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## **Last Dam Summer Party Benefits Olympic National Park**

April 29 – Celebrate the final summer of the Elwha River Dams in Olympic National Park at the “LastDamSummer Party” Thursday, May 27 from 7-10 p.m. at the new Holiday Inn Express in Sequim. Proceeds from the evening will support education, preservation and protection efforts at Olympic National Park. Tickets are \$35 per person.

The evening will feature fabulous appetizers and desserts highlighting Olympic Culinary Loop Association members; an auction complete with travel packages, artwork, dining opportunities and more; entertainment by “Therapy Session” from Forks; and a special appearance by a national park yellow bus.

Beginning in 2011, dam removal will restore the Elwha River to its natural free-flowing state, allowing all five species of Pacific salmon to once again reach habitat and spawning grounds. Olympic National Park, inscribed on the World Heritage list in 1981, is internationally recognized for the diversity of its ecosystems, which boasts a temperate rainforest, alpine meadows and a pristine coastline. The park is one of 890 treasures of the world identified as World Heritage sites for their outstanding value to humanity.

The event will be held at the newly opened Sequim Holiday Inn Express, operated by Wirta Hospitality Worldwide, a member of the World Heritage Alliance which promotes sustainable tourism and local economic development of World Heritage sites.

Bret Wirta, CEO of Wirta Hospitality Worldwide, said the term “sustainable tourism” conjures up images of adventures in the rainforests of Costa Rica and bicycling around Europe. But the vast majority of travel time and dollars are spent in hotels like the Sequim Holiday Inn Express. Wirta believes that if you really want to change the global footprint, you need to make a shift on the smaller, more mainstream tourism scale. Wirta counsels other hotel partners that changing their practices and becoming more environmentally responsible would have a huge impact.

“Just do a little bit of your part,” said Wirta. “You don’t have to save the world, just a little bit of it.”

The Olympic Culinary Loop Association showcases Olympic Coast Cuisine by bringing together the region’s culinary interests from farm to table and supporting a local distribution system that reduces their carbon footprint. The May 27 event will feature chefs from the Ocean Crest Resort in Moclips, Lake Quinault Lodge and Kalaloch Lodge preparing appetizers from local ingredients. Food will be donated by Nash’s Family Farm, Sequim; Short’s Family Farm, Chimacum; Wild West Seafood and Mushrooms; Little Skookum Shellfish Growers; and Ocean Crest Resort, Moclips. Dessert will feature Elevated Ice Cream from Port Townsend and wine selections will include the Olympic Cellars Winery and other Olympic Peninsula Wineries.

Olympic Culinary Loops Association President Peter Becker said his group has a special attachment to Olympic National Park as the region’s biggest tourist draw.

“We ask visitors for three, three and sleep – experience three excursions, eat three meals a day and sleep in our local lodgings,” said Becker, who also owns the Little Skookum Shellfish Growers.

To purchase tickets to the May 27 event or donate an auction item, visit [lastdamsummer.org](http://lastdamsummer.org).

Washington’s National Park Fund is the official philanthropic partner for Olympic National Park. Your gifts are fully tax-deductible to the extent provided by law. The Fund is a 501(c)(3) organization Tax ID #01-0869799. Visit [wnpf.org](http://wnpf.org) to learn more about the fund or get involved.

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