

THE WILD CASCADES

THE JOURNAL OF THE NORTH CASCADES CONSERVATION COUNCIL

Fall 2018



Celebrating 50 Years of North Cascades National Park

THE WILD CASCADES ■ Fall (October 2018)

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COVER: *Approaching the Lower Curtis glacier, August 18, 2018.*
—© TOM HAMMOND PHOTO

The Wild Cascades

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THE NORTH CASCADES

CONSERVATION COUNCIL was formed in 1957 "To protect and preserve the North Cascades' scenic, scientific, recreational, educational, and wilderness values." Continuing this mission, N3C keeps government officials, environmental organizations, and the general public informed about issues affecting the Greater North Cascades Ecosystem. Action is pursued through administrative, legal, and public participation channels to protect the lands, waters, plants and wildlife.

Over the past half century N3C has led or participated in campaigns to create the North Cascades National Park Complex, Glacier Peak Wilderness, and other units of the National Wilderness System from the W.O. Douglas Wilderness north to the Alpine Lakes Wilderness, the Henry M. Jackson Wilderness, the Chelan-Sawtooth Wilderness, the Wild Sky Wilderness and others. Among its most dramatic victories has been working with British Columbia allies to block the raising of Ross Dam, which would have drowned Big Beaver Valley.

N3C is supported by member dues and private donations. These contributions support the full range of the Council's activities, including publication of *The Wild Cascades*. As a 501(c)(3) organization, all contributions are fully tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. Membership dues for one year are: Living Lightly/Student \$10; Individual \$30; Family \$50; Sustaining \$100.

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Founded in 1957
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THE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

FALL 2018

Let me open with how excited I am to have Lisa Bergman join the N3C board! I've known Lisa for many years, and to have such a gracious, accomplished, talented woman on our board is a boon. More importantly, she brings positive energy and meaningful action to conservation efforts. We are fortunate indeed, and not just because she (and husband Dave Fluharty) provide great munchies when they host board meetings.

Speaking of women in conservation, let me also express my gratitude for former board member Athena Pangan, who continues to do bookkeeping and other financial things to keep this organization running. And there's the field team for the North Cascade Glacier Climate Project 2018 version. As you'll discover in the article on the Lower Curtis Glacier, all field scientists this year were women. Mauri and I talked at length about the lack of engagement by young people—women, men, girls and boys—in science, conservation and ecology-aware activities. A disquieting trend I believe this organization should engage and remedy.

I saw images of helicopters carrying goats in the Seattle Times the other day. It is hard to fathom why the agencies engaged in this important and correct action to get goats out of the Olympics seem to believe that goats require drop-off service in Wilderness areas (or really, ANY areas) of the North Cascades. Notably, when the weather was poor and they couldn't fly the goats in, they dropped them off at the end of a logging road and (you'd never believe it) the goats found their own way to the high country. A-hem.

While I am pleased that the 50th anniversary of North Cascades National Park was celebrated in Seattle's Central District to attract all races and ages, I remain concerned that folks see our natural areas primarily as a means of recreation and service to humans. Speaking of celebrations, see the great presentation by our own Dave Fluharty at the official event in Newhalem that was hosted by the National Park Service.

The 50th anniversary of the creation of North Cascades National Park marks a conservation achievement that lives on in time and will benefit current and future generations in so many ways and on so many levels. We have the founders of the N3C to thank for this and I am profoundly grateful to them and all conservationists who seek to make our planet a better place for all living things. The 50th anniversary also reminds us we need to continue to protect our wild places—and we need to work together in the conservation community to move said efforts forward. I call on like-minded organizations to work together to secure meaningful protections. More action is needed on the ground!

I remain confident in our democracy and the greater understanding of how important it is (and is becoming) to take care of this grand water planet we call home. The forces of good will prevail, but we need to keep at it. I ask each and everyone to continue fighting the good fight.

N3C raises questions about Excelsior Mine

By Dave Fluharty



NCCC has joined with other organizations to challenge the U.S. Forest Service's Draft Environmental Assessment for the Excelsior Mine Redevelopment by signing on to a letter prepared by Tom Uniak of Washington Wild. NCCC understands that mining is one of the multiple uses that the USFS manages on public lands but we are concerned that the Draft Assessment ignores important land management regulations and does not anticipate water quality impacts and other aspects of potential mining.

The proposal being evaluated comes from a group who thinks that current mineral prices and mining technologies are sufficiently robust to potentially reopen the Excelsior Mine, which was abandoned prior to 1920. It is unclear whether or not any of the investors in the original mine actually made money and the Cascade Range is notoriously mineral poor. Thus, the current proposal is to do exploratory drilling to determine if there is sufficient mineralization to justify resuming mining in the area.

