how important our park system is in making those experiences available.

My wife and two boys and I have camped and hiked all over the country, visiting battlefields, historic sites, and, of course, many of our great natural landscapes. It's been a solid foundation for appreciating America and the natural world.

So that's why I'm so excited to come to NPCA's Northwest Office, to return to where I grew up and join the team supporting our great park system. I've spent many years working

for other conservation groups, primarily in the Southwest. I've always been involved in lands and park protection, from my first Congressional hearing as a citizen advocating for new parks and wilderness in Alaska—remember “Our last great first chance”?—to fighting to restore natural quiet and clean air at the Grand Canyon.

The job of renewing our commitment to the parks is never done. And the park system won't be complete until we've secured the landscapes and wildlife that define this country, and have captured the varied stories of people who have shaped our country's history. With the parks' centennial only three years away, now is an excellent time to begin planning for the second hundred years of our National Park System. NPCA is generating ideas for new parks and monuments; focusing on the restoration of native wildlife such as salmon, wolves and wolverines; working toward a reliable and adequate source of funding for our park system, and building a new and broader constituency of park enthusiasts for the next generation.

I'm pleased to be joining you in that work in the Northwest, and I welcome your thoughts and involvement in safeguarding and adding to our National Park System, still “the best idea we ever had.”



Tell President Obama and Congress to protect our parks and our shared heritage—and the family vacations and local economies that depend on them—by finding a more balanced solution to our deficit problem. **Thank you for speaking up to protect the parks. Contact your legislatures and take action at www.npca.org/get-involved**

Taking Care of Our Best Idea

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Growing up in Port Angeles, raising my family in this region, and now having the opportunity to represent an area this beautiful and meaningful in the House of Representatives is an incredible honor.

It's a special place to live and to raise a family. There isn't a summer of my childhood that didn't involve going up to Hurricane Ridge trying to count how many deer and marmots we'd see or trekking out to the Hoh Rain Forest for a hike. I take pride in the fact that I am able to take my two girls to some of the most pristine and unique wilderness areas in our country.

But in addition to appreciating this national treasure, it's also our responsibility to ensure we are good stewards of the land to protect it for future generations. In our neck of the woods, our identity is directly tied to the quality of our environmental resources. It's part of our DNA. I want my girls to enjoy all of what the Northwest has to offer just as I have been able to. After all, our children are only as healthy as the air they breathe,



the water they drink, and the earth we'll pass on to them.

I'm particularly concerned about the ongoing effects that the across-the-board cuts known as sequestration will have on our national parks. These cuts have hit our parks right at the height of tourist season to the tune of \$110 million slashed from park

budgets throughout the country. National parks like Olympic face closed campgrounds, limited hours of operation at visitor centers, delayed maintenance and repairs, and, as a consequence, reduced visitor opportunities.

This hurts the economy of our entire region and could do permanent damage to the parks that mean so much to our local and national heritage.

As a member of the bipartisan National Parks Caucus, I strongly believe Congress can and should work across party lines to ensure our national parks have the resources available to make sure they are safe and clean for visitors while maintaining the natural integrity of the landscapes and wildlife.

The first step is for Congress to get its act together and replace sequestration with a balanced, bipartisan, long-term budget. We need to move beyond cutting funding for our parks and toward thinking about how we can make smart investments to encourage visitors from every background to come, explore, and enjoy these wonderful public spaces.

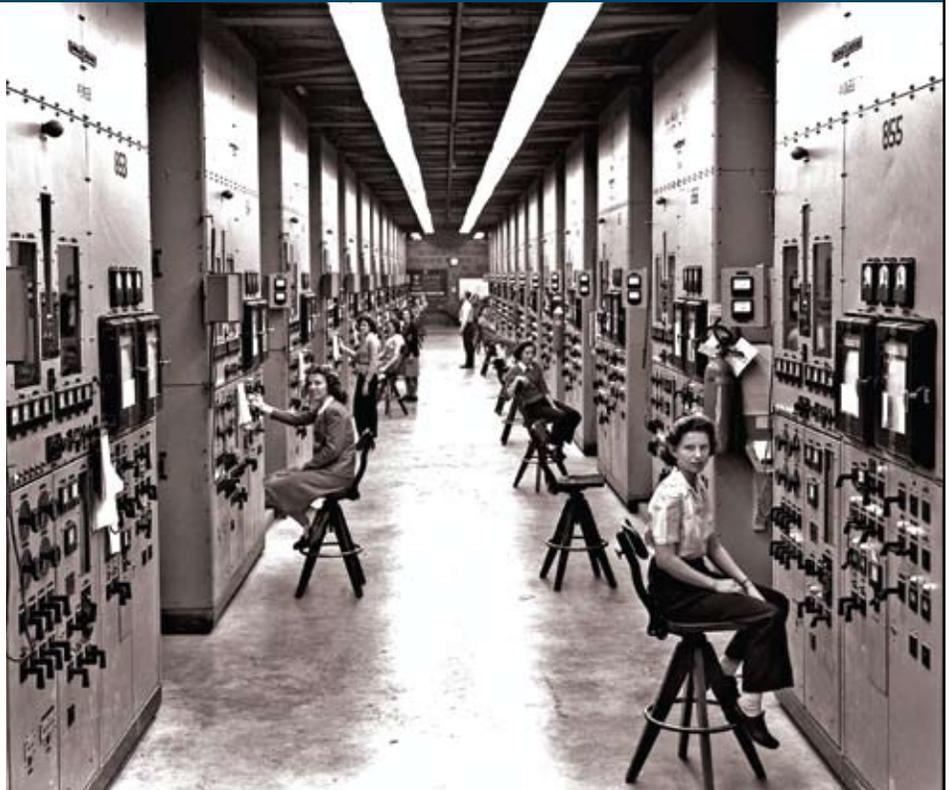
Tough Times for the Parks, But New Opportunities on the Horizon

