



FOREST SERVICE'S MANAGEMENT OF OLYMPIC  
FOREREST  
Organizational Analysis

ABSTRACT

This is an analysis of the management of the Olympic National Forest. The Olympic National Forest (ONF), is managed by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS)

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## Executive Summary



<https://www.fs.usda.gov/main/olympic/maps-pubs>

The Olympic National Forest (ONF), managed by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), is a vital ecological area that exemplifies the intersection of land management, ecological preservation, and collaboration with indigenous communities. Located on the Olympic Peninsula in the northwest corner of Washington State, the forest encompasses over 633,600 acres and is part of a larger 2-million-acre area of public federal lands. It surrounds much of the Olympic National Park. The forest features diverse landscapes, including temperate rain forests, rugged mountains, lowland lakes, rivers, and coastal beaches. There is a high annual precipitation of about 220 inches; this supports various vegetation areas and streams. The recreational activities consist of hiking, camping, backpacking, fishing, boating, kayaking, biking, snow shoeing, and



berry picking. The establishment of Olympic National Forest was originally created as Olympic Forest Reserve in 1897, it was later renamed in 1907. While ONF is not an “organization” in the traditional sense, it operates as a public land managed under the Forest Service, which is a division of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) with headquarters in Olympia and ranger district offices in Forks, Quinault, and Quilcene. ONF plays a critical role in maintaining the health, accessibility, and ecological integrity of the forest while navigating the complexities of federal policies, budget constraints, and management challenges.

### Key Terminologies

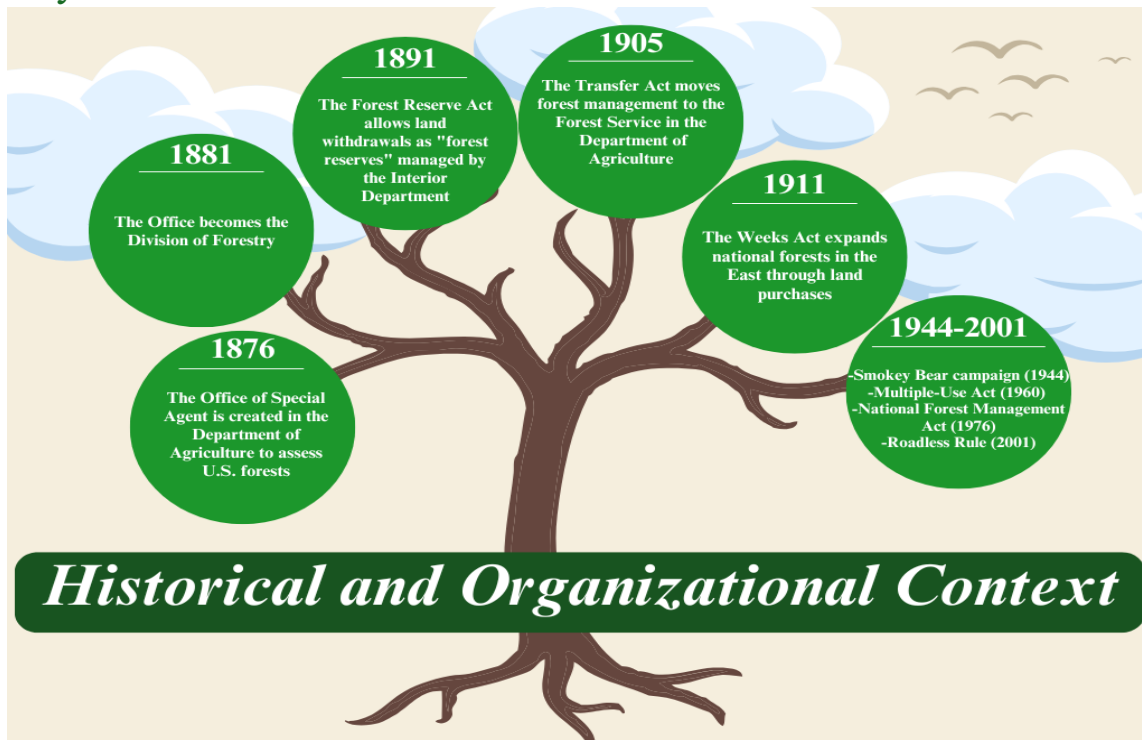
Area	Description/Purpose	Related Permits
<b>National Forest Management</b>	Compliance with NFMA and other environmental regulations through land management planning	
<b>Special Use</b>	Occupying or building on National Forest land for personal or business purposes	Special Use Permit
<b>Forest Products</b>	Gathering special forest products (mushrooms, salal, firewood, etc.) for personal or commercial use	Forest Products Permit
<b>Fire Management</b>	Using fire as a tool for mitigation, suppressing fires, maintaining healthy ecosystems	
<b>Invasive Species</b>	Mitigating the spread of high priority weed species. These species pose a threat to healthy forests and grasslands	
<b>Tribal Relations</b>	Consulting with 12 tribes on and around the Olympic Peninsula, acknowledging their connection to the land and working towards shared stewardship	
<b>Watershed Restoration</b>	Collaborative efforts with diverse landowners to restore ecosystem resilience within priority watersheds	