The problem with this proposal as seen by NCCC and other organizations is that

part of the proposed drilling development is in areas designated as roadless areas because of their values as forests and watershed areas that offer recreational activities and wildlife habitat as well as protect tribal Treaty rights. Unfortunately, it appears that the USFS has not protected these areas as required by law and has allowed clearing of a road to the upper portion of the proposal area without USFS authorization and without approval of the Department of Agriculture, which is necessary. Alternative approaches to perform the proposed drilling were not considered either.

Also, it is surprising that in this day and age of maturity of understanding of the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) the USFS has not fully analyzed all of the baseline conditions for impacts on Endangered Species, groundwater, sediment discharges, and mine wastes and their direct, indirect and cumulative impacts. It is particularly disturbing that there is no baseline established for water quality that could affect fish and other species in the watershed.

Cabin from the "Glacier Peak Mines" operation of Kennecott Copper, remaining from prospects of a 372-acre open pit mine on Miners Ridge, dating back to the 50s. —PHIL FENNER PHOTO

This Excelsior project has been a slow-moving issue for the USFS but it does not credit the agency that its assessments and position on requirements for permit authorization have not changed over the years and that comments submitted in earlier processes of scoping have not seemed to have any effect on the USFS positions or have been refuted. Does the USFS pay attention to the comments received? The answer appears to be no. Let's hope that our current support for these efforts obtain more credible attention.

Read the joint comment letter signed by NCCC at: <https://tinyurl.com/yb2xf9mw>



“Donut Hole” logging threatens B.C. Cascades

By Rick McGuire

The Cascades on the Canadian side of the border are threatened by ongoing and planned logging in an area known as the “donut hole”—a gap of unprotected lands between Manning and Skagit Provincial Parks. Near Silverdaisy mountain in the uppermost reaches of the Skagit watershed, this area was left out of the two provincial parks due to the presence of mining claims.

The Canadian Cascades are a critical area for any efforts to recover grizzly bear populations on both sides of the line. It is thought that the “ghost bears” occasionally reported in the North Cascades are actually bears who filter down from British Columbia, finding food and living space on the U.S. side. There has been, so far, little hard evidence that they are really here. If they are, they are likely too few in number for mating and reproduction.

N3C and others support efforts to recover grizzly bears in the Cascades, which have plenty of good habitat but few or no grizzly bears. About 15 years ago a serious effort to study reintroduction began on

the Canadian side of the line. It did not get very far before the “Liberal” party government in power in British Columbia at that time pulled the plug on it.

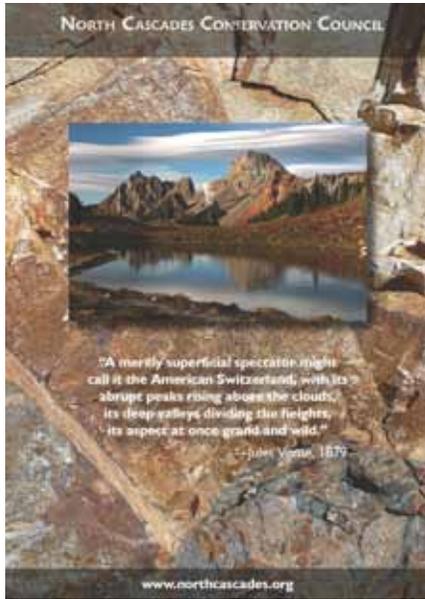
Hopes for grizzly bear recovery have again been rekindled, this time in the U.S. After mixed signals, Secretary of Interior Ryan Zinke has apparently given his support to these efforts, although concerns remain.

N3C, along with a number of groups on both sides of the international boundary, has weighed in against the “donut hole” logging. Seattle mayor Jenny Durkan and Washington Governor Jay Inslee have also expressed their concerns about the Skagit watershed to the B.C. government. It is hoped that the current B.C. government, a more conservation-friendly coalition comprised mostly of New Democrats with several Greens giving them a slim majority in the Provincial legislature, will be receptive to these comments and can give long-sought protection to this critical area.

Joe Foy, co-executive director of Canada’s Wilderness Committee, looks out over a new clearcut in the upper Smitheram Creek Valley. —WILDERNESS COMMITTEE PHOTO

‘No New Jets, No New Flights’ campaign kickoff

Navy Growler jet overflights from Whidbey Naval Air Station will drastically increase in plans publicized by the Navy, and it’s becoming a problem from Whidbey Island to the San Juans to the North Cascades. A new organization called “Sound Defense Alliance” is organizing protests and asking those affected to log their noise experiences for evidence. They are online now at <https://sounddefensealliance.org/>. TWC has published many reports over the years of military overflights of the Cascades and their harmful effects on Wilderness values and potential hazard to recreation there, so we encourage you to get involved with this new organization.



