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Mount Rainier National Park News Release

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Mount Rainier National Park: A Year After the Flood

One year ago this week, Mount Rainier National Park experienced an historic flood that changed the landscape of the park forever. Eighteen inches of rain fell over a period of 36 hours, washing out roads, destroying trails, severing power, telephone and sewer systems, damaging campgrounds, and closing the park for an unprecedented six months.

A year later, the park has made tremendous progress in the recovery process. Throughout the winter and spring of 2007, park crews worked tirelessly to repair roads and restore utilities in the park. Mount Rainier reopened the gates to visitors on May 5th, 2007. Throughout the summer and fall, park staff and volunteers continued to work diligently to restore dozens of damaged sites throughout the park. The Wonderland Trail, a 93-mile trail circling the park, reopened in August, and by mid-November, the major road repair projects in the park will be complete.

"It is an enormous milestone to have all the major road projects finally coming to completion in the park. We cannot thank enough our employees, the many volunteers, and the support of Congress in getting us where we are today," said Park Superintendent Dave Uberuaga.

Mount Rainier received a record 80,000 hours of volunteer support in 2007, amounting to \$1.6 million in value to the park. The efforts of partner organizations such as the Northwest Storm Recovery Coalition,

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the Student Conservation Association, the National Park and Conservation Association, Washington's National Park Fund, the Mountaineers, the Washington Trails Association, and businesses such as Recreational Equipment Incorporated (REI) and Starbucks have been extraordinary.

Much work is still to be done. Attention is now focused on shoring up flood protection for the rainy season to protect park infrastructure and the historic assets of the park. The trails system, however, may take years to fully recover. Decisions are still on the horizon as the park is developing alternatives for how to provide public access to the Carbon River area and major trail rerouting projects on the Carbon River and Glacier Basin trails.

In 2008 the park will need the continued support of volunteers and partnering organizations to fully complete the recovery of the park. Most of the recovery work ahead is in the backcountry on trail projects and remote backcountry structures.

Initial estimates for flood recovery were projected at \$36 million. Due to the support of volunteers and the use of park crews for much of the repair work, estimates have been revised down to \$24-27 million over the two year recovery period. Superintendent Uberuaga attributes the cost savings to the use of existing park crews to perform a majority of the recovery work. Lower cost alternatives were chosen on projects such as Kautz Creek, where park crews were able to install culverts in lieu of major bridge construction. Solutions were engineered with consultants to apply alternative methods to road repair projects at White River, where an estimated \$1 million repair was completed for only \$400,000 by using river barbs, a lower cost alternative, instead of rip rap. Volunteers also did a great deal of routine recurring maintenance on roads, trails and campgrounds, allowing park crews to focus on more complex repairs to the park.

For more information on the recovery of Mount Rainier National Park, visit the park's website at www.nps.gov/mora.

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