

## The Weather Twins

Looking out the window at the foot of snow in Port Angeles Thanksgiving week, it seemed like National Weather Service predictions were right. La Niña is back. This year the Olympic Peninsula is being visited by La Niña, the contrary sister of her more famous brother, El Niño. While El Niño usually brings milder, drier winters to our region, La Niña can mean increased precipitation, lower temperatures or both.

### Born in the eastern Pacific Ocean

La Niña conditions occur when cooler sea surface temperatures develop in the central and eastern Pacific Ocean. Since ocean and atmospheric temperatures mirror each other, these oceanic temperatures affect the weather above. During La Niña years easterly winds strengthen in the tropical Pacific, shifting large thunderstorms to the western Pacific. This in turn affects weather in other parts of the world, including the position of the jet stream—the high altitude river of air that delivers moisture and weather systems to the Pacific Northwest. With La Niña, the jet stream interacts with a low pressure zone over our area, bringing cold Alaskan air toward the Peninsula from the northwest rather than the southwest.

### La Niñas of winters past

What does this global weather pattern mean for us? Storms from the northwest mean lower freezing levels and abundant snowfall, especially in the mountains. La Niña has brought four of the five snowiest winters to the Olympic Mountains. In fact, the world record annual snowfall is held by Mount Baker in the Cascades, where 1,140 inches fell during the La Niña winter of 1998-1999. That same year Hurricane Ridge got a record-breaking 62 feet of snow. The relentless 10 to 30 inches of snow that fell nearly daily for weeks at a time outpaced the park's road crew as they tried to open the road! In contrast, during the record-breaking low snow of 2005, an El Niño year, the meadows around the Hurricane Ridge Visitor Center were bare in February.



During the record snows of the La Niña winter of 1998-1999, the Winter Sports Club worked with park plow crews coping with snow deeper than the gaping maws of the blowers (above). For several months, many of the poma lift towers were nearly buried (right).



While El Niño and La Niña shape our weather patterns, there will always be daily and weekly fluctuations in what you see out your window. As a state climatologist report put it, the La Niña cycle stacks the deck toward cooler, wetter weather in western Washington, but doesn't guarantee a particular hand. But don't be surprised if this La Niña brings us the same cold temperatures and high snowfalls of some of her previous visits.

## Weather vs. Climate: The Big Picture

Weather is what you get on the news each night. It determines what you wear the next day. Climate represents the long-term, overall picture, reflected by your entire wardrobe. While La Niña may bring heavier snow to the mountains this winter, research by the University of Washington's Climate Impacts Group reveals that climate change is decreasing regional snowpack. As temperatures warm, more of Olympic's precipitation falls as rain, rather than snow. Researchers studying the Blue Glacier on Mount Olympus discovered that average winter temperatures at the elevation of the glacier's snout have increased about 6 degrees F since 1948, far faster than the increase in global temperatures.

The Pacific Northwest, with its dry summers, relies on mountain snow to store and slowly release life-giving water to rivers, fields and communities downslope. Park rangers measure that stored water by drilling and weighing snow cores, then calculating snow density expressed as water equivalent. Since snow can be dry and powdery, or wet and heavy, scientists use water equivalent rather than snow depth to more accurately monitor snowpack. University of Washington research has shown that snow water equivalent in the Pacific Northwest has declined 30 to 45 percent over the last 50 years. For a snow-dependent region, this trend is sobering. But if La Niña has her way with the weather, this winter may bring an abundance of snow, maybe even another record.



# Services and Facilities

A winter visit to Olympic National Park's mountains, coast and forest can be magical, but it takes planning as fewer services and facilities are available. Roads and facilities normally open may close due to snow, high water, downed trees, or reduced staffing. Call (360) 565-3131 for road and weather updates.

## Emergencies

Dial 911 in an emergency or to report a crime. For non-emergency help call (360) 565-3000 ext. 0 between 7 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. or (360) 417-2459 after hours.

## Entrance and other Recreation Fees

Entrance fees apply year-round in main spur road areas (Elwha, Heart O' the Hills, Hoh, Ozette, Sol Duc, Staircase). A single visit receipt (1-7 days) is \$15 per private vehicle or \$5 per person (age 16+) entering by bus, bike, or foot. The Olympic National Park Annual Pass is \$30.

The America the Beautiful - National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Annual Pass is \$80. This pass is honored for entrance or standard amenity fees in national park, national forest, U.S. Fish and Wildlife, Bureau of Reclamation, and Bureau of Land Management lands. A \$10 lifetime pass for U.S. seniors (age 62+) and a free lifetime access pass for those with permanent disabilities are also available. Additional recreation fees apply for overnight camping permits. The Senior and Access passes provide a 50% discount on these fees.

Park fees provide critical funding for many projects such as repair of roads, trails, and buildings; printing brochures, including the park map and fishing regulations; and providing staff at entrance station and wilderness permit locations. Your support of the fee program is very important. Thank you.

