

Wilderness Report

A non-profit organization dedicated to protecting wilderness values

April 25, 2017

Randy King
Superintendent
Mount Rainier National Park
55210 238th Avenue
East Ashford, WA 98304

Dear Superintendent King,

Late last summer I was awarded the privilege of hiking the Wonderland Trail. It was a beautiful and amazing hike. However, all along the route the ghosts of roaring chainsaws disturbed the tranquility of the trail. It was disturbing and at the same time puzzling.

Let me explain. Throughout the Wonderland gorgeous old-growth logs have been bucked back twenty feet or thirty from each side of the trail. Below the trail, dozens of rounds of wood crowd every gully, hollow or creek bed. The scene is reminiscent of an industrial wood lot. It is a management approach that fails to celebrate restraint or harmony with nature. The result is ugly, unappealing, and robs the visitor of the sense of wonder so often experienced as one walks through a chasm cut through an ancient fallen giant.

The Wilderness Act, Section 4 (c), clarifies that administrators should make minimal use of motorized equipment in managing these areas. The Act, Section 2 (c) 2, also references “outstanding opportunities for solitude” as a key aspect of wilderness.

I would appreciate your written response to the following two questions:

1. Given that the Wilderness Act defines wilderness as having, “outstanding opportunities for solitude”, why is Mt. Rainier dependent on the use of chain saws instead of the more historic hand powered equipment like crosscuts?
2. Given that the Wilderness Act stipulates that management should make minimal use of motorized equipment, why do crews remove forty and fifty foot sections of fallen trees when a six or eight foot section would very adequately preserve the trail corridor?

Wilderness Report is dedicated to protecting wilderness values. Because the management of the Mt. Rainier Wilderness is a matter of concern to many users, correspondence related to this issue will be posted on the Wilderness Report website, expected to launch soon.

Sincerely,

Arthur Pope
Executive Director