

AFTER THE STORM

Eighteen months after storms pounded Mount Rainier, the recovery is nearly complete

Most residents of the Northwest are used to the occasional down-pour now and then. But after Mount Rainier experienced 18 inches of rain in a 36-hour period in the fall of 2006, locals and long-distance travelers alike faced the unlikely prospect of “CLOSED” signs posted at every park entrance. Downed trees blocked hiking routes, campgrounds were washed away, and all 93 miles of Wonderland Trail, which encircles the mountain, were off limits.

Fortunately, a coalition of conservation groups quickly rallied to do something about it, thanks largely to generous financial assistance from outdoor retailer REI. NPCA joined with the Student Conservation Association (SCA), Washington Trails Association, The Mountaineers, and Washington’s National Park Fund to undo what Mother Nature had done. By the end of 2007, the Northwest Storm Recovery Coalition deployed more than 1,700 volunteers who donated 84,000 hours of service at Mount Rainier. While SCA oversaw most of the work on the ground, NPCA communicated with members of Congress includ-



A volunteer hiking in Mt. Rainier National Park.

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ing Norm Dicks (D-WA) and Dave Reichert (R-WA), securing \$45 million for Park Service repair efforts. Last spring, NPCA’s visitor information center and art gallery in downtown Seattle hosted a show focusing on the storm damage, raising more aware-

ness and rallying even more volunteers.

In April, Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne presented the coalition with a Cooperative Conservation Award, which recognizes achievements in conservation through collaboration. More importantly, thanks to their work, some of the final “CLOSED” signs have come down in recent months, and summertime visitors can expect to find a park that has returned to “business as usual.”

“Some people were surprised at the response of all the volunteers who wanted to pitch in and help Mount Rainier recover, but I wasn’t,” says Shane Farnor, senior program coordinator in NPCA’s Northwest office. “I know how much people love that park and what an icon ‘The Mountain’ is. You really got the sense that this storm event had damaged *their* park and they were going to do whatever they could to help the park recover. Once you’re out on a trail tangibly making a difference, that connection grows even more. Although the storm itself was destructive, in the end, it really pulled people together.”

—Scott Kirkwood

THE LIST

Whether you’re planning to visit a park this summer or just hoping to escape to one in the pages of a book, here are some of the best titles with national parks as their backdrops, selected by our staff and current and former Park Service employees.

As Far As the Eye Can See: Reflections of an Appalachian Trail Hiker (1990)

by David Brill
Appalachian National Scenic Trail, ME to GA

Desert Solitaire: A Season in the Wilderness (1968)

by Edward Abbey
Arches National Park, UT

The Last Season (2006)

by Eric Blehm
Sequoia & Kings Canyon National Parks, CA

The Measure of a Mountain (1997)

by Bruce Barcott
Mount Rainier National Park, WA

Strangers in High Places: The Story of the Great Smoky Mountains (1966)

by Michael Frome
Great Smoky Mountains, NC and TN

The Swamp: The Everglades, Florida, and the Politics of Paradise (2006)

by Michael Grunwald
Everglades National Park, FL

Travels in Alaska (1915)

by John Muir
Glacier Bay National Park & Preserve, AK

Undaunted Courage: Meriwether Lewis, Thomas Jefferson, and the Opening of the American West (1996)

by Stephen Ambrose
Lewis & Clark National Historic Trail, IL to WA

Winter Study (Fiction; 2008)

by Nevada Barr
Isle Royale National Park, MI