## General Park Information

For park information see the park website: [www.nps.gov/olymp](http://www.nps.gov/olymp), call (360) 565-3130, or in the Port Angeles area tune to 530 AM; Quinault area tune to 1610 AM. Park information, maps, wilderness permits, bear canisters and information on wilderness fees are available year-round at the Olympic National Park Visitor Center/ Wilderness Information Center.

Pets are not allowed in public buildings, on trails, or in winter use areas. They must be on a leash in parking areas or campgrounds. Please do not approach or feed any park wildlife, including birds. It is illegal, harmful to the animal and hazardous to you. Violators are subject to a \$100 fine.

## Port Angeles Area

**Olympic National Park Visitor Center & Wilderness Information Center:** Open 9-4 daily (except Thanksgiving and Christmas) with exhibits, movie, map and book sales and staff to help you plan a visit. Wilderness camping, hiking and permit information, as well as bear canisters, are also available. Most ranger stations do not have regular winter hours; please call (360) 565-3130 for general park information, (360) 565-3100 for wilderness trip planning.

## Hurricane Ridge Road

Call (360) 565-3131 for a 24-hour recording. For the winter season, current conditions are also updated daily at [www.nps.gov/olymp/planyourvisit/hurricane-ridge-current-conditions.htm](http://www.nps.gov/olymp/planyourvisit/hurricane-ridge-current-conditions.htm).

**Shuttle Service:** All Points Charters and Tours will offer 2 round trips to Hurricane Ridge Wednesdays through Sundays, beginning December 17, 2010. Round trip fare is \$10 (park entrance fees are not included). Vans will depart the Port Angeles Chamber of Commerce Visitor Center 121 E. Railroad Ave. at 9:00 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. (with a pickup at the Vern Burton Center, 308 E. Fourth) and return at 11:00 a.m. and 3:45 p.m. The schedule will be flexible for the start up of this new service. Reservations are strongly recommended and can be made at (360) 565-1139 or (360) 460-7131.



**To improve public safety, all vehicles (including 4WD) traveling above Heart O' the Hills on the Hurricane Ridge Road between November 15 and April 1 must carry tire chains.** The road is scheduled to be open daily, weather permitting, from December 17, 2010 through March 27, 2011 (except Christmas). Until December 17, the road is open Fridays through Sundays. The road usually opens at 9:00 a.m., but times vary depending on conditions. At 4:00 p.m. the road is closed to uphill traffic at Heart O' the Hills, five miles above Port Angeles. As days lengthen in spring, the road closes later. The Ridge parking lot closes at sunset and vehicles must be below Heart O' the Hills by dusk (1/2 hour after sunset).

**Storms, high winds, drifts or high avalanche conditions may delay or prevent road opening or may force an early closure.** To minimize closures due to a full parking lot, please carpool and park closely to other vehicles at Hurricane Ridge. For safety, do not ski or walk on roads if plows are working since the operators have limited visibility. Also for safety, vehicle passengers must be inside vehicles or fully inside a pick-up truck bed. After March 27 the Hurricane Ridge Road may open as weather, staffing and road conditions allow. By early May the road is usually open 24 hours a day.

## Hurricane Ridge Area

**Hurricane Ridge Visitor Center:** Usually open 9:30-5 when the road is open, with restrooms, exhibits, movie and warming area. A foyer warming area and restroom are open 24 hours a day. An information desk is staffed daily December 17, 2010 through March 27, 2011 (except Christmas), as well as December 10, 11 and 12, 2010.

**Hurricane Ridge Snack Bar & Rental Shop:** December 11, 2010 to March 27, 2011, food service (reduced selection on Fridays) and ski/snowshoe rentals will be available 10-4 Fridays, weekends, holiday Mondays, and December 27 to 30. Closed Christmas.

**Hurricane Ridge Downhill Ski Area:** When fully operating there are two rope tows and a Poma lift for beginner to advanced skiers. Weather and snow permitting, tows operate 10-4 weekends from December 11, 2010 through March 27, 2011, as well as December 27 and 31, January 17 and February 21. Closed Christmas. A full day pass for all tows is \$27.00, half-day \$25.00. For rope tows only, full day and half day rates are \$22.00 and \$20.00. The lifts are operated by the Hurricane Ridge Winter Sports Club. For more information see [www.hurricaneridge.com](http://www.hurricaneridge.com) or call (360) 457-2879 (messages only). Cross country skiers using the ski area must use ski leashes.

**Equipment Rentals:** Packages include skis, boots and poles. Hurricane Ridge Ski Shop requires a driver's license to rent equipment.