<b>National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)</b>	Guiding the planning of national forest projects and management activities	
<b>Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA)</b>	Providing planning information to the public, published quarterly	
<b>Resource Management</b>	Encompasses forest management, watershed restoration, invasive plant control, and timber sale management	
<b>Recreation Management</b>	Managing national forests and grasslands for recreation	Northwest Forest Pass (may be required)
<b>Wilderness Areas</b>	Five Wilderness Areas with an extensive network of trails	

## Overview of the Olympic National Forest and the U.S. Forest Service

### Key Historical Events



## Mission and Vision

### *Mission of the U.S. Forest Service*

The mission of the U.S. Forest Service is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations. This mission is encapsulated in their motto: "Caring for the Land and Serving People."

### *Mission of the Olympic National Forest*

The Olympic National Forest, as part of the U.S. Forest Service, shares the overarching mission but also focuses on specific regional goals. The Olympic National Forest aims to provide economic opportunity through innovation, help rural America thrive, promote agriculture production that better nourishes Americans while also helping feed others throughout the world, and preserve the nation's natural resources through conservation, restored forests, improved watersheds, and healthy private working lands.

### *Vision of the Olympic National Forest*

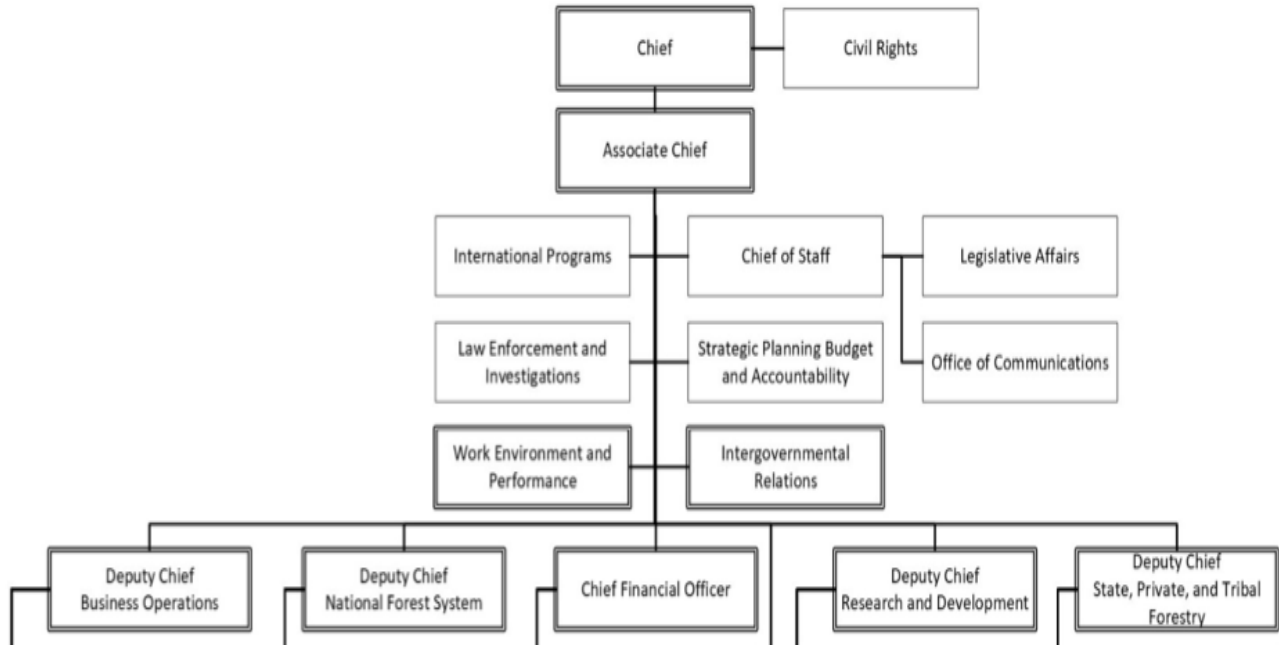
The Olympic National Forest aims to sustain and enhance ecosystems, foster collaborative stewardship, promote sustainable recreation, and support local economies.

