Spring arrived in Western Washington and the Crew headed out for a weekend of backpacking in the Olympics for another pre-Phimont shakedown. Since it's still pretty early in the season and with fresh snow reported only a week earlier at 2,500 feet, we decided to hike up the Dosewallips River Valley and stay below 2,000 feet elevation. Be warned, however, that there's a new washout on Dosewallips Road at Case Creek, over a mile short of the 2003 washout which is the end of the driveable gravel road. This new washout can be navigated only by 4x4 vehicles with high axle clearance.

There's a cut-out trail available for hikers to climb the ridge and bypass the old washout. It's steep, with switchbacks, but quick. Within minutes, you'll be on the west side of the washout and back on level ground. Sign in at the NPS kiosk and then it's only a mile stroll to Elkhorn Campground, alongside the river and in deep, old-growth, moss-covered beauty. There are many, many flat and hardened campsites with fire rings, but several of the old picnic tables have begun to collapse. This was a vehicle-ready campground until 2003 but is no longer maintained. The "bear boxes" are gone, so you'll need to hoist your foods and odorous items. There are no bear wires, but we found many strong branches reaching out to get our bear bags sufficiently out from the tree and off the ground. We spotted no wildlife while we were there...not even a bird. Both of the pit toilet buildings are now permanently closed, with their doors fastened shut, so you'll need to practice your LNT skills out in the forest beyond. Elkhorn is on US Forest Service land. While the Dosewallips River is glacier-fed, you still need to treat your water. A filter pump is best, since there's just enough sediment to be annoying if you only try to boil it. Filtering is arguably still the best method to guard against protozoa.

After a hot breakfast, we broke camp, cleaned the area, and started up the trail to the