Location	Cross-Country	Downhill	Snowshoes
Hurricane Ridge (no phone)	\$30/day	\$35/day \$40/day w/ helmet	\$15/day \$20 w/poles
<b>In Port Angeles:</b>			
Brown's Outdoor (360) 457-4150	none	none	\$15/day (\$7/extra day) \$5/day for poles
North by Northwest Surf Co. (360) 452-5144	Snowboards & boots		\$30/day \$25/additional day

**Downhill Skiing/Snowboard Lessons:** Hurricane Ridge Winter Sports Club offers lessons for ages four and up starting January 8, 2011. Private lessons are available with 24 hours notice. For more ski school information call (360) 457-2879 (messages only) or see <http://www.hurricaneridge.com>.

## National Park Campgrounds

The following park campgrounds are closed this winter: Altair, Deer Park, Fairholme and South Beach. Others may be closed by snow, storms, high winds, flooding or downed trees. Sol Duc and Queets campgrounds are particularly vulnerable. Several have primitive winter camping, with pit toilets, no running water, and no fees. Most campgrounds fully open in April (see [www.nps.gov/olymp](http://www.nps.gov/olymp) for specific dates). Fees at most campgrounds with facilities are \$12 a night, but range from \$10 to 18 depending on facilities and season. Check at the Visitor Center or call (360) 565-3131 for current status. The following campgrounds usually have some loops open year-round.

**Quinault:** North Fork (primitive year-round); Graves Creek (primitive in winter)

**Kalaloch:** Kalaloch Campground. Reservations can be made for Kalaloch campsites between June 15 and September 5, 2011 by calling (877) 444-6777 or [www.recreation.gov](http://www.recreation.gov) no more than 6 months ahead.

**Hoh:** Hoh Campground

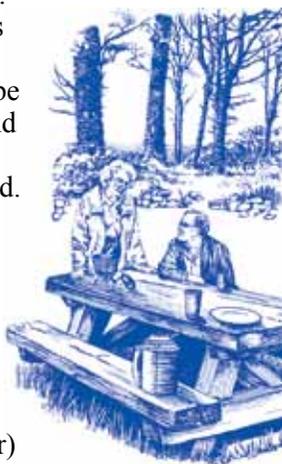
**Mora:** Mora Campground

**Ozette:** Ozette Campground (primitive in winter)

**Elwha area:** Elwha Campground only (primitive in winter)

**Hurricane area:** Heart O' the Hills Campground (walk-in if it snows)

**Staircase:** Staircase Campground (primitive in winter)



## Roads

Some park roads regularly close in winter and others may be closed temporarily by weather. Call (360) 565-3131 for current conditions. *Deer Park Road* is closed at the park boundary (9 miles from Highway 101, 2,000 feet elevation) from October 17 until May 26, depending on snow. *Obstruction Point Road* is closed October 17 until June 30, depending on snow. *Dosewallips Road* is washed out 4 miles from the park boundary. Roads in the *Staircase*, *Sol Duc*,

*Hoh*, *Mora*, *Ozette*, *Elwha*, *Queets* and *Quinault* areas are open year-round weather permitting. Note: roads in the Elwha valley will be affected by closures needed for Glines Canyon Dam removal starting summer 2011.

## Other Park Facilities

**Hoh Rain Forest Visitor Center:** Open 10-4 Friday through Sunday through May 19 (except Christmas); daily starting May 20, 2011. Exhibits, information, wilderness permits, bear cans and book sales, (360) 374-6925.

**Olympic National Park/Forest Recreation Information Center in Forks:** Open 10-4 (except lunch) Friday through Sunday through December 19, and March 11 to June 12, 2011 (closed between). Open daily starting June 17, 2011. Information, wilderness permits, bear cans and books, (360) 374-7566.

## Lodging in the Park

**Lake Crescent Lodge:** Roosevelt Cabins open weekends in winter (no food service). Lodge fully open May 5 to October 30, 2011 with lodging and food service, (360) 928-3211, [www.olympicnationalparks.com](http://www.olympicnationalparks.com).

**Log Cabin Resort:** Closed in winter. Open weekends only May 20, fully open June 20 to September 18, 2011 with lodging, food service and store, (360) 928-3325, [www.logcabinresort.net](http://www.logcabinresort.net).

**Fairholme Store:** Closed in winter. Open May 27 to September 5, 2011.

**Sol Duc Hot Springs Resort:** Closed in winter. Pools, cabins, restaurant and RV park open March 24 to October 16, 2011, (360) 327-3583, [www.olympicnationalparks.com](http://www.olympicnationalparks.com).

**Kalaloch Lodge:** Lodging and food service open all year, (360) 962-2271, [www.olympicnationalparks.com](http://www.olympicnationalparks.com).

## Lodging and Food Service Outside the Park

Local communities provide lodging and food service all year. Contact local Chambers of Commerce or the North Olympic Peninsula Visitor and Convention Bureau at 1-800-942-4042, [www.olympicpeninsula.org](http://www.olympicpeninsula.org).