Your copy of the new N3C brochure is inside this issue!

We updated our brochure to reflect the progress we've made in the last decade and some of the new challenges we face, and we're proud to include your copy inside this issue. Pull it out, take a look, and get inspired to spread the word! Then take it with you, and when you're talking up N3C you'll be ready to use it to recruit a new member. If every N3C member recruits just one new member, we'll double our membership! But don't stop there. If you need more brochures just email philf@northcascades.org and we'll send you more copies. You can also download and print the colorful new N3C flyer from our website to pin on bulletin boards: www.northcascades.org/publications/flyer



2018 Flyer

Lake Serene trail preserved

FORTERRA Land Conservancy purchased 190 acres of land from Weyerhaeuser Lumber to preserve Lake Serene Trail. The trail travels through thick timber to access Lake Serene, a popular hiking destination near Mt. Index. When Weyerhaeuser had planned to close the trail in order to log the area, FORTERRA stepped in and organized a fundraiser. Helping to raise funds were Snohomish County, Washington Trails Association, Washington Alpine Club, Outdoor Research and REI. FORTERRA vice president Michael Beneke said the deal ultimately cost \$617,000. Part of the agreement included the harvest of 57 acres of timber which would not affect the esthetic appearance on the trail. FORTERRA plans to keep the property and is working with Snohomish County to apply a conservation easement on the acreage so it will continue to be used as trail and forest habitat.

FORTERRA (which stands for "Land for Good") was started in 1989 by volunteers from the Seattle King County Land Trust who recognized that saving wildlands means protecting our working lands. Its Cascade and Olympic Agendas seek to protect 1.3 million acres of working forest, farms, shorelines, parks and natural areas and to make cities and towns great places to live, work and raise families. We appreciate instances like this one where this agenda aligns with our goals of land and scenic protection in the North Cascades.



Join our N3C Facebook page!

We have almost 150 friends already. Help us build our clout by friending us and then sharing posts with friends and others concerned about preserving the North Cascades. While you're at it, give a look to the American Alps page as well.



Planning begins for Middle Fork Snoqualmie and Pratt Wild and Scenic Rivers

The planning process has begun for the Middle Fork Snoqualmie and Pratt River Wild & Scenic rivers. Both were designated at the end of 2014 in the same bill that added the Pratt River valley and other nearby areas to the Alpine Lakes Wilderness.

Wild & Scenic designation creates a management zone for a quarter mile on each side of the river. The managing agency, in this case the U.S. Forest Service, is mandated to come up with a management plan. The Forest Service has discretion to make the management area wider or narrower, as long as the total acreage equals a half-mile-wide strip in total along the rivers.

N3C is participating in this process. One problem along the Middle Fork is uncontrolled dispersed camping. Large four-wheel-drive trucks are used to smash down vegetation and create new "camp-sites" right along the river. It is hoped that the W&S designation will provide another tool to use against this destructive practice.

The designation and management plan should also help guide decisions about where to locate, or not locate, recreational facilities. It also means that threats like the flood control dam on the Middle Fork, proposed by the Army Corps of Engineers in 1973, should never again reappear.

N3C is looking forward to a strong management plan to further protect the Middle Fork, in the closest mountain valley to Seattle, and now 99% publicly owned.

Washington Commissioner of Public Lands Peter Goldmark next to the one-time "Queen of the Middle Fork," sadly now fallen. —MARK BOYAR PHOTO

Corvid's eye

Like most of the major west side valleys of the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie (MBS) National Forest, the North Fork Nooksack suffered its share of abuse during the U.S. Forest Service's logging heyday. From roughly the end of World War II until the Endangered Species Act listings of the northern spotted owl and marbled murrelet in the early 1990s, logging roads were pushed high into every reachable drainage; with irreplaceable, centuries-old forests trucked out to become two-by-fours. Although the uniquely rugged character of the MBS partly limited the extent of old-growth liquidation in comparison to other national forests to the south, this didn't mean the Forest Service wasn't willing to give it the old college try with the encouragement of its then-bottomless budget. In the North Fork Nooksack, logging roads were bulldozed and dynamited well up the mainstem river valley, as well as the major tributaries of White Salmon, Ruth, Swamp, Anderson, Wells, Thompson, Glacier, and Canyon creeks. For the Forest Service, these roads served the dual purpose of facilitating the elimination of "decadent" ancient forest and preventing the dreaded prospect of eventual Wilderness designation.

