

ONLY THE SQUEAL IS LEFT:
CONFLICT OVER ESTABLISHING
OLYMPIC NATIONAL PARK

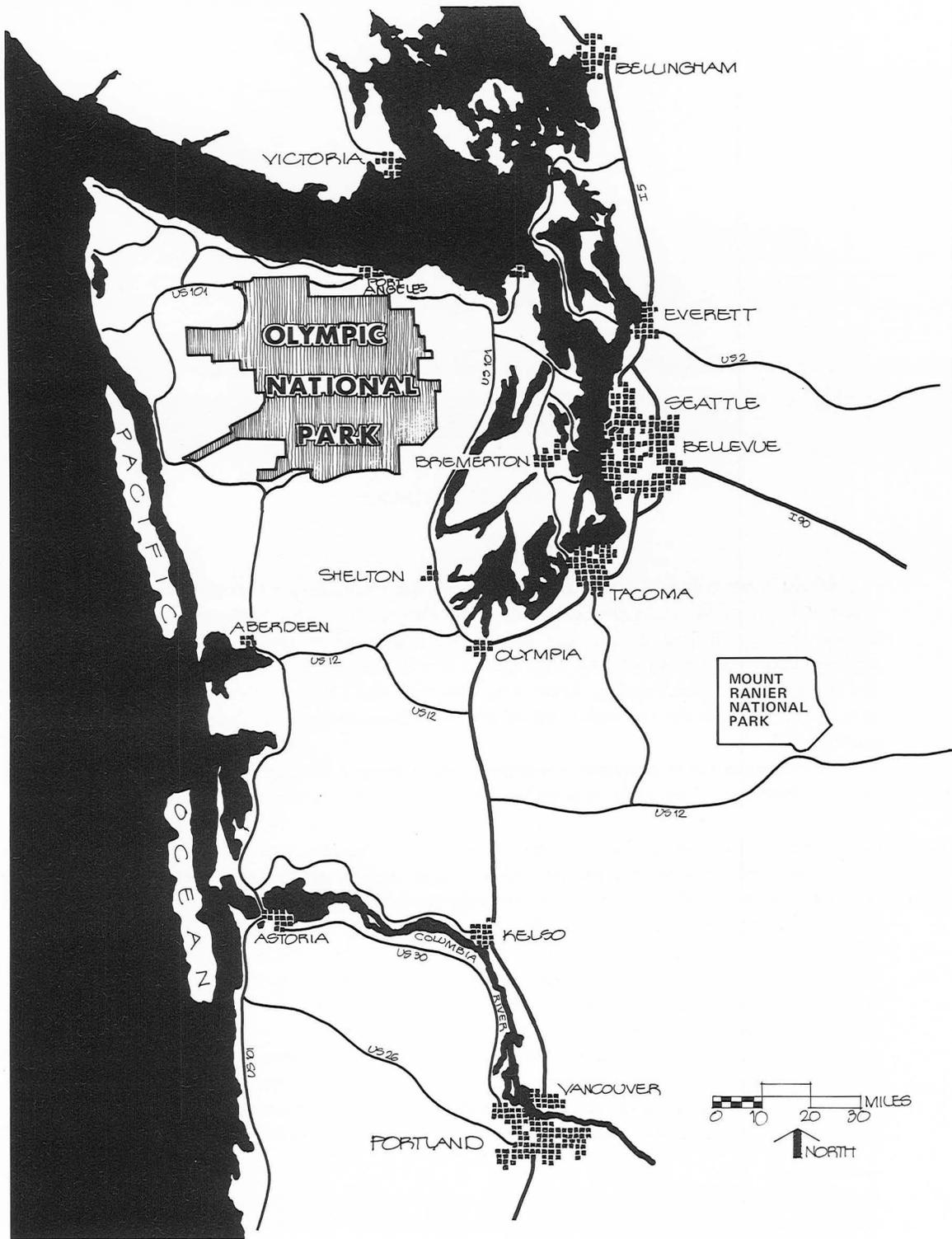
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Harold Ickes railed in 1936 against applying the multiple-use theory to the marvelous forested lands of Washington State's Olympic Peninsula. "This is the same multiple-use theory that is applied to the pig in the stockyards when the prestidigitators in the packing houses get hold of him. All that is left is the squeal," he thundered. "And if the exploiters are permitted to have their way with this Olympic Peninsula area, all that will be left will be the outraged squeal of future generations. . .," the interior secretary contended.¹

