



Goats in Olympic National Park *Bob and Ira Spring*

## **Wilderness for Olympic and Mt. Rainier National Parks**

*Polly Dyer*

The Wilderness Act finally comes to the Olympics and Mt. Rainier in 1974—at least the studies were made, the public hearings were held.

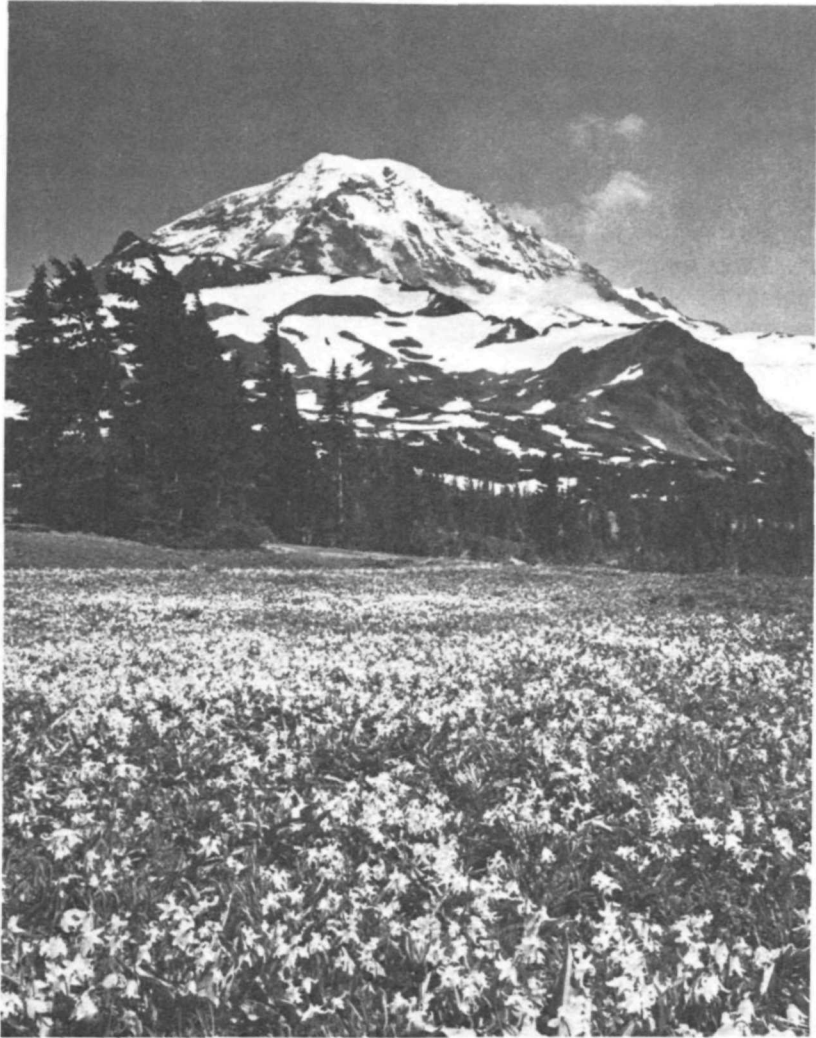
September 3, 1974, marks the end of the ten years allowed the Secretary of Interior to make Wilderness recommendations for areas under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service when the Act became law in 1964. (Areas added later to the National Park System generally have separate provisions for Wilderness study in the legislation as provided in the Act establishing the North Cascades National Park Complex in 1968.

The 1974 deadline is the reason for the public hearings in the Northwest for Olympic National Park and Mt. Rainier National Park, in late 1973 and early 1974. The public response will be reviewed, analyzed, and a determination made by the National Park Service as to whether and where to make changes in the Wilderness proposals to be submitted to the President and thence to Congress.

In anticipation of Wilderness classification under the Wilderness Act, during 1969-70 The Mountaineers prepared and submitted detailed recommendations to the Planning Team of Mt. Rainier National Park. During that same period the club adopted the specific proposals for Olympic National Park prepared by the Olympic Park Associates.