### *Vision of the U.S. Forest Service*

The U.S. Forest Service's vision is to be a multicultural, diverse, efficient, and productive organization that respects and appreciates its employees, rewards work, shares responsibility, and maintains public trust.

## Organizational Structure and Staffing

Organizational chart:



For further information on more positions: [Fiscal Year 2025 Budget Justification](#)

### Staffing Levels

Position	Duties/Description
<b>Foresters</b>	Manage timber resources by developing work plans, surveying timber, and reviewing logging plans.
<b>Wildlife Biologists</b>	Monitor projects to protect wildlife and habitats.
<b>Ecosystem Health Specialists</b>	Maintain plant and grass communities for grazing and wildlife.
<b>Firefighters</b>	Fight wildfires by hiking, flying helicopters, and patrolling roads.
<b>Forestry Technician</b>	Construct fire lines by moving dirt and chopping brush.



<b>Forest &amp; Conservation Workers</b>	Plant seedlings, clear brush, and protect plants from disease.
<b>Data Services Specialists</b>	Provide support for natural resource software and databases.
<b>Administrative Support Assistants</b>	Manage purchasing and procurement.
<b>Public Relations Specialists</b>	Interact with the public about fire prevention and other forest issues.
<b>National Environmental Policy Act Planners</b>	Develop work programs for NEPA accomplishment.
<b>Front Desk Staff</b>	Sell maps, permits, and recreation passes.

## Roles and responsibilities

Recent federal budget adjustments have led to layoffs in national parks and forests, including in Washington state. The Forest Service and National Park Service have seen job cuts, which could impact Olympic National Forest’s ability to manage resources, maintain trails, and support conservation programs.

- **Preserve natural resources:** Avoid damaging trees and leave natural areas as pristine as possible.
- **Dispose of trash:** Pack out what you pack in, and properly dispose of all trash.
- **Respect cultural sites:** Do not move, damage, or take historic artifacts, old structures, or objects with historic or archeological value.
- **Be courteous:** Be respectful of other visitors and keep noise at a reasonable level.
- **Control pets:** Keep pets under physical control or on a leash in developed areas.
- **Allow animals in authorized areas:** Saddle, pack, or draft animals are allowed only in authorized areas.
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## Budget and Performance

### Budget Overview

**Annual Budget:** The Olympic National Forest receives an annual budget from the U.S. Forest Service, which is then allocated to various programs and activities.

**Funding Sources:** The budget is funded through a combination of federal appropriations, grants, and revenue generated from activities such as timber sales, recreation fees, and special use permits.