Such concern for the natural resources of the Olympic Peninsula had not always been present, however. The early nineteenth-century pioneers in the peninsula showed little interest in the scenic beauty of this tremendous tract of land while they applied themselves to harvesting the abundant stands of marketable trees. Before the century's end, concerned citizens and public officials were already worried that these exploitative practices, in the Pacific Northwest and elsewhere, would eventually denude the nation of its forests, degrading the environment. Overcoming the powerful opposition of vested interests in the West and elsewhere, in 1891 persistent conservationists were able to secure the passage of legislation that empowered the president to establish forest reserves on public land. Using this authority President Grover Cleveland in the early spring of 1897 established the 2,188,800-acre Olympic Forest Reserve.²

Lumber magnates immediately protested this action and lobbied for the reduction of all forest reserves. The next president, William McKinley, soon responded to this pressure and by 1901 had withdrawn 721,860 acres on the peninsula from federal protection. As embattled conservationists awaited further reductions in Washington and elsewhere, an

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anarchist assassinated McKinley in the fall of 1901. His successor was the young liberal Republican, Theodore Roosevelt, who firmly believed in preservation of forest and wilderness areas.

While government control of forests in the peninsula continued to cause great excitement in the early days of the Roosevelt presidency, the focus of attention increasingly centered on protection of the Olympic or Roosevelt Elk, named in 1897 by the renowned naturalist Clinton Hart Merriam for Theodore Roosevelt. Peninsular residents and those acquainted with this species of elk, the largest of the four North American species, had recently become alarmed about the great number being killed, and they feared the elk would eventually become extinct. The Elks Lodge of Port Angeles, Washington, petitioned Congress on this subject in 1903, requesting formation of a national park in the area most frequented by the animals. Congressman Francis W. Cushman of nearby Tacoma responded to this and similar requests by introducing a park bill in 1904. Although the bill failed to pass, it did bring the plight of the elk to the attention of many people. Among those who probably heard about the elk killing was President Roosevelt. When Congressman William E. Humphrey of Washington approached him in early 1909 about creating a game reserve in the Olympic Mountains to protect the native elk, he immediately agreed to the request. Before leaving office in

The Olympic or Roosevelt Elk, the largest of the four North American species, was named by C. Hart Merriam for Theodore Roosevelt in 1897. Following the turn of the century, peninsular residents became alarmed by the large numbers being killed and succeeded in bringing the plight of the elk to the attention of many, including President Roosevelt. Before leaving office he established the 610,560 acre Mt. Olympus National Monument as a game reserve for the elk.



Courtesy, Washington State Historical Society, Tacoma

March he signed a proclamation establishing Mount Olympus National Monument, composed of 610,560 acres situated in the center of the Olympic National Forest.³

The new monument was soon assailed by local entrepreneurs who wanted access to minerals and timber of the area. Joining this opposition was the Forest Service. Regional officials of that agency felt that commercial interests should supercede wildlife considerations. However, their repeated requests for elimination of the monument were vetoed by the Forest Service central office because the agency had promised the U.S. Biological Survey to preserve Roosevelt Elk habitat in the Olympic Mountains.

