



Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility Wilderness Watch

April 12, 2006

Jon Jarvis, Region Director,
Pacific West Region
National Park Service
One Jackson Center
1111 Jackson Street
Suite 700
Oakland, CA 94607

Dear Mr. Jarvis:

Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility and Wilderness Watch formally request that the Superintendent of Olympic National Park, William G. Laitner, be reprimanded for knowingly violating the Wilderness Act. We also formally request that the management staff receive wilderness training by the staff of the Arthur Carhart Wilderness Training Center.

This violation of the Wilderness Act occurred despite the fact that Superintendent Laitner was fully informed that the proposed action to airlift two, pre-fabricated buildings into designated wilderness was illegal. Despite being counseled, the superintendent proceeded to move forward with this plan that has the potential to cost the American taxpayer more than \$250,000 in construction costs, environmental analysis and legal fees. From the description contained within the Environmental Assessment, it appears that NPS built these structures off-site prior to beginning the scooping process with the full intent to proceed no matter the outcome of the public comment process. This expenditure is particularly outrageous when it is contrast to the \$6 million estimated maintenance budget shortfall for the park that has resulted in decreased visitor's services and staffing.

The decision-making process that led up to this plan can only be characterized as hubristic and should have never occurred. Violations of the law should be punished and therefore we believe a formal reprimand is warranted. This will provide Superintendent Latiner deeper awareness of the restrictions placed by the Wilderness Act and also to serve as a warning to other Park Service managers that they have an obligation to comply with the law.

As the manager of one of the crown jewels in our National Park System and in the Wilderness System, Superintendent Latiner has a critical obligation to both uphold the law and provide a model for managing wilderness. This responsibility was unambiguously abandoned. Therefore, we further request that the full management team of Olympic National Park be trained on the directives of the Wilderness Act. The Arthur Carhart National Wilderness Center was created to educate federal land management agencies' staff about wilderness and to strengthen wilderness leadership. The recent court decision strongly repudiates the actions taken by the park related to wilderness and clearly indicates the superintendent and the staff needs to be trained how to successfully steward this wilderness park.

The park's Draft General Management Plan, expected out this summer is a case in point why wilderness training is absolutely necessary for the park management staff. Incredibly, Olympic National Park has no Wilderness Management Plan 18 years after designation despite the fact that 95% of the land is wilderness. We are seriously concerned that the draft plan will include policies that negatively impact wilderness. Management of wilderness should be tiered off policies derived from the Wilderness Act and not from a General Management Plan.

We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Sue Gunn, Ph.D.
Washington State Director PEER
on behalf of Wilderness Watch

cc: Fran Mainella, Director National Park Service
William Laitner, Superintendent Olympic National Park
Rick Potts, National Park Service Wilderness Program Manager

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