Conservationists took heart from the over-all sensitive planning by the National Park Service for Olympic and Mt. Rainier when the studies and recommendations were released in the latter half of 1973. These contain several serious threats, however, whereby prime park wilderness would be eliminated from protection of the Wilderness Act. It is hoped the otherwise demonstrated sensitivity might mean reconsideration in favor of wilderness.

Basically good Wilderness designations are proposed, no new roads are to be considered, and results of past grievous mistakes in Mt. Rainier are recommended for rehabilitation before it is too late.



Spray Park, Mount Rainier National Park *Bob and Ira Spring*

Only by eradicating the road to Mowich Lake (as proposed by The Mountaineers in 1969) can the damage to the fragile surroundings of the lake caused by automobiles and too many people all at once be arrested and the terrain healed. Elimination of the road also will reduce the impact of overuse in Spray Park's alpine meadows. Returning part of the West Side road to a natural state with a trail is a good beginning but, as proposed in The Mountaineers' 1969 report, it would be preferable to close that road in the vicinity of Tahoma Creek and let it all revert and be included as Wilderness.

An outstanding proposal of the National Park people is that of extending the coastal area of Olympic National Park northward to protect the remaining seven and one-half miles of roadless coast south of the Makah Indian Reservation. The inclusion of the Point of the Arches and Shi Shi Beach, together with the classification of the coast inside the park without roads as Wilderness, is truly forward-looking.

If there were ample space, many of the excellent statements from the Wilderness Studies and Master Plan should be quoted here. Praise for the National Park Service can't be too great and reference should be made to maps for areas it proposes be classified as Wilderness under the Wilderness Act. All of these have been endorsed by The Mountaineers and many others. The Mountaineer Library has copies of the official Master Plans and Wilderness Studies by the National Park Service for Mt. Rainier National Park and Olympic National Park; also available are copies of the Environmental Statements for each, together with copies of the transcripts of the testimony received orally for the Wilderness proposals. In addition, there are copies of the 1969 "Recommendations for Future Development of Mt. Rainier National Park" prepared by The Mountaineers, the 1969 Olympic National Park Recommendations of the Olympic Park Associates and the statements from both The Mountaineers and Associates submitted to the National Park Service during and after the hearings.

Serious eliminations from wilderness, as proposed by the National Park Service, need to be examined for the loss would be substantial for both parks. Future piecemeal developers could consider areas without legal Wilderness status as earmarked for developments, even though present personnel say they will be managed as natural areas.

The largest omissions in both Mt. Rainier and Olympic are set aside for future studies for potential experiments with tramways. Some 26,800 acres around Mt. Angeles in Olympic National Park are



Nurse Log, Olympic National Park *Bob and Ira Spring*

thus threatened; in Mt. Rainier an approximately five-mile wide excision would leave vulnerable the slopes from White River to Sunrise. In both cases the tramway dreams are partly based on hopes the existing roads could be obliterated. But, it is also conceded scars of the present Hurricane Ridge and Sunrise highways are of such magnitude it may take a century or more to heal. Alternate plans for visitor access to Sunrise and Hurricane Ridge call for minibuses or larger similar surface transportation on the existing roads in lieu of huge numbers of private automobiles. (All of this, of course, was drafted before gasoline tanks became emptier, when park travelers may increasingly wish to turn to park-operated buses.)

Of those testifying in opposition to tramways during the public hearings, a freelance writer, Emilie Martin, expressed the general public sentiment: "I cannot concur with omitting the Sunrise Ridge area from wilderness status. A tramway to be studied for that area would only duplicate Crystal Mountain's summertime chair lift less than 20 miles away by road. Currently, there are no roads, powerlines, or special use lands in this area, but some delightful day hikes. It fully qualifies for wilderness today, hence should be so designated. This would give assurance that the White River drainage remains primitive and undeveloped."

A similar statement could apply equally to the Mt. Angeles area of Olympic.

That Mountaineers find tramways an undesirable intrusion is evident from past actions of the Board of Trustees: Postions were adopted in 1927, 1928, and again in 1954 opposing tramway proposals for Mt. Rainier, as well as joining opponents of tramways on Mt. Hood in 1928 and the Matterhorn in 1952.