Representative Humphrey agreed with his constituents that monument restrictions were undesirable, yet he also felt the elk had to be protected from predatory hunters. So, to appease both entrepreneurs and conservationists, in 1911 Humphrey introduced legislation that would abolish the monument and transfer the same area into a national park where some entrepreneurial activity would be permitted. But local business men and the Forest Service felt the bill was still too restrictive and lobbied effectively for its defeat. A similar bill was introduced in Congress during the 1912 session but failed to pass.⁴

Regional Forest Service personnel continued their campaign to have the monument reduced or abolished. Chief Forester Henry S. Graves visited the area in 1914 to assess the situation and returned to Washington, D.C., convinced that his subordinates were correct. He drafted a lengthy memorandum recommending that monument acreage be reduced by fifty percent. Graves suggested also, however, that certain unique wilderness areas be included in a national park. The latter proposal helped ensure cooperation of the Department of the Interior, and Biological Survey support was obtained by advising them that the Forest Service had the authority to restrict development on elk breeding grounds. With all government factions temporarily in agreement, Graves approached President Woodrow Wilson and asked him to reduce the monument by fifty percent. Since there was little opposition to the proposal, Wilson signed the necessary proclamation in May 1915.⁵

The elk problem continued to plague the Forest Service in the following years. In 1916 Congressman Albert Johnson of Washington sponsored legislation to transform the existing monument into a national park, specifically for protection of the Roosevelt Elk. The bill died in committee when the secretary of agriculture advised that he was opposed to it.⁶ When citizen complaints about elk destruction reached a crescendo in the twenties, Johnson introduced new legislation to create a park in the Olympic Mountains. The apparent unwillingness of the National Park Service to support the bill assured its early demise. But Johnson was undaunted and began planning to establish a federal game refuge in the mountains at the earliest possible moment.

While Johnson was trying to enlist support for his proposals the Forest Service was preparing a master plan subsequently known as the Cleator plan. Prepared by Forest Service Recreational Engineer Fred Cleator, the plan provided for roads and trails, designated a 134,000-acre primitive area for future protection, and established the Mount Olympus National Monument as the Snow Peaks Recreation Area. The plan temporarily silenced some Forest Service critics and was later used by the organization in trying to defeat subsequent efforts to establish a park in the area.

Conservationists soon resumed their attacks on Forest Service management of the area. The renowned curator of the American Museum of Natural History, Williard Van Name, visited the Olympic Mountains in 1928. His later widely distributed monograph, *Vanishing Forest Reserves*, denounced the Forest Service but also rebuked the National Park Service for its passive posture in the peninsula. A colleague, Harold E. Anthony,

maintained a lengthy correspondence with the government about elk protection and always remained slightly suspicious of official efforts to save the animals. The prestigious Audubon Society established its own correspondence with the Forest Service and learned from the beleaguered organization that it was having little success in protecting the elk.

While the Forest Service tried to salvage its position with the public, it also had to deal with National Park Service efforts to gain control of the public domain in the peninsula. The latter agency had tried to obtain jurisdiction over certain wilderness areas for some time, so it was obviously pleased when President Franklin D. Roosevelt transferred administration responsibility for national monuments to the National Park Service in June 1933.

Soon after this transfer a number of conservationists mounted a campaign to convert Mount Olympus National Monument into a national park. The most influential group favoring creation of this park was the Emergency Conservation Committee, a New York-based organization, liberally financed by a philanthropist, Mrs. Rosalie Edge. Opposition came from the Forest Service and those with entrepreneurial interests in the peninsula. Protection of these interests contributed significantly to Washington State's subsequent decision to oppose the park.

The dispute escalated over the next two years. Then in March 1935 Representative Monrad C. Wallgren, whose district included the peninsula, introduced a bill to establish Mount Olympus National Park, incorporating recommendations of the Emergency Conservation Committee and suggestions from his constituents. Besides adding 400,000 acres to the existing monument, most of it from the national forest, the bill included specific provisions for protection of the elk.