## Snowshoe with a Ranger

Join a park ranger at Hurricane Ridge to experience the wonders of winter on snowshoes. If you can walk, you can snowshoe! The National Park Service provides snowshoes and instructions on this ranger-led program. A \$5.00 donation per participant helps the park provide these snowshoe walks and funds snowshoe repair and replacement.

Participants should be prepared for the rigors of winter, including cold, snow, wind or even rain. Dress in layers so clothes can be added or removed. Wear warm, waterproof boots and bring hats, mittens, sunscreen and sunglasses. If the Hurricane Ridge Road is closed, walks are cancelled.

**Snowshoe Walk:** Snow permitting, this easy to moderate walk is offered at 2:00 p.m. on Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays, and Monday holidays (January 17 and February 21, 2011) from December 10, 2010 through March 27, 2011. The walk lasts 1.5 hours and covers less than a mile. Group size is limited to 30 people. Sign up starts at the Hurricane Ridge information desk 30 minutes before the walk.

**Snowshoe Walks for Community Groups:** Clubs, youth groups or schools can schedule a reserved snowshoe walk. Walks for groups of 7 to 30 people are offered at 10:30 a.m. on Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays and holiday Mondays (January 17 and February 21) from December 17, 2010 through March 27, 2011. Walks last 1.5 hours and cover less than a mile. Reservations **MUST BE MADE IN ADVANCE** by calling (360) 565-3136.

## Perspectives

Learn more about your park at this free winter program series, sponsored by Olympic National Park, Friends of Olympic National Park and Discover Your Northwest. Programs are the second Tuesday of the month at 7 p.m. at the Olympic National Park Visitor Center, 3002 Mt. Angeles Road, Port Angeles. To accommodate larger audiences the venue may change. Call (360) 565-3146.

**December 14 – Ice Worms:** Join Peter Wimberger, University of Puget Sound, to learn about these invertebrates that live in snow and ice at the highest elevations of the Olympic Mountains.

**January 11 – Water Fleas:** Brooks Miner, University of Washington, reveals how a tiny crustacean found in the waters of Seven Lakes Basin helps us understand how life evolves in extreme conditions.

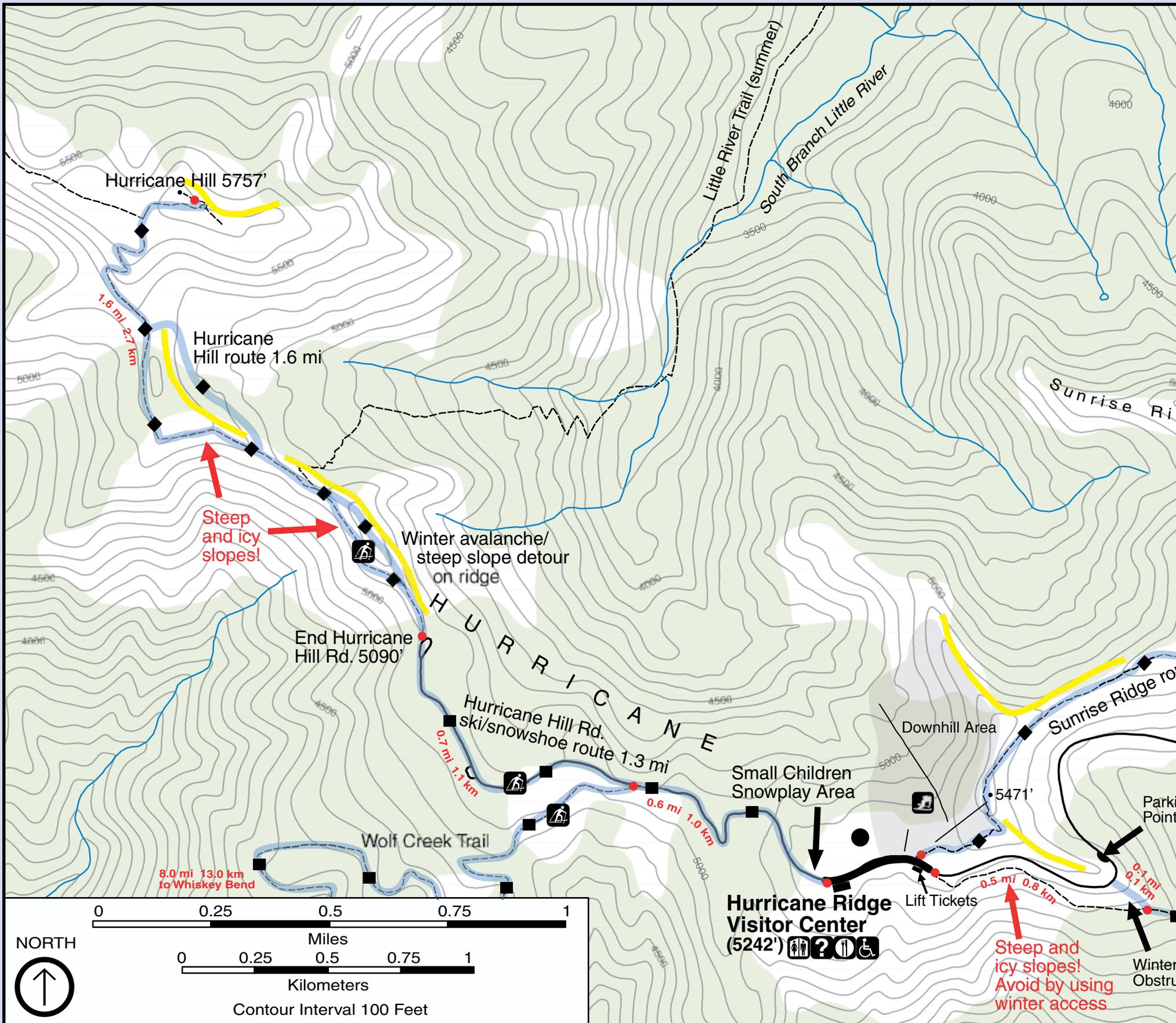
**February 8 – Sea Otters:** Steven Jeffries, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, tells of the successful recovery of this pivotal coastal species.

