



FIELDREPORT

Northwest Region | Autumn 2015



National Parks for Future Generations

By Senator Patty Murray



As a U.S. Senator from Washington state, one of my most important jobs is to protect our natural resources and make sure that our children—and our children's children—can experience the splendor of America's beauty. That is why I'm proud to fight to protect our national parks and other public lands, and help conserve what makes our state so unique.

With the support of people like you, Washington state has had some major successes in public land protection in recent years, and I was proud to create the Wild Sky Wilderness, the first new wilderness in Washington state in more than 20 years. More recently, my legislation to expand the Alpine Lakes Wilderness was signed into law last year, making even more high-quality recreation opportunities available to millions of Washingtonians and protecting intact habitat for fish and wildlife. While not a part of the National Park System, this land, habitat, and recreation opportunity frequently crosses federal management boundaries, and I believe it is especially important for there to be robust habitat connections as we work to recover endangered species across the state.

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Park on the Edge The Northwest's Most Popular Park Continues to Face Funding Challenges

By Braeden Van Deynze

For more than a decade, the National Park System has been chronically underfunded, and the effects can be seen in our own backyard in the Northwest. Managers at Olympic National Park projected they would need \$13.3 million to fully maintain and operate the park in 2014, but Congress, entrance and usage fees, and generous donations were only able to provide \$7.7 million, leaving the park a startling 42 percent underfunded.

The effects of funding shortages can be observed throughout the park.

- Along the Elwha River, the revegetation of a dry lakebed left behind by a historic dam removal project will run out of funding eight years short of the time it is projected to become self-sustaining.
- Trails along the weather-beaten Wilderness Coast go without repair for years as an understaffed trails crew reaches less than 75 percent of its projects annually.
- The recently renovated Hoh Rainforest Visitor Center remains staffed with only one ranger most of the year and without any exhibits, despite being one of the most popular and iconic attractions in the park.

- The road to the winter recreation area atop Hurricane Ridge is only plowed and opened three days a week, greatly diminishing opportunities for visitors to enjoy the most popular scenic vista in the park and the ability of local businesses to generate consistent traffic during the off-season.

Olympic National Park is the Northwest's most visited park unit and a key driver of economic activity on the Olympic Peninsula. In 2014, 3.2 million recreational visits generated \$264 million in spending in

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Top: Kayaking on the Elwha River ©John Gussman **Above:** Aging resources at Olympic National Park @Braeden Van Deynze **Left:** Senator Patty Murray

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NORTHWEST CORNER BY NW REGIONAL DIRECTOR ROB SMITH

A few months ago I had the opportunity to be part of the National Park Service's "Fundamentals" training class for park employees seeking a broader understanding of their agency and its work. Almost every exercise included operating within the constraints of an inadequate budget.



progress has been made as Congressional appropriators have begun trying to find more money. However, across the board "sequester" cuts for all agencies are still the law.

To help make the case for stronger park funding, the Northwest Office brought on a Gonzaga University

The posed problems forced choices between fixing facilities, caring for resources or providing for visitor safety. Too many situations demanded favoring the short-term patch over the longer term fix because there wasn't enough money to do the right thing even if it was cost effective over the long haul.

After years of seeing their funding and buying power erode, the NPS is training itself to survive on a skeletal budget and make the best of a set of limited and poor options. Is that any way for our National Park System to enter its 2016 Centennial year?

NPCA has been making the case for restoring the NPS budget for several years, and some

economics graduate and doctoral candidate, Braeden van Deynze, to develop a report on funding needs for the Northwest's popular Olympic National Park. Check out his article in this field report. Our hope is that talking about this issue with specific places, consequences and dollars will contribute towards breaking through. We use tools like this to help supporters advocate for much-needed reinvestment in our national parks through our "Find Your Voice" campaign, NPCA's push to celebrate the NPS Centennial through engaging more people to demonstrate their support for "America's best idea."

Above: Rob Smith at Mount Rainier
© Shannon Brundle



WE ARE EXCITED TO INTRODUCE YOU TO OUR NEWEST TEAM MEMBER

Graham Taylor will be spending much of his time out in the field working with our partners and advocates as NWRO's Field Representative. He can be reached at gtaylor@npca.org.

Find Your Voice

America has more than 400 national parks, protecting some of our most important cultural and historical sites and our most iconic landscapes. We hike their trails, boat their waters, wander their museums and learn about some of the most pivotal moments in our country's history. Yet these places are facing very real challenges, from encroaching development to climate change to years of underfunding. And they need our help.

National Parks Conservation Association has launched Find Your Voice—an initiative to encourage people to be both

national park visitors and national park advocates. Through community service events, speaker series and advocacy trainings, NPCA is working to educate, engage and empower people to speak up for America's favorite places to they can thrive well into their next century.



For more info about the initiative and activities near you, please visit FindYourVoice.camp.

Army Helicopters and Navy Jets Put our Parks at Risk

By Graham Taylor

Our stunningly beautiful National Parks in the Northwest attract thousands and provide an unmatched mosaic of recreational opportunities close to major population centers. These places are becoming more valuable with time, as opportunities for silence, solitude and reflection become scarcer.

Meanwhile, it is clear that the military is focusing more on the Pacific Northwest, including some of our most treasured landscapes and national parks. The Navy has a poorly planned proposal to expand F-18 Growler training over the Olympic Peninsula and Olympic National Park. The Army has proposed to expand its operations with new helicopter training areas bordering North Cascades National Park and in Southwest Washington.

On the peninsula, Navy jets would fly over the Hoh rainforest and west coast wilderness, places that represent the heart and soul of Washington State. If implemented, there will be an enormous addition of noise in our quietest areas. Climbers and hikers have reported rock fall caused by jet vibrations. Horseback riders have been dismounted by startled horses. Hikers have seen jets fly much lower than recommended.