Other proposed Wilderness deletions appear to be based on general National Park Service policy. Boundaries are set back from existing roads either along section lines or about one-quarter to one-half mile endangering the physical ground. Doug Scott put that in perspective at the Longmire hearing: ". . . it is absolutely essential that the roadside boundaries be revised to bring them down to the right-of-way of the road. . . A section line isn't a natural thing. . . . Where there is a lousy wilderness boundary, you only protect half of it. A road is a feature of the landscape. It's something easy to find and easy to enforce . . . and after all, what is the most threatened wilderness area in this park? It is the wilderness closest to the road. And, [the road's] charm is because it is a wilderness road, and the boundary ought to recognize that right down to the road itself. . . ."

The non-wilderness enclaves for hostels deep inside the Wilderness of the Olympics and the Paradise-to-Camp Muir corridor omitted from Mt. Rainier's Wilderness are based on similar premises: large numbers of people are there at one time, buildings are needed beyond the minimum allowed, and it lacks the solitude some expect and want in wilderness. During the Olympic hearings the proposed hostel enclaves were almost unanimously opposed as a violent intrusion on the surrounding wilderness and in themselves invited concentrations of people. After the universal dismay expressed, it is doubted the National Park Service will keep them in the plan and the 20-acre proposed holes have a better chance of coming under the Wilderness Act along with the surrounding country.

Objections to leaving the route to and site of Camp Muir out of Wilderness were broadly based, too. Willi Unsoeld put forth the views of many when he outlined the possible infiltration of the area by snow cats, railroads, and tramways. At the Tacoma hearings, he also advocated adequate, but minimal provision for shelter at Camp Muir for individuals and guided parties alike.

Apart from the specific proposals for each of these parks, questions are asked: What about the timber industry and chambers of commerce on the Olympic Peninsula and their years of trying to get the remaining old growth forests of Olympic National Park? These groups combined into what they term the Olympic Peninsula Heritage Council, opposed to all but the center "scenic portion of the high country" for Wilderness. This effectively leaves out the forests. One of the forest industry speakers at Port Angeles asserted that he knew of no timber company in the state which had designs on timber in the park. However, a reporter interviewed the President of the Olympic Park Associates in October, 1973, indicated that a less publicized goal of the anti-wilderness chambers of commerce and timber interests seems to eventually leave the virgin forests within Olympic National Park in a status where they could be more easily removed in the future. For those who recall the battles to keep the loggers out of this park, a statement circulated by the Olympic Peninsula Heritage Council can easily be interpreted to mean just that; in seeking support to keep Wilderness to the high country and the lowland country out of the National Wilderness Preservation System the circular concluded: "Once it is designated as Wilderness, that's the ball game. We have to try and get this . . . reduced."

The Mountaineers and many others are firm in their stand that the wild forests will be best protected under the Wilderness Act. For a

review of the battles to preserve Olympic National Park's boundaries, see the 1959 and 1966 issues of "The Mountaineer." Changes in thinking have come to the Peninsula, too, exemplified by the strong stand in support of the park's wilderness taken by the students of Port Angeles High School, where 96.4% of 969 students surveyed favored the wilderness plan of the National Park Service for Olympic.

#### ADJACENT LANDS:

Roadless, undeveloped areas adjoin both Olympic and Mt. Rainier National parks in the abutting National Forests. These "de facto wildernesses" are under study by the U.S. Forest Service for their ultimate fate as consumable, multiple uses or retention as wilderness.

In the Olympic National Forest, most of the remaining wild lands were once Primitive Areas established in the 1930's as a counter attack to oppose the establishment of Olympic National Park. By 1938 the park was a fact, and eventually those parts of the Primitive Areas not included in the park were reopened by the Forest Service for commercial operations. In the 1972 Forest Service inventory of remaining roadless, undeveloped areas on the National Forests, such "de facto" wilderness still adjoined Olympic National Park. Parts of those adjoining the park's eastern boundary have been proposed as Wilderness Candidate Study Areas by the Forest Service, with additional areas around the Gray Wolf and adjacent to the southeast boundary also proposed by conservation groups. Those to the south along the eastern and western corners of the park have been rejected for potential wilderness classification by the Forest Service, but wilderness enthusiasts on the Olympic Peninsula as well as from Puget Sound are trying to change this decision. No formal proposals have been advanced to include these in the park, and it is generally felt that Wilderness under Forest Service management can be satisfactory. The roadless areas adjoining the park to the west and north are being recommended for further study, but without formal action at this time.