**March 8 – Sea Bird Wreck:** Join Mary Sue Broncato, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, to learn about the massive seabird mortality event along the Washington and Oregon coast in fall 2009.

**April 12 – Olympic Astronomy:** Explore the wonders of the night sky indoors with John Goar, a Master Observer who helped visitors experience the dark sky at Hurricane Ridge last summer as a park volunteer astronomer.

**May 10, 2011 – Voices of the Strait:** Enjoy a Puget Sound Partnership-funded video documenting long-time residents' perspectives on the rich resources of the north Olympic Peninsula, then stay for a discussion.

# Hurricane Ridge Area in Wi



**!** Before heading out, check at the Hurricane Ridge Visitor Center for current avalanche beacons, carry a probe, snow shovel and the 10 essentials (see page 8), and avoid steep lee slopes.



# Cross-Country Skiing & Snowshoeing

With its easy access and 15 to 20 miles of routes, Hurricane Ridge is the focus of cross-country skiing and snowshoeing in Olympic National Park. Though winter explorers of all abilities can enjoy the area, flat, easy beginner ski terrain is limited to the meadows above the Hurricane Ridge Visitor Center. Backcountry skiers can explore several slopes and bowls in the area. No trails are groomed or marked; however, two routes use unplowed roads which can usually be navigated.

**NOTE FOR SNOWSHOERS, WALKERS AND SNOWBOARDERS:** Skiers, walkers, snowshoers and snowboarders can safely share this area. Snowshoers, walkers and snowboarders, please stay to one side to avoid damaging ski tracks on trails, and do not snowshoe or walk through the downhill ski area.

**Before heading out on any trip remember to register at the Hurricane Ridge Visitor Center and check current avalanche conditions. Below are descriptions of routes in the Hurricane Ridge area.**

## ● Easiest

### *The Meadows*

The meadows above the Hurricane Ridge Visitor Center offer gentle, easy terrain for everyone and excellent views in fair weather. Because the meadows are exposed to the wind, they are sometimes icy or wind-packed.

## ■ More Difficult

### *Hurricane Hill Road*

*1.3 miles one way*

Beginning just west of the visitor center, this trail first descends steeply, then follows the rolling, moderate ridgeline along the snow-covered Hurricane Hill Road. Experienced skiers can use this trail to reach the Hurricane Hill Route (see Most Difficult), as well as several bowls for backcountry skiing. In clear weather, there are good views to the north and south, especially at the trail's terminus at the Hurricane Hill trailhead. Much of this ridgetop trail is sheltered by a subalpine forest, making it a good choice in windy, inclement weather or when there is elevated avalanche hazard.

### *Wolf Creek Trail*

*8 miles one way to Whiskey Bend*

This route begins 0.6 miles west of the visitor center along the unplowed Hurricane Hill Road (see above) and winds through meadows and forests into the Elwha valley. There are several south-facing slopes near the beginning which are good for backcountry skiing. The Wolf Creek Trail is seldom snow-covered at lower elevations and skiers must often walk the last several miles. Check at the information desk for current conditions.



**Backcountry skier nears the west end of the often difficult “steep and icy” traverse enroute to Hurricane Hill (rising in background).**

### *Obstruction Point Road: To Waterhole*

*3.4 miles one way*

A pullout on a curve along the Hurricane Ridge Road 0.5 miles below the Hurricane Ridge Visitor Center marks the beginning of this route (park in a pull-off below the curve). After descending a steep but short hill, the trail follows the unplowed Obstruction Point Road. The first 1.5 miles of the trail are relatively easy and sheltered by forest. Near Steeple Rock the trail crosses steep, exposed slopes which may be icy and difficult to traverse. After Steeple Rock the trail flattens and meanders through subalpine forest. Beyond Waterhole, it climbs steeply.