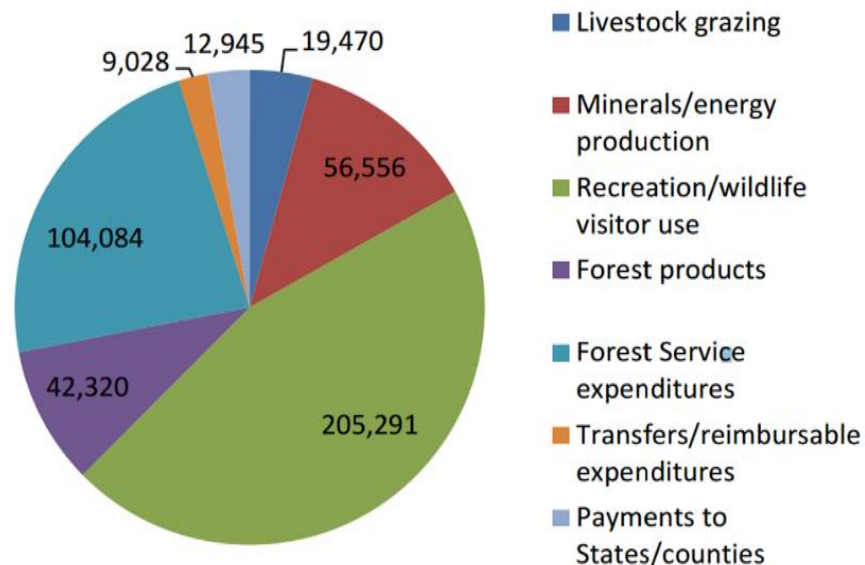
#### Expenditure Categories

- **Resource Management:** Funds allocated for managing forest resources, including timber, wildlife, and watershed restoration.
- **Fire Management:** Budget for fire prevention, suppression, and rehabilitation efforts.
- **Recreation:** Funding for maintaining and improving recreational facilities, trails, and campgrounds.
- **Infrastructure:** Budget for maintaining and improving forest infrastructure, such as roads, bridges, and buildings.
- **Collaborative Projects:** Funds for collaborative projects with local communities, tribes, and other organizations.

### Budget

The Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 Forest Service Budget request for discretionary appropriations is \$8.9 billion. This is an increase of \$658.5 million in comparison to the FY 2024 annualized continuing resolution.

## Finance and Performance Metrics:



<https://www.fs.usda.gov/about-agency/budget-performance>

## Managing the Land ~ Key Activities and Accomplishments

### Land Management Plans

The Olympic National Forest's land management is guided by the [1990 Land and Resource Management Plan](#), which was later amended by the 1994 Northwest Forest Plan. These plans form a comprehensive ecosystem management strategy aimed at maintaining both a sustainable economy and environment through varied land allocations with different management emphases.

*Key Components of the Olympic National Forest Plan*



- Late Successional Reserves for old-growth species.
- Adaptive Management Areas for testing innovative approaches.
- Riparian Reserves for aquatic systems.

The **Aquatic Conservation Strategy** of the Northwest Forest Plan plays a crucial role in aiding the recovery of fish habitat, riparian habitat, and water quality on the Olympic National Forest. The **Northwest Forest Plan** covers 24.5 million acres of federally managed lands in California, Oregon, and Washington. Established in 1994, it addresses threats to threatened and endangered species while also contributing to social and economic sustainability in the region. These plans and strategies ensure that the Olympic National Forest is managed in a way that balances ecological health with economic and recreational opportunities.

## Notable Accomplishments

- **2010:** [Dungeness River Restoration Project initiated](#)
- **2011:** [Olympic Peninsula Collaborative established](#)
- **2012:** [Northern Spotted Owl Habitat Conservation Plan launched](#)
- **2014:** Olympic National Forest Recreation Plan developed
- **2015:** [Elwha River Restoration Project completed](#)
- **2016:** [Fire Management Plan implemented](#)
- **2017:** [Olympic National Forest Stewardship Program launched](#)
- **2018:** [Marbled Murrelet Conservation Strategy implemented](#)
- **2020:** 50 million board feet of timber sustainably harvested

## Fire Management

As climate change exacerbates the threat of wildfires, Olympic National Forest has implemented strategies aimed at increasing fire resilience. The proposed amendment to the forest's management plan emphasizes proactive fire management and climate adaptation. One key strategy involves creating Community Wildfire Protection Zones to protect both communities and forests from devastating wildfires. Additionally, the Forest Service has implemented ecosystem restoration initiatives, such as reintroducing fire into fire-adapted ecosystems to sustain meadows and restore areas encroached upon by non-native species.

### Fire Management Strategies

- **Prescribed Fire:** Controlled burns to reduce fuel, manage vegetation, and restore ecosystems.
- **Mechanical Thinning:** Removing excess vegetation to reduce fuel and create defensible space.
- **Wildland Fire Use:** Allowing natural fires to burn under controlled conditions for ecological benefits.
- **Fire Prevention and Education:** Public education on fire safety and the Firewise Communities Program.
- **Fire Suppression:** Containing and extinguishing fires using crews, equipment, and aerial resources.
- **Collaboration and Partnerships:** Working with federal, state, tribal, and local partners to coordinate fire management.