When the House Committee on Public Lands began hearings on this legislation in April 1936 both sides were well represented. Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes and former Park Service Director Horace Albright sharply criticized the Forest Service. As Ickes ended his inflammatory testimony, he told committee members: "Sustained-yield logging, multiple use, or any of the smooth-sounding techniques of the Forest Service are no substitute for a national park, and will not save an area of national park quality. Neither will they replace trees that are centuries old after they once have been cut down." Assistant Chief Forester Leon F. Kneipp defended his agency's timber management practices and maintained that a park would destroy the local economy. State representatives argued for a minuscule park, including only the topmost ridge of the Olympic Mountains. The bill subsequently received committee approval but failed to reach the house floor before the session ended.⁷

The Forest Service hoped to strengthen its position in Congress considerably, before another park bill was introduced. Special Assistant R.F. Hammatt wanted the agency to "put on a real show before the Public Lands Committee. . . . Our presentation must be snappy and interesting." Besides a well-orchestrated publicity campaign, Hammatt wanted regional officials to work for local support. Part of this effort included using other personnel to ensure that peninsular labor unions would support their position, and there was some lobbying with the Washington delegation.

The agency initially expected that Washington State organizations would staunchly support their efforts. These groups, however, felt a peninsular park was inevitable and planned to use their influence to ensure that a protected area would not jeopardize the local economy. The Washington State Planning Council decided to lobby for adoption of a modified form of the Cleator plan. According to this proposal, the national park would consist of 360,000 acres — primarily the area of the existing monument. Adjoining it on



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the west and southwest would be some 200,000 acres under Forest Service jurisdiction but maintained principally as a wilderness area.

Congressman Wallgren, meanwhile, had voiced concern about the impact of his original plan. While he would not accept the Cleator plan, he did agree to reduce park boundaries to 648,000 acres, although the new legislation (introduced in February 1937) included some land that contained accessible supplies of pulpwood. Besides Forest Service opposition, the bill was vigorously opposed by Irving Brant — a well-known journalist associated with the Emergency Conservation Committee and a confidant of President Roosevelt.

With the debate raging in the fall of 1937, Roosevelt — urged by Ickes — decided to visit the peninsula. He remained for two days (September 30 and October 1), toured the area, and publicly promised that all interests would be protected. In private talks with the Forest Service, however, he supported a large park, including stands of valuable trees. The agency reluctantly concluded that its position was untenable and, except for defending its practices in the Olympics, ceased opposition to the park bill.

Congressman Wallgren once again reversed himself and, responding to administration pressure, introduced a new bill in March 1938 providing for a park of 898,202 acres. Besides this expanded acreage, the new park would have westward extensions down the Bogachiel, Hoh, and Queets rivers. And finally, there was no mention of multiple-use administration or entrance roadways — items earlier endorsed by the Washington State Planning Council.

Alarmed state officials, including Governor Clarence Martin, made a hurried trip to Washington D.C., in April. There they first argued for a reduced park before the House Public Lands Committee. Afterwards state and congressional leaders met with the president, who told them that he would support an amendment allowing logging near the park. Whatever his motivation the president obfuscated the boundary issue, leaving state officials convinced they could veto any unwanted boundary changes.



Courtesy, Washington State Historical Society, Tacoma

Olympic National Park, which covers more than a million acres in four western counties of Washington State, contains a wide variety of topography for the delight of visitors: from high mountain wilderness to driftwood-littered Pacific shoreline.



Courtesy, Ellen Seeley and Tom Pittenger

Administration officials soon dispelled state hopes that they could influence any decision regarding final park boundaries. Other Roosevelt staffers tried to quell the incipient conflict with Washington state officials and, too, quickly maneuvered the Wallgren bill through the House without disabling amendments. In the upper house, presidential spokesmen urged senators to amend the act so that Roosevelt would have the authority "to add to the proposed park any lands within the boundaries of the Olympic National Forest."

Washington state leaders were infuriated by the amendment. They demanded that their congressional delegation defeat it and, when the act was finally passed by both houses in June, it did include a provision requiring consultation. But the legislation also provided for a park of 898,292 acres, far exceeding the worst fears of state leaders.

