



Washington State Marine Debris Task Force **MEDIA ADVISORY**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – December 20, 2012 (evening)
12-012 MDNR



Treacherous conditions turn ground crew back just short of grounded dock on Olympic National Park shore

FORKS, Wash. – A dangerously swollen stream combined with rough, high seas forced a ground crew representing federal and state agencies to turn around today just short of their intended inspection of a large dock that washed ashore in a rugged section of the Olympic National Park / Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary shoreline.

A team led by National Park Service staff and including Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Williams College, Oregon State University and Ballard Diving and Salvage was deployed Thursday morning to make the challenging hike to a remote stretch of coastal beach



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and inspect the dock for invasive species, place a tracking beacon on it, take samples for analysis, take measurements, and verify dock origin.

The team came within 200 yards of the dock, and got a good look at it through binoculars, but team members were unable to cross the normally passable Mosquito Creek under the extreme conditions.

If weather conditions permit Friday, the team will mount a new effort in the morning with additional safety gear suitable for making the stream crossing.

Friday is considered the “last best shot” to reach the dock during the current tide series. The next opportunity would come in early January – weather permitting.

The dock is aground on a remote stretch of beach between LaPush and the mouth of the Hoh River, which must be accessed by foot via primitive trails across rough terrain. Stream crossings are dangerous due to very high flows. There is no vehicle access. The coast has been pounded by high winds, storm surge, and extreme high tides. Safety of the ground crew is a priority.

As photos become available, they will be uploaded to this site:
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/ecologywa/sets/72157630409598334/>

Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary regulations prohibit disturbing wildlife by flying below 2,000 feet within one nautical mile of the coast or offshore islands. This includes the area where the dock has washed ashore.

Pending further information about the precise location and risks associated with the dock, the wilderness beach between Hoh Head and Toileak Point is closed to all public entry.

Olympic National Park protects more than 70 miles of wild Pacific coast. Much of this coastline, including the dock’s location, was designated by Congress as Wilderness in 1988. Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary protects the 3,188 square miles of the marine environment seaward of the national park.

The coastal section of Olympic National Park and Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary protect one of the richest and biologically diverse intertidal zones on the west coast of North America. Invasive species present a significant risk to the rich native coastal community.

Marine debris is an ongoing problem with everyday impacts, especially around the Pacific, and natural disasters can make the problem worse. Anyone sighting other significant debris that may be from the tsunami is asked to report it to DisasterDebris@noaa.gov.



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As of Dec. 13, NOAA has received approximately 1,432 official debris reports, of which 17 have been confirmed as definite tsunami debris. For the latest information on tsunami debris please visit <http://marinedebris.noaa.gov/tsunamidebris> and <http://marinedebris.wa.gov>.

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