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We believe that this national park will allow visitors to consider the project's many ethical, cultural, and scientific implications. This is not a park to celebrate the creation of atomic weapons, but to put into context the impacts, both positive and negative, that resulted from splitting of the atom.

Finally, NPCA has experienced our own changes. Rob Smith recently became the new Regional Director of the Northwest Regional office of NPCA (read more about Rob on page 2). NPCA is also in the midst of hiring a new president following the departure of Tom Kiernan, who led NPCA for the last 15 years. These changes, along with the adoption of a new strategic plan, will shape NPCA's efforts to revitalize and enhance the National Park System in time to celebrate their centennial in 2016.

Right: Calutron operators working at their panels in the Y-12 plant at Oak Ridge TN during World War II. ©Ed Westcott/American Museum of Science





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Member Spotlight

ROBYN GRAD, Seattle, WA, has been enjoying our national parks with her family for years. Her passion and enjoyment led her to NPCA and with our more than 15,000 members in the northwest, she is helping make a difference for our national parks. Each of us has a story and reason for loving the national parks, here is Robyn's.

Q. What was your most transformational or memorable experience in a park? My most transformational national park experience was reaching the summit of Mt. Rainier—it proved to me I could do anything I set my mind to doing—plus the view was incredible! My most memorable experience was our New Year's family vacation to Yellowstone organized by

NPCA—every time we rounded a corner we were treated to another new, even more amazing sight—the wolf pack hunting elk in the Lamar Valley was one highlight.

Q. Do you have a favorite park? My favorite park is the one I last visited! In the past year I've been to Mt. Rainier, Zion, Denali, Acadia, the National Mall and Pu'uuhonau O Honaunau.

Q. What do you like best about National Parks? What I like best is that every national park site is a unique treasure and provides an opportunity for new experiences.

Q. What led you to become involved with NPCA? I support NPCA because it's so important to preserve America's historical, cultural and natural wonders for the enjoyment and education of future generations.



Special Opportunity! Multiply the Impact of Your Gift

We need your help to advance NPCA's programs, and right now, The Kendeda Fund will match your gift one-to-one! The caveat?

- You must make a first-time donation of \$1,000 to \$10,000, or
- You increase any gift within this range. The Kendeda Fund will match the full amount of the gift, not just the increment of the increase! Visit: npca.org/kendeda2

NWRO CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Bear Research in the North Cascades Thursday, November 7, 6:30pm

Join NPCA, Woodland Park Zoo, Vital Ground, and Western Wildlife Outreach for an evening reception and presentation from bear researchers Robert Long, PhD and Bill Gaines, PhD as they discuss ongoing research on grizzly bears and black bears in the North Cascades. For more information contact David Graves at dgraves@npca.org or (206) 903-1645. RSVP required.

Coastal Cleanup Saturday, April 19, 2014

NPCA will be leading a group of volunteers to the coast of Olympic National Park for this annual event to remove debris, keeping our marine wildlife safe and our coast clean. All day event. For

more information, contact Shannon Brundle at sbrundle@npca.org or 206.903.1444.

National Trails Day Saturday, June 7, 2014

NPCA will lead a group at North Cascades National Park for the 20th anniversary of America's largest trail celebration-National Trails Day. All-day event. For more information, contact Shannon Brundle at sbrundle@npca.org or 206.903.1444.

National Public Lands Day September 27, 2014

NPCA co-sponsors National Public Lands Day at Mount Rainier National Park for a day when we give back to the park. For more information, contact Shannon Brundle at sbrundle@npca.org or 206.903.1444.



For details and more information on these events, visit www.npcap.org/nwevents

Top: Robyn Grad hiking at Mount Rainier.
Above: Volunteers removing polluting debris from Ruby Beach ©Shannon Brundle

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