State officials were even more gloomy when Harold Ickes announced in August 1938 that he favored extending the park boundaries to their maximum limits as soon as possible. The State Planning Council subsequently met with Frank Kittredge, regional director of the National Park Service in the northwest, and they jointly issued a report in December 1938 recommending additions to Olympic Park of 202,292 acres on the north, east and south, although that amount was finally reduced to 187,411 acres. Since the conferees could not agree on the western boundaries, these were left open for future adjudication. The state lost this battle too, and when Roosevelt made the final decision in December 1939 he included land along the Bogachiel, Hoh, and Queets rivers. About the same time, the president authorized the Public Works Administration to acquire a strip about two miles wide down the Queets Valley to the Pacific Ocean and an adjacent section of oceanfront land — in all some 47,000 acres. And finally, in 1940, Roosevelt added another 28,000 acres around Lake Quinault to the park.⁸

The demand for lumber during World War II finally forced Ickes to open Queets Corridor and Ocean Strip lands to limited logging in December 1942. In the immediate postwar years efforts to reduce park boundaries were successfully defeated by Monrad Wallgren, now Washington State Governor. After Republicans succeeded in capturing the state house and the presidency in 1952, some efforts were made to reduce the park but they were defeated. Park boundaries have been adjusted slightly in succeeding years, and in 1983 a study was authorized to determine whether additional land should be added to the park to protect these significant resources.

NOTES:

In addition to the sources cited in detail below, the author has placed special reliance on works by Elmo R. Richardson, *The Politics of Conservation: Crusades and Controversies, 1897-1913* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962); Ben Whitfield Twight, "The Tenacity of Value Commitment: The Forest Service and the Olympic National Park," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Washington, 1971; and the Harold Ickes Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

1. Statement of Harold Ickes, secretary of the interior, *Hearings Before the Committee on the Public Lands*, House of Representatives, 74th Cong., 2nd Sess., on H.R. 7086, A Bill to establish the Mount Olympus National Park in the State of Washington and for other purposes, April 23, 24, 25, 27, 28, 29, 30, May 1 and 5, 1936, p. 154 (hereinafter cited as Mount Olympus Hearings).

2. Ruby El Hult, *The Untamed Olympics: The Story of a Peninsula* (Portland, OR: Binfords and Mort, 1971), p. 179; Harold T. Pinkett, *Gifford Pinchot: Private and Public Forester* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1970), pp. 12, 13; Meredith B. Ingham, Jr., "Olympic National Park: A Study of Conservation Objectives Relating to its Establishment and Boundary Adjustments," (Washington: National Park Service, 1955), p. 1, copy at Denver Service Center, National Park Service, Denver, CO. The Forest Reserve Act of 1891 granted the president authority to create, by executive proclamation, permanent forest reserves on the public domain. Within sixteen years Presidents Cleveland, McKinley and Theodore Roosevelt established 159 national forests.

3. Carsten Lien, "The Olympic Boundary Struggle," *Mountaineer*, Vol. 52 (March 1, 1959), p. 21; Resolution of Elks Lodge of Port Angeles [Washington], Nov. 11, 1903, *House Reports*, 58th Cong., 2nd Sess., No. 1874, p. 7; Hult, *Untamed Olympics*, p. 213. The Antiquities Act of 1906 authorized the president to create by executive proclamation "historic landmarks, historic and prehistoric structures, and other objects of historic or scientific interest. . . ." Because the monument had been established to protect elk habitat, the Forest Service prohibited lumbering, mining and other activities having the potential of harming the elk.

4. Hult, *Untamed Olympics*, p. 215.

5. Ingham, "Olympic National Park," p. 2.

6. Edmund B. Rogers, comp., "Olympic Park," in "History of Legislation Relating to the National Park System Through the 82nd Congress," 3 Vols., 1: Appendix A, p. 2. On file at Rocky Mountain Regional Library, National Park Service, Denver, CO.

7. Statements of Ickes and Kneipp, Mount Olympus Hearings, pp. 180-199, 229-251, 257.

8. Ingham, "Olympic National Park," p. 28. In January 1953 President Harry Truman used executive authority to add the Queets Corridor, Ocean Strip and Dogachiel Valley to the park. Ingham, "Olympic National Park," p. 26. National Park Service, "Quinault Valley Impact Study, Final Report" (Seattle, WA: National Park Service, 1978), p. 3. Copy on file at National Park Service Regional Office, Seattle.