## ◆ Most Difficult

### *Hurricane Hill Route*

*1.6 miles one way*

This route starts at the end of the Hurricane Hill Road and climbs 700 feet to the summit of Hurricane Hill. There are several very steep sidehills, so use extreme caution under icy or avalanche conditions. As an alternative, skiers can follow the ridge line. Be careful to stay off cornices. Under good conditions, advanced skiers will find this a rewarding trip with good views and some nice slopes. Check with the information desk before venturing out.

### *Obstruction Point Road: Waterhole to the end*

*4.3 miles one way*

(Obstruction Point Road is 7.8 miles one way)

This route begins at the midway point on the unplowed Obstruction Point Road (see description above for the first 3.4 miles to Waterhole). After Waterhole, the route gains 900 feet, climbing steadily for 0.5 miles to open slopes on Eagle Point. In clear weather, views can be spectacular but steep sidehills and exposure to storms make this a difficult route. It is recommended only under good conditions for experienced skiers. Travel beyond Obstruction Point can entail steep terrain with high avalanche potential.

### *Sunrise Ridge*

*2.1 miles one way*

Begin this route by crossing below the intermediate rope tow and climbing to the right of the ski hill (right of the trees). From the top of Alpine Hill, above the downhill ski slope, this route follows a narrow ridge toward the south side of Mount Angeles. There are several avalanche prone areas along the way, so check conditions and use caution under unstable conditions. Be especially careful to stay off cornices that form along the ridge and side ridges. Several nice slopes on the east side descend to the Hurricane Ridge Road.

## Other Areas

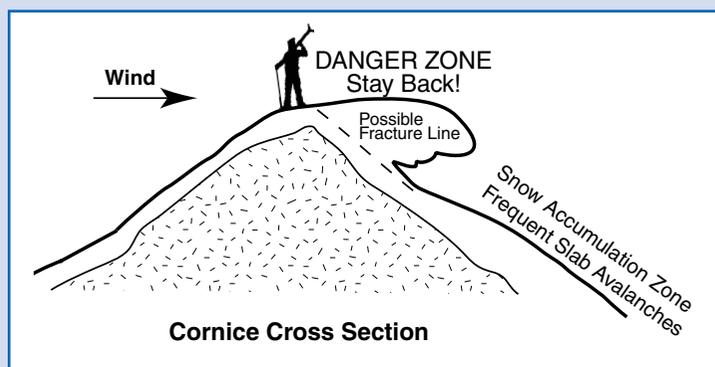
Depending on the snow level, other roads and trails in both the park and in Olympic National Forest may be snow-covered. Check at the visitor center for current snow levels. The Deer Park Road may provide skiing or snowshoeing opportunities. For safety, this steep, narrow road is closed at the park boundary, 9 miles from Highway 101, at about 2,000 feet elevation. The road climbs steadily about 9 more miles from the park boundary up to Blue Mountain. If the snow level is low enough, the road may be skiable from the boundary; but users usually need to hike several miles before reaching snow.

For other routes on the Olympic Peninsula, refer to *100 Best Cross-Country Ski Trails in Washington*, by Tom Kirkendall and Vicky Spring or *Snowshoe Routes: Washington* by Dan Nelson.

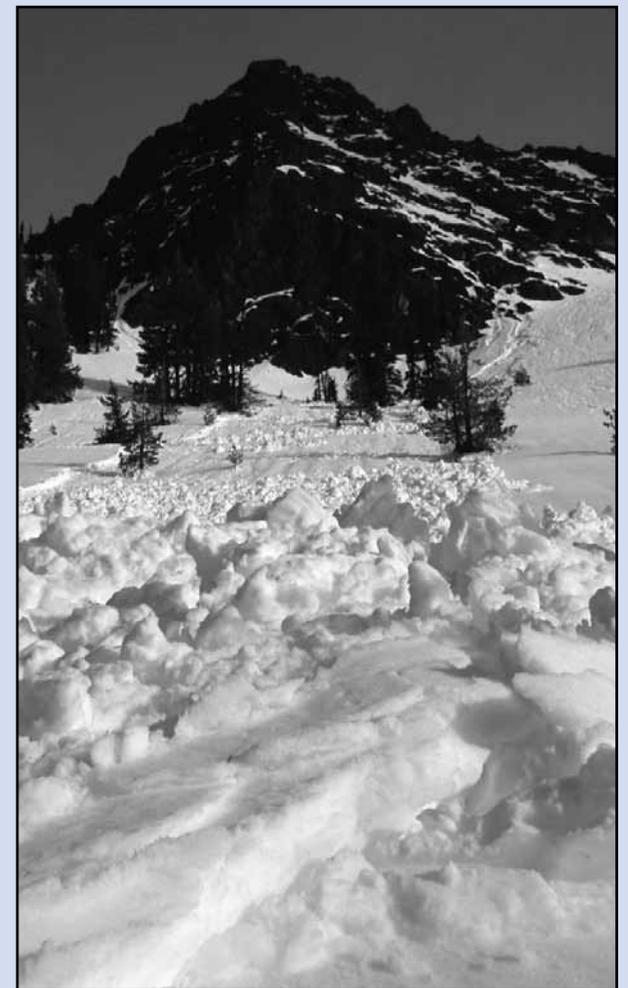
## Avalanche!

