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Washington's National Parks Turn Black Friday into Green Free Day for Visitors

Mount Rainier and Olympic National Parks offer free admission on Friday, Nov. 27

Seattle, Wash. –Washington's National Park Fund, a non-profit dedicated to supporting our state's three largest national parks, is encouraging Washingtonians to take advantage of the recent decision to waive entrance fees for visitors at Mount Rainier and Olympic National Parks on Black Friday and join the growing #OptOutside movement to turn the day into an opportunity to enjoy the great outdoors.

"The parks' decision to throw open their gates could not come at a better time," said Laurie Ward, Executive Director of Washington's National Park Fund. "Since REI began this movement, more and more Washingtonians are looking at one another and saying 'let's go!' This gracious offer now makes it even easier to get out and enjoy our wonderful state's beauty."

"Mount Rainier and Olympic National Parks are two of this state's most phenomenal places. When families, adventurers or groups of friends go there, they're creating memories for a lifetime," said Marc Berejka, REI's Director for Community and Government Affairs. "It's incredibly exciting to see the parks go fee-free on Black Friday, making it even easier for Washingtonians to #OptOutside at two of this state's natural wonders."

"The diverse terrain and numerous recreational options at our national parks offer something for everyone," Randy King, Superintendent of Mount Rainier National Park, stated recently. "And with our recent snowfall, Mount Rainier National Park is as beautiful and pristine as ever. We can't wait to share this day with folks from throughout the region. And a little secret? The crowds are greatly diminished at this time of year. You'll feel like the parks are all yours, which in fact they are!"

"The day after Thanksgiving is the perfect time for some fresh air and a little exercise," said Olympic National Park Superintendent Sarah Creachbaum. "We invite individuals, couples, groups and families to get out and enjoy a fee-free day in either Olympic National Park or Mount Rainier National Park. We're calling the day after Thanksgiving 'Green Friday' at Olympic National Park," said Creachbaum.

Locally, Washington's National Park Fund, the official fundraising partner of Mount Rainier, North Cascades, and Olympic National Parks, is opting to take it outside on Green Friday as well. The office will be closed and staff and board members will be out in the national parks creating memories of their own.

"We're joining the ranks of many others who have decided to join up with what our friends at REI have started," Ward said. "We hope to see many of our donors and friends in the parks that day, too!" The Fund is planning to be at the gates of Mount Rainier and Olympic National Parks celebrating the good news with park visitors.

The push to opt out of Black Friday and opt in to the outdoors has been spreading since national retailer REI recently launched the #OptOutside initiative. REI is closing its doors across the country on Black Friday. Instead, REI wants people to get outside, take in some fresh air, and unwind a bit.

"Whether it's snowshoeing, skiing, hiking, or taking a scenic walk, we really encourage everyone to make time to get out into nature," said Bret Wirta, board president of Washington's National Park Fund. "Making the national parks part of your Thanksgiving tradition can create treasured memories that would certainly be more meaningful than any shopping bargain you may find that day!"

More information about visiting Mount Rainier, North Cascades, and Olympic National Parks is available at www.nps.gov.

About Washington's National Park Fund: Washington's National Park Fund is the *only* philanthropic organization dedicated *exclusively* to supporting Mount Rainier, North Cascades and Olympic National Parks through charitable contributions, operating under a Partnership Agreement between each national park and the Fund.

The mission is to raise private support to deepen the public's love for, understanding of, and experiences in Mount Rainier, North Cascades and Olympic National Park. Annually, the park superintendents submit priority lists of projects that, except for charitable contributions, would not otherwise be implemented.

Over the past seven years, more than \$3 million has been contributed to these parks. 100% of donations to Washington's National Park Fund stay right here in Washington for the benefit of Mount Rainier, North Cascades and Olympic National Parks.

www.wnpf.org

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