

*The mission of the  
Olympic Forest Coalition  
is to protect and restore  
forest and aquatic ecosystems  
on the public lands  
on the Olympic Peninsula.*



Fall 2011

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## On the Ground with OFCO



### President's Column

*John Woolley*

If you haven't heard from us for a while, it's not because all is quiet on the Peninsula these days. Quite to the contrary, we've been busy with ongoing projects and quandaries, and several new ones. Here's a rundown on a few of them:

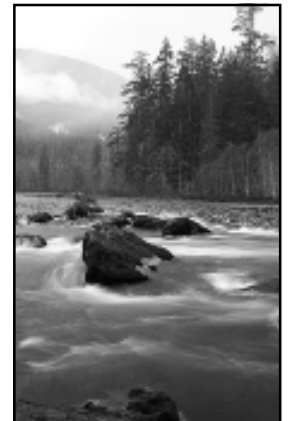
#### Dungeness River Watershed Action Plan:

Earlier this year, the Forest Service initiated a water quality and habitat enhancement project for public lands in the Dungeness watershed, and requested OFCO's assistance in the process.

Presently, many former logging roads and spurs are contributing to the erosion of the area. Since funding to repair and maintain these roads will not be available, some will be decommissioned unless they have recreational value. User groups will be expected to contribute to funding the necessary maintenance.

OFCO has been engaged in discussions with the Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) user groups to determine how they want to support access and to seek areas of agreement about which trails can be maintained without damage to the ecosystem. Some OHV users are reluctant to support the decommissioning of any roads that might fit into their loop trail proposals. OFCO maintains that extensive OHV use is not appropriate in many parts of this steep watershed and considers such use a lack of respect for our natural resources.

The Olympic National Forest (ONF) and other partners have recognized the river drainage as a priority watershed for restoration because of its abundant natural resource values, impacted condition, and current extensive human use. Objectives of the action plan include restoration of natural watershed processes within the Dungeness watershed; the involvement of community in the stewardship of our public lands; the creation of sustainable infrastructure within the watershed; and the development of a framework that fosters future collaboration. The Dungeness watershed encompasses over 129,000 acres.



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**Saving Streamkeepers:**

Since the early 1990s, OFCO's Board Member and retired scientist Coleman Byrnes has been assisting Clallam County's Streamkeepers in gathering water samples for a data collection program on stream turbidity. Streamkeepers have helped in setting up collection protocols, providing equipment, analyzing data, and assisting with recordkeeping for water quality data in the streams. The program has over 100 volunteers and one County staff person to coordinate and administer it. The data results are filed with the Department of Ecology.

This field season, OFCO has helped to fund this activity with \$5,000 to Streamkeepers for their services to cover mileage expenses. We also entered into an agreement with Clallam County to maintain the monitoring program; we're hoping it will not be a casualty of the budget cuts under consideration by the County.

**Dosewallips River Salmon Enhancement:**

The Olympic National Forest and the Wild Fish Conservancy are proposing a restoration project to stabilize the river channel and improve fish habitat in the Dosewallips River. Logs jams and wood complexes would be constructed and installed in six separate reaches of the river on Olympic National Forest lands (near the Dose Road washout). According to the Forest Service, habitat restoration in the river is a key element in the recovery plan for the Puget Sound Chinook. Placement of root wads and other debris is critical to promote short- run, as well as long- run, enhancement. District Ranger Dean Yoshina is inviting the public to participate in the NEPA process during public scoping. In the near future, woody debris will be added to the Dungeness and Gray Wolf rivers.



Dosewallips River

**Western Straits Action Group (WSAG):**

Formed under the OFCO umbrella, this group has met with DNR in Forks in an effort to get access to logging operations that appear to threaten salmon and Marbled Murrelet habitat. After a long process, WSAG's Don Hamerquist now has the key to access the gate to the logging operations, enabling more productive groundtruth outings. Don also organized an on-site meeting with three salmon groups and the Department of Transportation (DOT). At milepost 24 on Highway 112, the Pysht River is on the move north (1951 and 2006) and is threatening the highway and disrupting property lines. Don has been successful in getting salmon interests and DOT to coordinate corrective action.



Pysht River

**Elwha River Fish Hatchery:**

The lowering of Elwha River dams is creating a great opportunity to study native fish returns to a natural flowing river. Short-term economics is conflicting with an unprecedented opportunity to study native returns. Court appeals are challenging both "enhancement" and "production" hatchery activities.



Please contact us for more information on how to be involved with our projects. We greatly appreciate your financial support.



# OFCO Supports ‘No Action’ for Spruce RR Trail Expansion

by Peggy Bruton

On October 20th, OFCO President John Woolley sent a letter to Olympic National Park Superintendent Karen Gustin stating our support for the “No Action” alternative on the project to enlarge and expand the Spruce Railroad Trail around Lake Crescent and in the park’s Sol Duc area.

The Park’s preferred alternative calls for considerable widening, expansion of parking and heavy construction for the trail, which will eventually extend from Port Townsend to LaPush. Clallam County prefers considerably greater expansion, citing pressures from biking and handicap accommodation advocates for greater access.

While some environmental groups, including Olympic Park Associates, are supporting (albeit reluctantly) the Park Service’s preferred alternative, OFCO believes the proposal needs more consideration. Woolley’s letter explains: “No action is most appropriate because the amount of development pressure being placed on ONP is considerably beyond the Park’s original intent. Pressures from Clallam County to overdevelop our National Park are very disappointing. Originally, OFCO had intended to endorse the position of the Olympic Park Associates, as it encouraged more reasonable development options based on ONP’s General Management Plan.