### Example Case Study on Fire Management

In 2023, the Hurricane Ridge area of Olympic National Park experienced two significant fire incidents:



### Hurricane Ridge Day Lodge Fire (May 2023)

The more devastating fire occurred on May 7, when the historic 12,201-square-foot Hurricane Ridge Day Lodge was engulfed in flames. By the time firefighters from Clallam County Fire District 2 and Port Angeles Fire Department arrived, the building had already collapsed. It had been undergoing interior renovations and was closed to the public at the time. Investigators later determined that the fire originated in the northeast section of the building but were unable to pinpoint a specific cause due to the extent of the damage. The fire destroyed key visitor infrastructure, including the site's electrical, water, and communication systems.

### Hurricane Ridge Fire (August 2023)

A small wildfire broke out near the Hurricane Ridge parking lot due to lightning strikes. The fire, estimated at one acre, burned in heavy dead and downed fuels on steep terrain. The National Park Service (NPS) and U.S. Forest Service (USFS) responded promptly with suppression efforts, including a hand crew, an engine, and a water tender. A second fire, the Eagle Point Fire, was also detected nearby but remained small and manageable. In response, Olympic National Park and Olympic National Forest enacted Stage 2 fire restrictions, banning charcoal fires due to ongoing dry conditions.

**Hurricane Ridge Fire (August 2023):** In August 2023, a lightning strike near Hurricane Ridge parking lot caused a small wildfire. The National Park Service and U.S. Forest Service quickly responded and contained the one-acre fire. Due to dry conditions, both Olympic National Park and Olympic National Forest implemented Stage 2 fire restrictions.

**Hurricane Ridge Day Lodge Fire (May 2023):** A more destructive fire occurred in May 2023, when the Hurricane Ridge Day Lodge was destroyed. The building was undergoing renovations and closed to the public at the time. Firefighters were unable to save the structure, and the cause of the fire remains undetermined due to extensive damage. The loss of the lodge significantly impacted visitor infrastructure at Hurricane Ridge.

### **Investigation & Safety Measures**

Authorities conducted an extensive fire investigation but could not determine the exact cause. The site remained closed for debris removal and utility construction, reopening for limited winter recreation in late 2023.

## Rebuilding

The National Park Service and Washington’s National Park Fund set up a relief fund to support rebuilding efforts. While temporary facilities were established, the area still lacks a visitor center, gift shop, or food services.

# Recreation

## Recreational Opportunities



## Visitor Management

- **Permits and Passes:** Permits are required for activities like camping, fishing, and harvesting.



- **Trail and Facility Maintenance:** The forest maintains trails, campgrounds, and other recreational facilities.
- **Visitor Education and Outreach:** The forest promotes responsible recreation and environmental stewardship through educational programs.
- **Monitoring and Enforcement:** Rangers patrol the forest to monitor activities, enforce regulations, and ensure safety.
- **Collaboration with Partners:** The forest collaborates with local communities and organizations to manage visitor use and address challenges.

## Economic Impact

- Visitor spending supports local businesses and jobs.
- Tourism and recreation create jobs in hospitality, retail, outdoor services, and maintenance.
- Fees and permits fund forest management.
- Recreation boosts business opportunities, tax revenues, and quality of life, and promotes cultural exchange.

## Special Use Permits

**Special-Use Authorization:** A legal document (permit, term permit, lease, or easement) allowing occupancy, use, rights, or privileges of agency land for a specific use and time.

### *Entrance Passes*

- **America the Beautiful Annual Pass:** \$80, provides access to over 2,000 federal recreation sites for one year.



- **America the Beautiful Senior Pass:** \$20 (annual) or \$80 (lifetime) for U.S. citizens and permanent residents aged 62 or older.
- **America the Beautiful Access Pass:** Free lifetime pass for U.S. citizens or permanent residents with permanent disabilities.
- **Military Annual Pass:** Free annual pass for active-duty U.S. military and dependents with valid ID.
- **Fourth Grade Pass:** Free annual pass for U.S. fourth-grade students through Every Kid Outdoors.
- **Volunteer Pass:** Free annual pass earned by completing 250 hours of volunteer service with federal agencies.

#### *Wilderness and Backcountry Permits*

- **Wilderness Permits:** Required year-round for overnight stays in designated wilderness areas (fees and reservations vary).
- **Backcountry Permits:** Necessary for overnight trips in backcountry areas (availability and requirements vary).

#### *Special Use Permits*

- **Commercial Use Authorizations (CUAs):** Required for businesses conducting commercial activities within national parks.
- **Event Permits:** Necessary for organizing events (weddings, public assemblies) within park boundaries.