Things did change in dramatic fashion after the owl and murrelet listings, bringing with them a new norm that's persisted into the present day. For over a quarter-century now, the Nooksack's largest branch and other MBS valleys have in some ways begun recapturing the deep quiet that characterized the region for thousands of years, prior to the logging frenzy of the latter half of the 20th century. Denuded areas have since greened up, with a rumpled forest quilt reasserting itself below treeline as far as the corvid's eye can see. And although the recently completed "access and travel management plan" for the North Fork largely maintained the status quo for the existing road network (so as not to offend any user group constituency), Ma Nature has nonetheless taken it upon herself to put a healthy quantity of dead-end spur roads to bed. To be sure, all-season recreation has exploded in the North Fork as the years have passed. Accessible mountain scenery of such quality that it would've long since been bestowed national park status virtually anywhere else in the lower 48 is

a favorite not only of hyper-outdoorsy Bellingham, but also the metropolises of greater Seattle and Vancouver.

Now, however, peaceful times on the Nooksack appear once again to be coming to a premature end. In spring of 2018, the Forest Service quietly unveiled the "Nooksack Integrated Conservation & Enhancement Project," known shorthand as an Orwellian acronym: "NICE." Despite the fact that Forest Service higher-ups in modern times have periodically floated the notion of eliminating the MBS timber program in its entirety, NICE represents the sharpest of right turns. Chainsaws and heavy equipment would return to the North Fork in as loud and outmoded a fashion as a new Rolling Stones tour. The Forest Service is essentially proposing to re-enter practically every stand of recovering second-growth forest in the upper watershed and commercially thin it into submission. The usual agency singsong of "restoring and accelerating old-growth characteristics" is of course on full display, despite the inevitable and widespread damage inflicted upon nearly every thinning unit on the wet, west slope of the Cascades. But the Forest Service doesn't stop there, as old school, 40-acre clearcuts are on tap as well, depending on North-west Forest Plan zoning of the second-growth stands in question.

How could they possibly get away with this, in such close proximity to the relatively progressive, nature-loving population residing along the I-5 corridor? They say first impressions are everything, and so the Forest Service has taken upon itself to produce some of the slickest promotional media for NICE that the corvid has ever witnessed from the agency. So atypical are these marketing materials (a condescending "story map" even!) from the ever-retro Forest Service that one can't help but wonder if the agency contracted with Sierra Pacific's communications team. Yes, this is perhaps an impulsive suggestion of conspiracy, though it's no secret that Sierra Pacific has been after the public's trees around these parts, especially now that they've completely skinned their



holdings in the Cultus Mountains just east of their gargantuan Skagit County mill. Expect this oversized corporation to be doing more than a little work behind the scenes to bring NICE to extractive fruition.

Sophisticated public relations alone, though, won't quite do the trick in placating a public that loves the Mount Baker area as much or more than it loves even its ubiquitous family dogs. Anticipating this, the Forest Service has cleverly packaged its renewed timber lust with an assortment of recreation "enhancements," mostly of the industrial-strength variety, such as ill-advised trailhead parking expansions and fancy toilets. Expect much trumpeting of purported rec benefits as NICE moves closer to reality, with talk of thinning in public forums mostly limited to "just let the professionals in the green uniforms handle that, pardner." With this recreation angle, the Forest Service has the necessary lipstick for its pig of an extensive logging push on the North Fork Nooksack. Sure, there are always a few who aren't fooled by lipstick, no matter how bright and glossy, but enough people are busy or incurious enough to where the remaining skeptics may be dismissed as cranks. It's a remarkably savvy play on the part of the Forest Service, excitedly awaiting its chance to "get out the cut" again in a watershed that it thought was lost forever to such ignoble pursuits. But more than that, NICE is a reflection of what's happening in the unholy District of Columbia, where good ideas are as rare as a July snow, and where the discourse and policy are more crooked and rancid than ever. The feds, via the Forest Service, want to exploit the public's resources to the maximum extent for private gain, and NICE is but one small avenue for that.