“Now, OFCO supports taking more time to analyze the impact of enabling a second paved route along Lake Crescent. ‘No Action’ just might provide the time to come to our senses.”

The public comment period for this proposal ended October 21.



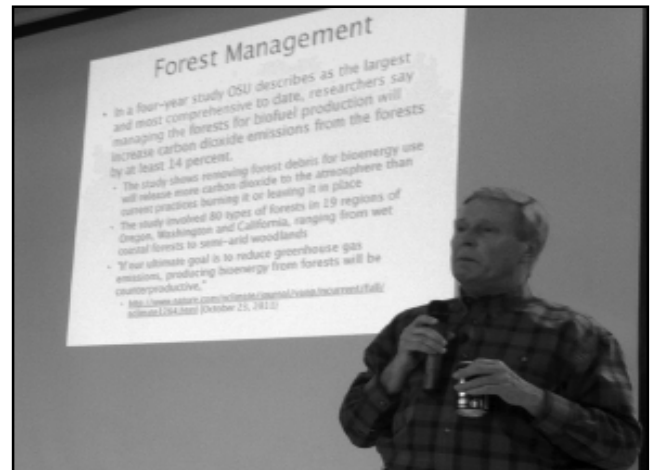
Spruce Railroad Trail

# Overflow Crowd Attends Port Townsend’s Biomass Talk

by Bob Lynette, Sierra Club North Olympic Group

Dr. William Sammons, renowned expert on the downsides of biomass burning, spoke to more than 200 residents at a public meeting in Port Townsend on October 26th about the health hazards of biomass burning. Port Townsend is considering a new biomass energy facility.

Dr. Sammons, a board certified pediatrician who specializes in behavioral and developmental pediatrics, has been speaking across the country and internationally about the serious health effects and environmental issues created by biomass incinerators. Sierra Club North Olympic Group, PTAirWatch, Olympic Environmental Council, and OFCO sponsored the meeting.



In summary, Dr. Sammons noted that the worst health hazards are dioxins and ultrafine particulates. The primary fuels used -- wood and construction debris (even if “clean”) -- produce significant amounts of dioxins. The U.S. Institute of Medicine now links dioxin to various cancers, insulin dependent diabetes and nerve and heart disease among people exposed directly or indirectly, and to birth defects in their children. The cancer potency factor is the highest of any chemical EPA has ever evaluated. Many doctors believe that there is no safe level of dioxins. Regulations now in force do not protect us.

Additionally, the projects would more than double the number of ultrafine particles released into the air. Recent research shows that these particulates are a very serious health hazard, as reported in thousands of medical articles in the last four years. Ultrafine particulates increase cases

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*And The Battles - Continued from page 5*

in their infancy, did not know what they wanted to be when they grew up. So they went at it haphazardly, caving in to political and business interests that held the reins and the funding for those very agencies. Looking at the vast availability of timber throughout the country, and the surge of housing development in a budding nation, the greed to harvest the giant trees that would yield more money and lumber was irresistible, particularly because timber companies could purchase huge amounts of land for as little as \$1.62 per acre.

The destruction of the giant trees on the Olympic Peninsula was devastating. However, this not only affected the trees but the entire ecosystem. Silt and sediment began collecting in rivers and streams due to the indiscriminate methods used. There were no protections for those streams, no buffers, and no concerns about the potential effect on fish, birds, and other wildlife. The effects are quite evident today.

I wish I could say that much has changed – but the one thing that has definitely changed is that we only have a tiny portion of the giant trees remaining on our peninsula. Now the devastation of second growth trees brings on the same drastic results. In our public lands, there are some protections in place such as the Habitat Conservation Plan – a plan that is in effect due mainly to the efforts of OFCO. However, challenges remain for public agencies to adhere to such a plan.

Through campaigns like the Wild Olympics we are, once again, attempting to protect areas for the benefit of present and future generations. The battle cries and complaints remain the same as those heard by John Muir and Rosalie Edge a century ago.



*Polly Dyer Old Growth Grove, Dosewallips*

## **An extravaganza of Canada Dogwood Pats Prairie - Road 2877**

*by John Woolley*

ONF Road 2877 extends a bit over three miles, accessing the headwaters of McDonald Creek. The road is passable for passenger cars that can handle a number of potholes. But maintaining this route for recreational driving and access is questionable. Perhaps future logging needs will be the rationale for spending funds on maintenance.

Pats Prairie sits between the headwaters of McDonald and Pats creeks. Grassland dominates the view, and cut grass sedge thrives. This year the prairie was still very wet when we visited during July, requiring rubber boots for serious wandering in the tall green grasses.



Indian Paintbrush at the trailhead were very fresh and notably a bit different, as is often the case. Wild Strawberries flowers indicated a late spring, and Canada Dogwood blossoms make for a lasting memory. The photographer could hardly wait to get out of our vehicle.

The trail access is quite a contrast from the old days when a faint route guided access into the dark forest that borders Pats Prairie. Now, the trail has been cut to give one a confident access to the east end of Pats Prairie. At the west end, where the trail starts, the prairie drains north into a fork of McDonald Creek. While on the trail, through the forest, the lush green meadow is an enigma, just off trail to the south, beyond some very giant Skunk Cabbage. Have patience, as access to the greens is available farther along the route.

Sitka Spruce, of good size, along with cedar and western hemlock compose most of the forest, though at trails end, apple trees appear among the alder. It seems there was a Pat who tried to make a home on the Prairie. A Pileated Woodpecker alerted us to his presence, but for the most part we heard nothing but the breeze. The clouds move over us; we don't see Blue Mountain this day.

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