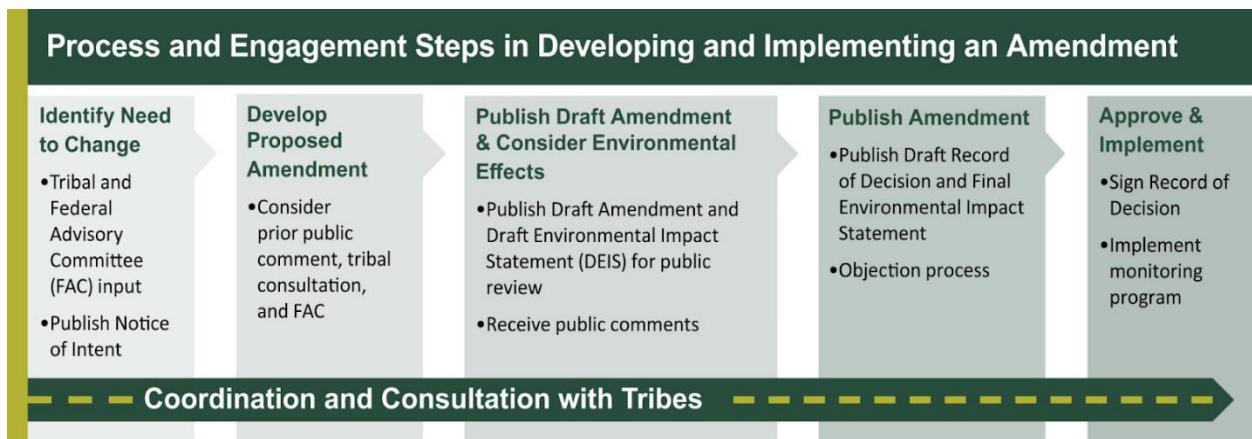
#### *Reservation Fees*

- **Site-Specific Fees:** Some parks offer digital passes for specific sites, covering entrance and amenity fees.



- **Pass Validity:** Varies per pass type (annual or lifetime).
- **Reservation Systems:** May be implemented for certain activities or during peak seasons.
- **Purchasing Passes:** Online, at park entrance stations, or through authorized vendors.

## Relationships and Collaboration



[https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/r6/home/?cid=fsbdev2\\_026990](https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/r6/home/?cid=fsbdev2_026990)

The Olympic National Forest currently consults with 12 tribes on and around the Olympic Peninsula, each with a unique relationship to the forest:

- Quinault Indian Nation
- Shoalwater Bay Indian Tribe
- Hoh Indian Tribe
- Jamestown S’klallam Tribe
- Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe
- Makah Nation
- Port Gamble S’klallam Tribe
- Quileute Nation
- Skokomish Tribal Nation



- Squaxin Island Tribe
- Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation
- Suquamish Tribe

Partnerships can take many forms, from formal agreements with multiple year commitments, or even a single volunteer event. Olympic National Forest's partners can be nonprofit and for-profit entities; rural, urban, and tribal communities; universities and minority-serving institutions; land management agencies; and more. ONF values the contributions partners bring including traditional ecological knowledge, creativity and innovation for effective public outreach and education, experience in managing work projects, and subject-matter expertise.

- **Congressionally Chartered Foundations:** National Forest Foundation, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, National Environmental Education Foundation.
- **Federal Land Management and Regulatory Agencies:** Environmental Protection Agency, Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service/Olympic National Park, U.S. Department of Transportation.
- **Recreation Focus:** Back Country Horsemen of Washington State (Mount Olympus Chapter and Grays Harbor Chapter), Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance, The Gray Wolf Trail crew, Mt. Rose Trail Crew, City of Tacoma, The Mountaineers, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Washington Conservation Corps, State of Washington Department of Natural Resources.
- **Youth and Community Engagement Focused:** Discover Your Northwest and Olympic Recreation Collaborative, Northwest Youth Corps, Pacific Northwest Trails Association, Student Conservation Association, Washington Trails Association.



- **Restoration Focus:** Back Country Horsemen of Washington State, Clallam County (Noxious Weeds/Invasive Species), Ducks Unlimited (Aquatic Organism Passage), Dungeness River Management Team (Watershed & Aquatic Species Restoration), Grays Harbor County & Grays Harbor Conservation District, Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe, Mason County, The Mountaineers, National Experienced Workforce Solutions, Olympic Forest Collaborative, Pacific Coast Salmon Coalition, Sierra Club of North Olympic Peninsula, Woodland Park Zoological Society, Ten Thousand Years Institute, Sustainable & Prisons Project.