Olympic Mountain terrain and weather create ideal conditions for avalanches. Before heading out, call the Northwest Avalanche Center (206) 526-6677, [www.nwac.us](http://www.nwac.us), and check at the Hurricane Ridge Visitor Center for current conditions. Wear beacons and carry a probe and snow shovel. The hazard levels range from low to extreme. Even in low hazard conditions avalanches can occur on some slopes. With extreme conditions backcountry travel should be avoided. Certain terrain features, for example steep gullies that funnel snow, unstable cornices (see below), or dark cliff faces on warm spring days, can increase avalanche hazard. The survival rate for avalanche victims is extremely low. If you or a group member are caught in an avalanche, take these steps in your rescue attempt:

- \* Ensure the safety of survivors.
- \* Mark where victims were caught and last seen.
- \* Quickly search downslope from the last seen points for clues.
- \* Search the avalanche debris below the last seen points by probing in a grid pattern with probes, ski tails or poles.
- \* Keep searching! The victim could be inches away from your boots.
- \* Send any extra person for help.
- \* If you are caught, make swimming motions and try to keep yourself on top of the snow. As the snow begins to slow down, push the snow away from your face to create an air pocket.



Overhanging shelves of snow called cornices form on the lee side of windblown ridges. They can be unstable, breaking off far from the snow edge. Stay back from ridge lines to avoid traveling on unsupported cornices.



Avalanche of snow released off warming face of Steeple Rock, Obstruction Point Road. Photo by Jack Lange

## Hey Kids!

Hurricane Ridge is a fun place to visit in the winter but would you want to live there? Nearly 70 years ago, Herb Crisler, a famous film maker, and his wife spent a winter in the old Hurricane Hill lookout (right). Imagine their experience...



- \* **How did they travel?** Hurricane Ridge receives an average of 32 feet of snow each winter. If your house were up in the mountains, it could be buried! With such deep snow, snowshoes or cross-country skis are essential for efficient travel.
- \* **Batten down the hatches!** Winter storms with hurricane force winds (over 73 mi/118 km per hour) sometimes hit Hurricane Ridge. Last winter, gusts over 100 mph were recorded! Notice the cable anchoring the lookout in the photograph.
- \* **Who are your neighbors?** Despite what we might consider pretty tough conditions, Herb and his wife weren't alone on the mountain that winter. Look for tracks of snowshoe hares, squirrels, weasels, coyotes and more on your visit. The snow always has stories to tell!
- \* **Unexpected dangers!** At 5,242 feet elevation there's less atmosphere between us and the sun, so ultraviolet radiation levels can be quite high. While sunscreen didn't exist in Herb's days, sunglasses and sunscreen are important parts of your winter survival kit!

## Snow Play

Snow sliding is a favorite pastime for some, but it has also been one of the most dangerous activities at Hurricane Ridge. **Serious injuries, even permanent disabilities have occurred when people collided with trees, other sliders, or lost control and ended up in the road.** For your safety, sliding is permitted only in the Small Children's Snowplay near the Hurricane Ridge Visitor Center where children eight and under may slide. **The Sunrise snowplay area was closed in 2009 due to hazards associated with the site.** These included:

- \* The site's location next to the road, which led to children and adults actually sliding into the road.
- \* The lack of parking, which resulted in both vehicles and pedestrians using the road's travel lanes for parking and walking, creating extremely hazardous conditions during the icy and snowy winter months.
- \* Plowing and sanding operations were impossible when people and vehicles were along or in the road.

**If conditions are too icy to allow safe sliding at the Small Children's area, that area will be closed.**

For the safety of participants, metal or hard plastic runner sleds and wooden toboggans are not permitted. Compressed air for inflating inner tubes is not available. To be as safe as possible, please observe the following rules:

- \* Slide only in the designated Small Children Snow Play area. **Sliding is not allowed anywhere else in the Hurricane area or along the Hurricane Ridge road.**
- \* For your safety, be sure the path is clear before starting your slide. Collisions can result in injuries. Watch for cross country skiers and snowshoers crossing below the area.
- \* Descend one tube at a time and do not put more than one person on a tube.



# Exploring Olympic in Winter

Olympic is indeed a park for all seasons. In fact, hikers can experience several seasons in one outing. But hikers ready for unpredictable weather can experience the beauty and solitude of winter.