The story is somewhat different for the lands adjoining Mt. Rainier National Park. The North Cascades Study Team in 1966 recommended addition of the Tatoosh Range to the park. This is now being studied jointly by the National Park Service and U. S. Forest Service, but a formal recommendation to include it in the park and to classify it as Wilderness at the same time as legislation is introduced for the Park Wilderness has not been made by the agencies. The Moun-



taineers and other organizations recommended such addition and Wilderness status be made at that time to include all of the roadless area, including that omitted from the Forest Service's inventory.

The Cougar Lakes area is also under study by the U. S. Forest Service as to its final use. The Mountaineers, North Cascades Conservation Council, and Sierra Club and, more recently the Cougar Lakes Wilderness Alliance, have sought Wilderness protection for it. A number of people feel that where the Cougar Lakes wilderness is physically a natural part of Mt. Rainier's environs, it should be under the uniform administration of Mt. Rainier National Park. This is an area of alpine country, where the Pacific Crest Trail is at times in the park, at times in the National Forest. A proposed boundary between the park-caliber Cougar Lakes Wilderness to be within Mt. Rainier National Park and a hunting-caliber Cougar Lakes Wilderness to be administered by the Forest Service is shown on the map. The sections proposed for Forest Service administered are not less precious as Wilderness, but the influence of Mt. Rainier is less and in it traditional hunting can continue.

Adjacent to the northeast boundary of the park the Clearwater de facto wilderness is partly separated from the park by a logged-over area and associated roads. Field trips have revealed this area to have exceptional natural features in charming wilderness surroundings. It is all being recommended for addition to the park as classified Wilderness, including the logged section to be allowed to revert to a natural state.

The remainder of the adjoining lands have been denuded of old growth forests and are riddled with logging roads: north, in the vicinity of Huckleberry Creek and the West Fork of the White River; south, around Skate Creek and Skate Mountain; and west, except for the vicinity of Mt. Beljica where primeval country survives. Representatives of the various groups regretted that this had not all been protected originally inside Mt. Rainier National Park and surmised the nineteenth century park enthusiasts probably didn't know all of the area or possibly could not foresee how rapid the destruction would be. During the hearings in Longmire and Tacoma, general proposals were made for study to determine what could become part of the park and be allowed to regenerate and heal. Subsequently, several persons formed an Ad Hoc Committee for Mt. Rainier National Park and Environs. They took a good look at the country and proposed more specific boundaries. They are convinced that what was once wild can be a "Recovery Area," added to

Mt. Rainier National Park, and in a hundred and more years new "old growth" forests will give future generations a more realistic feel for what Mt. Rainier's total environment was before the onset of the massive changes occurring from the late 1800's to the mid-1900's.

On the west it had long been felt it was a shame the lower slopes of Mt. Rainier had been severed from the park; at one point the Wonderland Trail is only a half mile from the boundary. The Ad Hoc Committee has proposed the boundaries be extended westward at least as far as the vicinity of the Puyallup River's confluence with Deer Creek. Also noted by the group are the excellent viewing sites along the Mowich road outside the present boundaries; the group recommends parkway protection for the Mowich and Carbon River roads starting at Fairfax for a future recovered scenic approach.

The next step in the history of preserving "The natural beauty of Northwest America" will be at the time when Wilderness legislation for Mt. Rainier and the Olympics is before Congress.

A final area recommended for further consideration and already studied by the State of Washington and the National Park Service is a potential Nisqually River Park from Mt. Rainier to Puget Sound. It would seem desirable to prepare appropriate legislation at the same time for some form of cooperative administration for the entire river to supplement the expected federal action to preserve the Nisqually Delta.