**Infrastructure:** National Experienced Workforce Solutions, Washington State Department of Transportation. We (ONF) value the contributions partners bring including traditional ecological knowledge, creativity and innovation for effective public outreach and education, experience in managing work projects, and subject-matter expertise.

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## Challenges and Recommendations

Olympic National Forest works with federal policymakers to secure more stable funding for sustainable forest management programs. They invest in GIS-based biodiversity monitoring to track habitat health and guide conservation efforts.

- **Climate Resilience:** Expand forests’ thinning and prescribed burns, enhance climate monitoring programs, increase collaborations with climate research institutions.
- **Timber Management & Economic Balance:** Implement sustainable harvesting techniques, increase funding for forest restoration projects, work with federal policymakers to secure more stable funding for sustainable forest management programs.



- **Conservation & Biodiversity Efforts:** Strengthen protections for threatened species, enhance riparian and watershed restoration projects, invest in GIS-based biodiversity monitoring.
- **Federal Support & Policy Adjustments:** Lobby for consistent federal funding, push for policies that balance economic activities with long-term environmental sustainability, engage in public education and stakeholder collaboration.

## Future Preparedness

Project 2025, a proposal developed by conservative think tanks, outlines significant changes that could affect the U.S. Forest Service and national lands under its management. These proposed changes could fundamentally alter the mission and operations of the USFS, affecting forest management, conservation efforts, and public access to national lands. It's important to monitor legislative developments related to Project 2025 to understand and respond to these potential impacts.

### *Timber Sales & Management*

Olympic National Forest has struggled to meet its timber harvest targets, which are crucial for funding restoration projects. The forest fell short of its 2024 goal, selling 17 million board feet instead of the targeted 19 million. This affects funding for local environmental projects, such as watershed restoration efforts.

### *Budget & Staffing Issues*

Recent federal budget adjustments have led to layoffs in national parks and forests, including in Washington state. The U.S Forest Service and National Park Service have seen job



cuts, which could impact Olympic National Forest’s ability to manage resources, maintain trails, and support conservation programs.

### *Policy Shifts & Future Uncertainty*

A proposed policy agenda known as “Project 2025” could reshape federal land management by emphasizing increased logging and reduced reliance on prescribed burns for wildfire prevention. Some critics argue that such changes might prioritize commercial interests over ecological sustainability.

## Compliance ~ Democratic Form and Action

### References Federal and State Laws

The U.S. Forest Service and the Olympic National Forest (ONF) abide by a wide range of federal and state laws, including but not limited to:

- **National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA):** Requires federal agencies to assess environmental effects of proposed actions and involve the public in decision-making.
- **Endangered Species Act (ESA):** Protects and recovers imperiled species and their ecosystems.
- **Clean Water Act (CWA):** Regulates discharge of pollutants and quality standards for U.S. waters.
- **Clean Air Act (CAA):** Regulates air emissions to meet air quality standards.
- **Multiple Use Sustained Yield Act (MUSYA):** Mandates that national forests be managed for multiple uses.
- **Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act (RPA):** Requires the Forest Service to develop a long-term strategic plan for forest and rangeland resources.
- **Washington State Laws:** The Forest Service complies with relevant state laws, and state laws apply to national forest lands.

### Ensuring compliance with Regulations

The Olympic National Forest functions as an organized system within the U.S. Forest Service, operating under a structured hierarchy. Its governance, resource management, and stakeholder involvement give it organizational characteristics.



The forest's deep connection to tribal relationships makes it unique. Native American tribes have co-management agreements and ongoing partnerships with the Forest Service, ensuring that land use decisions respect their cultural heritage and sovereignty.

Public deliberation and stakeholder involvement play a major role in forest management. Conservation groups, local communities, businesses, and recreational users contribute to decision-making, balancing economic interests, ecological preservation, and community needs.

The Olympic National Forest operates within a public service model, generating revenue and resources through sustainable timber harvesting, recreation fees, and ecosystem services. It also provides essential public services, such as maintaining trails, preserving wildlife habitats, and supporting local economies.

While not a conventional organization, the forest's structure, revenue generation, and stakeholder engagement give it a unique, system-like nature within the federal land management system.

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