It can get very wet here. Snow and rain can swell streams overnight, making crossings treacherous and washing out trails. Camp well above flood plains. Boardwalks and bridges are very slippery when wet or icy. On the coast, storms push tides higher, creating huge waves that easily move beach logs or trap hikers on rocks. Winter storms and winds often leave behind many downed trees that may block trails. Be prepared, always carry the 10 essentials, even for short hikes. They are: **extra clothing, extra food and water, map, compass, flashlight, knife, sunglasses, matches, fire starter/candle, first aid kit.**

But don't let winter chase you inside! There are always some options for winter and spring exploration. Stop at the Olympic National Park Visitor Center in Port Angeles for maps, tide tables and trail condition reports. For you and your pet's safety, pets are not allowed on trails in the park. If you plan to camp overnight in the park's wilderness, you can get the required permit, bear canisters and information on wilderness fees at the Wilderness

Information Center (WIC) in the Visitor Center. May through September some popular spots have limits, including parts of the coast. Call the WIC (360) 565-3100 for details or reservations. Below are options for winter hikes that are often accessible, depending on the snow level and storm damage.

## Low-Elevation Hiking

**Elwha Valley:** Geysir Valley Loop, West Elwha, West Lake Mills, Griff Creek, Cascade Rock trails and lower parts of the Elwha River trail.

**Lake Crescent:** Marymere Falls and Spruce Railroad trails.

**Ozette:** Cape Alava or Sand Point trails.

**Mora and La Push:** James Pond, Second, Third and Rialto Beaches.

**Kalaloch:** Short trails to beaches, beach hikes and the forest nature trail.

**Hoh:** Hall of Mosses and Spruce Nature trails, or lower Hoh River trail.

**Quinault:** Nature trails on both sides of the lake, Irely Lake and Cascading Terraces trails, lower stretches of the North Fork and Graves Creek trails.

## High Country Trips

Snow camping requires a lot of preparation and many safety precautions, but offers a glimpse into a season that few truly experience. Weather can change quickly. Places like Hurricane Ridge and Blizzard Pass earn their names, and whiteout conditions can occur anytime. Be prepared!

**Hurricane Ridge** offers the easiest access to winter high country. For safety, please observe the following rules:

- \* **Overnight campers must get a permit at the WIC, and register and check with a ranger at Hurricane Ridge for camping and parking locations.**
- \* If a storm forces a road closure, you may need to install tire chains and have a shovel in case of a snowy descent. Use caution as plow operators may not see you! If you are locked in uphill from the gate, call (360) 565-3000 ext. 0 (before 5:30 p.m.) or (360) 417-2459 after hours.
- \* **Because of the risk of sudden storms, winter overnight parking is not allowed at Hurricane Ridge.** You must park 3.3 miles below the Ridge at Third Peak. Check with rangers at Hurricane to see if a shuttle is available.
- \* Winter camps must be located away from the Hurricane Ridge parking lot and out of sight of ski/snowshoe trails. Check with a ranger for suggestions.
- \* Use a camp stove. Campfires are prohibited.
- \* Share the trails—avoid walking or snowshoeing in ski tracks.
- \* In emergencies, dial 911 from the Hurricane Ridge Visitor Center foyer.
- \* Check avalanche conditions and carry beacons (see page 7).

## Restoring the Elwha

The countdown has begun, removal of the Elwha and Glines Canyon dams begins next year. Freeing the Elwha River after 100 years will allow all five kinds of Pacific salmon, steelhead, sea-run cutthroat and bull trout to return to more than 70 miles of habitat protected in Olympic National Park, carrying with them marine-derived nutrients to restore a vital link between sea, river and forest.

A free-flowing Elwha River and the salmon's return will bring economic and cultural healing to the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe, whose members have lived along the river for generations. When the Lake Mills reservoir is drained, tribal members will also regain access to sacred sites currently underwater.

Just as the dams played a role in the history and industrial development of the Olympic Peninsula, removing them will create new opportunities for growth and regional vitality. Elwha River Restoration—the largest dam removal in history and the second-largest restoration project in the history of the National Park Service—continues to move forward:

- In August 2010, a \$26.9 million contract for removal of both dams was awarded to Barnard Construction of Bozeman, Montana. Dam removal will begin in September 2011 and progress over two to three years.
- Contractors broke ground on a replacement hatchery on the Lower Elwha Klallam reservation in early 2010. The hatchery, scheduled for completion in early 2011, will help maintain existing stocks of Elwha River fish during the dam removal phase.
- A sediment erosion project on the Lake Mills delta was completed in October 2010. Contractors cleared trees and excavated an 1,100-foot long pilot channel through the center of the delta (see photo).
- Modifications to levees near the mouth of the river are underway to protect landowners and the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe reservation from flood impacts.

For more information on this landmark project, visit Olympic National Park's website at [www.nps.gov/olym](http://www.nps.gov/olym), share or interact with 'Elwha River Restoration' on Facebook, or pick up a brochure at a park visitor center.



**A new central channel created in the Lake Mills delta will help maximize sediment movement during dam removal. Photo by John Gussman**