WORLD HERITAGE NOMINATION

IUCN TECHNICAL REVIEW

1. IDENTIFICATION NUMBER AND NAME 151 Olympic National Park

2. LOCATION: Northwestern Washington State, 47°50'N, 124°W

3. NOMINATED BY: National Park Service, Department of the Interior, Government of the United States of America

4. DOCUMENTATION:

(i) Nomination form, including maps and photos
(ii) Supplementary documentation (IUCN)

a) Olympic National Park Master Plan

b) Consultation: Harold K. Eidsvik, Senior Policy Advisor, Parks Canada

c) Dr. Jim Thorsell, Parks Planner

d) Hutchins, M. and Stevens, M. 1981. "Olympic Mountain Goats". Natural History. January

e) An Environmental Assessment on the Management of Introduced Mountain Goats in Olympic National Park. (February 1981).

5. BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY

Olympic National Park, comprising 3628 square kilometres, is isolated from other mountain ranges and surrounded by the waters of the Pacific Ocean and Puget Sound; this isolation has allowed the development of endemic wildlife, including the Olympic marmot, 4 subspecies of the other mammals, 2 subspecies of trout, and 12 species or varieties of plants. The area contains a great wealth of geological formations, affected by high rainfall (5000 mm) on the west and low rainfall (300 mm/year) on the east. The mountains contain about 60 active glaciers; the area is unique in that it is the lowest latitude in the world in which glaciers begin at an elevation lower than 2000 metres and exist below 1000 metres. The coastal strip of the site stretches along 80 kilometres of wilderness beach, characterized by rocky headlands, log-strewn beaches, and a wealth of intertidal life; rocky islets along the coast are remnants of a continuously receding, changing coastline, and the arches, caves, and buttresses are evidence of the continuous battering of the waves. Reflecting the varied topography (from seashore to glacier) and the varied rainfall (from the wettest location in the continental US, to the driest on the northwest coast), the vegetation zones in the site are complex and varied. The Olympic rainforest, which reaches its maximum development within the site is; sitka spruce, Douglas fir, western red cedar, and others reach a living standing biomass here which may be the highest of anywhere in the world.

6. INTEGRITY

The site is large enough to contain on-going geological processes (glaciation and changing coastline) and evolution of the many and varied forest types. Ideally, the site should include the national forest which separates the 80 kilometre-long coastal strip from the montane areas, but this is not considered feasible or vital to the integrity of the site as both the coastal

strip and the 3350 square kilometres of the Olympic Mountains can stand alone. The main danger to the integrity of the site is, oddly, one of its attractions: the mountain goat. Due to the isolation of the site, mountain goats never dispersed naturally to the Olympics, so their introduction in 1925-29 may be causing significant changes in the natural ecosystem. Research has suggested that the mountain goats have reduced plant cover, increased erosion, and shifted plant-community dominants toward more resistent or less palatable species; they have been recorded feeding on at least three of the endemic plants, and some concern has been expressed that these species may be endangered by the mountain goat. A mountain goat control programme aimed at removing 180 goats and establishing and expanding a goat-free alpine zone was begun on 15 April 1981).

7. COMPARISON WITH OTHER AREAS

There is no comparable site in British Columbia or Alaska. Pacific Rim National Park in British Columbia does not yet have the extensive virgin forest; negotiations are underway, but even if successful they will not add alpine areas and glaciers to Pacific Rim. Other mountain parks such as Garibaldi (British Columbia) do not have the coastal representation. Once the northern end of Vancouver Island is passed, the forest composition changes; halfway up the British Columbia coast, the magnificent Douglas fir disappears, so the Alaskan sites are all quite different. Redwood National Park lacks the mountains and has much lower diversity of plants and geological features.

8. EVALUATION

It is apparent from the nomination form and other documentation that the Olympic National Park is the best natural area in the entire Pacific Northwest, with a spectacular coastline, scenic lakes, majestic mountains and glaciers, and magnificent temperate rainforest; these are outstanding examples of on-going evolution and superlative natural phenomena. It is unmatched in the world.

9. RECOMMENDATION

Olympic National Park meets natural criteria (ii) and (iii) and should be added to the World Heritage List. The Committee might wish to express concern about the introduced mountain goats and request a copy of the mountain goat management plan.

International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources

July 1981 (rev)