

**Conservation Northwest * Gifford Pinchot Task Force * Mountaineers
Olympic Coast Alliance * Olympic Forest Coalition
Olympic Park Associates * Sierra Club, Cascade Chapter**

March 4, 2008

Senator Patty Murray
113 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Congressman Norm Dicks
2467 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Senator Maria Cantwell
511 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Congressman Jay Inslee
403 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Senators Cantwell and Murray; Congressmen Dicks and Inslee:

As you may be aware, on Wednesday, February 13, the timber industry, primarily through the American Forest Resources Council and the Washington State Contract Loggers, held a meeting in Quinalt to discuss their desire to salvage-log trees in an Inventoried Roadless Area south of Lake Quinalt that blew down during the early December 2007 storm. We were dismayed to see the articles in the Aberdeen Daily (see links to these articles below) that discussed this issue.

These articles precipitated a discussion with Olympic Forest Supervisor Dale Hom and District Ranger Lance Koch. In both cases, they assured us that they had no plans or desire to log in this (or any other) Inventoried Roadless Area. As the articles point out, they said this would take congressional action. It is our understanding that the timber industry will be coming to you for support to enter this Roadless Area. Given that there is no ecological basis for salvage, no increase in fire risk to structures, and little economic benefit, we strongly oppose entering this—or any other—Roadless Area.

We know that you have been a strong supporter environmental protection and restoration in Washington State. We also are aware that you are a strong supporter of fixing and decommissioning roads on our national forests, not building new roads.

The rationale for salvage spelled out in these articles is based on ideology and not science. First, risk of major wildfire is very low in this wet zone, and leaving wood on the ground will not increase risk in any significant way. Second, major insect outbreaks are very unlikely as these forests have a diverse mix of tree species. Assessments by Forest Service specialists support both these conclusions.

Third, log prices are at a 20-year low and there is a huge glut of logs on the market. The Gatton Creek salvage sale that the Olympic National Forest put up last year had no bidders, and many green tree sales on the Olympic Peninsula are barely selling. Both the State Department of Natural Resources and private industrial landowners are in the process of offering millions of board feet in salvage sales from the same storms, which will further saturate the market, although many of these sales are also likely to not make money or find bidders.

While the blowdown looks messy and catastrophic, it is part of the nature disturbance cycle in this area. The forests will recover and the downed wood is important for wildlife habitat and forest health. Attached you will find an excellent summary of the literature on blowdown and fire as it relates to coastal areas in our region. This was written by Derek Churchill, a forester with Conservation Northwest, and should give a good sense of the science of blowdown.

We appreciate your strong support for environmental issues in our state. If you have any questions, please contact Bonnie Phillips, Executive Director, Olympic Forest Coalition at (360) 456-8793; Bonnie@olympicforest.org.

Sincerely,

Dave Werntz
Conservation and Science Director
Conservation Northwest

Emily Platt
Executive Director
Gifford Pinchot Task Force

Eric Linkweiler
President
The Mountaineers

Jim Davis
President
Olympic Coast Alliance

Bonnie Phillips
Executive Director
Olympic Forest Coalition

Donna Ossewald
President
Olympic Park Associates

Mark Lawler
Forest Chair
Cascade Chapter, Sierra Club

cc: Dale Hom

Attachment: ECOLOGY OF PACIFIC NW COASTAL FORESTS

Links to articles in the Aberdeen Daily World:

Locals blown away by daunting timber blowdown
http://www.thedailyworld.com/articles/2008/02/14/local_news/02news.txt

Dicks pledges to help solve blowdown issue - Feb 16th
http://www.thedailyworld.com/articles/2008/02/16/local_news/04news.txt

Blowdown follies: stupidity meets federal inertia - Feb 20th
<http://www.thedailyworld.com/articles/2008/02/20/opinion/editorial/view.txt>