If fast flying jets are already creating these impacts, low and slow flying helicopters are likely to be even more problematic, especially for wildlife. The Army's initial proposal has included seven landing zones in the North



...veterans return from war and use our National Parks and wildlands to heal the wounds left over from their rigorous service.

Cascades, with one positioned in the Alpine Lakes Wilderness and another landing site just east of Highway 20, the scenic portal into North Cascades National Park. Both visitors deep inside and on the periphery of the park are increasingly likely to be disturbed by the Army's proposal to make these areas available for training 24 hours a day, year round.

Beyond cleaning our air and water, wild lands are homes to a myriad of species and have become natural havens for people. As we learn more about PTSD and other impacts from trauma, we are finding that veterans return from war and use our National Parks and wildlands to heal the wounds left over

from their rigorous service.

As we monitor these military training proposals, NPCA continues to encourage public comment, and dialog with our Congressional delegation and the decision makers with the Department of Defense. NPCA applauds Representative Derek Kilmer for trying to bring together the Navy, the National Park Service and members of the public to talk about reducing impacts around training Navy pilots. Please thank Rep. Kilmer by calling his Tacoma office at (253) 272-3515.

Above: Hiker in North Cascades mountains
©Galyna Andrushko | Dreamstime.com

Park on the Edge

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gateway communities such as Port Angeles, Forks, and Sequim, creating over 3,600 jobs. Tax dollars appropriated to the National Park Service are critical investments in creating sustainable and vibrant economic opportunities in more rural areas that often need the most help.

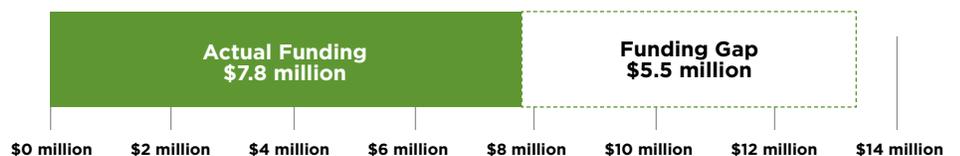
As the 100th birthday of the National Park Service approaches in 2016, Congress has an opportunity to reverse years of fiscal neglect of America's favorite places. Olympic National Park's struggles are representative of similar challenges faced throughout the country in the National Park System. Filling

the \$5.5 million funding gap at Olympic National Park and providing additional funding to address deferred projects will ensure that the park's natural treasures are protected for future generations while allowing local communities to leverage their greatest outdoor resources to attract businesses, entrepreneurs and skilled workers

that help stimulate economic development.

NPCA has created an in-depth report highlighting the ways that inadequate funding has challenged Olympic National Park's ability to protect its natural treasures, serve visitors from around the world, and act as an economic driver for the region.

Funding Sources at Olympic National Park





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MEET OUR MEMBERS

By Paul Balle

We love hearing directly from our supporters about why they support NPCA. For several years,

Chris and Bill Marks (married 44 years) have been annual donors via Seattle Foundation's Give Big campaign (which provides an added match). According to Chris, they jointly chose to support NPCA because "we were looking for a way to financially support our National Parks and felt that this well-established organization was the best way to direct our donation." Chris grew up in a small town in central Illinois and Bill in Chicago. Together, they began exploring the new landscapes and wild spaces found in our National Parks. Today, Chris and Bill have lived in Washington State for 22 years, and are now retired. They love being in the mountains, knowing the flora and fauna, geology and topography, and value knowledge gained on

the trail. We asked, why should others support NPCA? Chris replies that "the planet faces enormous environmental pressures that, left unchecked, threaten human existence as we know it...a willingness to invest in the environment begins with an intimate understanding and deep appreciation of the natural world. We believe that the National Park system—which NPCA advocates for and supports—is the surest way to build those relationships and in so doing assure a healthy and vital world for generations to come."

**Consider NPCA at year-end.
Go to npca.org/donate**



Chris and Bill Marks ©Chris Marks

Call for Volunteers!

To learn more about exciting
volunteer opportunities with NPCA
go to npca.org/events

Right: Volunteers at Olympic National Park
(beach) © Shannon Brundle



National Parks for Future Generations

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Our National Park System tells more than just the natural history of our country; it also preserves and tells our shared built history as well, which is why I worked for years with my colleagues in Congress to create the Manhattan Project National Historical Park. This park, with sites at Hanford, Washington, Los Alamos, New Mexico, and Oak Ridge, Tennessee, tells an important part of our nation's history. The sites in Hanford, including the B Reactor, commemorate the important role Washington state played in World War II. The Manhattan Project National Historical Park is a testament to American innovation,

dedication, and ingenuity, and I was proud to support its creation.

We must do more than just create new parks, however, and so I was proud to break through the gridlock and dysfunction last Congress to reach a budget deal with Republicans that kept our parks open, rolled back the devastating automatic budget cuts, and restored important funding to so many of our national priorities, including wildlife, conservation, and National Park efforts. I am currently hard at work to build on that bipartisan budget deal and restore some certainty for our shared priorities for years to come, because without that certainty, investments you and I care about, including the protection and enhance-

ment of our public lands, could be at risk.

The National Parks Conservation Association and all of you are great partners in my work to protect national treasures such as Mount Rainier, the North Cascades, Olympic National Park, and the Manhattan Project. I am able to fight for investments in our public lands and for future preservation efforts because of your hard work on the ground. Thank you for your efforts, and please know that I will continue to be a voice in Washington, D.C. to leave future generations a healthier and stronger country than the one we inherited.

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