To be generous, reasonable people might fairly debate the silvicultural merits of commercial thinning operations in the westside forests of the Cascades. The corvid, though, has toured dozens of thinning units since the early aughts, and most were abominable wreckage. The formerly recovering forests are invariably homogenized and vacuumed of their biomass when thinned, with soils compacted and eroded, and streams trashed from both

The corvid has toured dozens of thinning units since the early aughts, and most were abominable wreckage.

truck roads and yarding operations. Three or four years later, the understory is often swamped by a carpet of suffocating hemlock seedlings or, worse, noxious weeds brought in by the thinning crew. Happy talk about westside thins from non-agency folks is usually the result of their participation in one or two dog-and-pony shows led by the Forest Service, where gullible “partner” NGO and political office staffers experience the thrill of wearing a hardhat for a day and maybe seeing a perplexed deer or two. The harsh reality of these thins, if one takes the time to see them firsthand and without a chaperone, is not at all easy on the eyes, much less the soul.

No reasonable person, though, can dismiss the horrific degradation that new and reconstructed roads for thinning sales inflict on a forest and its waters. The Forest Service will attempt to assuage such concerns by stating that these logging roads are “temporary,” while consciously ignoring well-researched findings that the bulk of aquatic and soil damage is inflicted well before their removal. Beyond these negative effects, which are quite bad enough, said roads act as vectors for exotic invasives and predators of sensitive or listed species. Among the 2-legged crowd, these same roads invite reckless motorized incursions, shooting, squatting, dumping, poaching, and all manner of atrocities known to unscrupulous individuals. This will become the reality across great

expanses of acreage in the North Fork Nooksack if NICE succeeds as initially proposed. Even in a best-case scenario, the crush of increasingly heavy recreational use in the North Fork will ensure that every newly opened road corridor will be discovered and traveled repeatedly in some way, never allowed to recover, and therefore fragmenting the habitat of dwindling native species in perpetuity.

The upper North Fork is a broad basin of cold water, some of which must be thrown on NICE before the worst ensues. It's telling that in the Forest Service's snake oil literature for this project, the public is referred to as “our guests.” Yet the MBS is owned by neither the Forest Service nor the crooks and charlatans in

D.C. The 140-mile length of this national forest, all 1.7 million acres of it, belongs to us, the public. Actions by the Forest Service, entrusted by us to care for a huge swath of our collectively owned lands, remain subject to our consent, and it appears to be high time to remind the agency of this before it hurts the North Fork for the second time. The preliminary scoping phase for NICE's environmental assessment (EA) is expected in early 2019. Keep an eye out for the opportunity to weigh in prior to the EA being published, as N3C will offer its informed perspective and suggested talking points. For sure, the Forest Service must hear loudly from us, and not just from the happy talkers, corporate flacks, and timber beasts.

Long-term conservation strategy for the marbled murrelet



Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is finally getting around to developing a Long Term Conservation Strategy for Marbled Murrelet to replace the Interim Conservation Strategy for its lands dating from 1997. In the intervening years the measures in place by DNR and others have been ineffective at stemming the loss of marbled murrelet, whose population has declined 44% (4.4%/year) since it was listed as Threatened under the Endangered Species Act in 1992. The Revised Draft Environmental Impact Assessment (RDEIS) is available for public comment until November 6, 2018. Links to all the relevant documents, shown in the box below, can be had through the Marbled Murrelet Coalition and the Washington Environmental Council.

DNR lands in Southwest Washington, Northern Coast and Straits and the Cascades (within 55 miles of a coast) are especially important because marbled murre-

lets are found close to the coast or beyond the urban corridors along Puget Sound. The marbled murrelet faces threats at sea and on land but the old forests in which it nests seem to be the most important areas to protect. DNR is seeking to balance protections of the marbled murrelet (and other species of fish, mammals and birds) listed under the federal Endangered Species Act with its responsibilities to manage State Trust Lands for revenues to support schools in nearby communities. It is becoming increasingly difficult to continue to accomplish both purposes. To its credit DNR has convened an advisory committee or “Solutions Table” of conservationists, businesses, economic development organizations, and state trust beneficiaries to devise alternative solutions and work together to achieve them.

DNR's position now is that it only needs to “maintain” the marbled murrelet populations, not be more proactive in managing its lands to promote recovery of the population. The Marbled Murrelet Coalition is advocating for a science-based Long Term Conservation Strategy. Completion of the RDEIS is expected by mid-2019 and that is the next step in revising its Habitat Conservation Plan which must be approved by the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

N3C has written a letter on the scoping and will be joining efforts by other groups to protect the marbled murrelet. Please add your voice through letters and emails

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22

N3C reaches out anew to NCI

By Phil Fenner

It had been some time since N3C visited the North Cascades Environmental Learning Center (ELC) to meet the leadership of North Cascades Institute (NCI) and talk conservation and the future. The 50th Anniversary year of the Park seemed like a good time to go say hello.

Seattle City Light's (SCL) Skagit Hydro Project begins its next re-licensing cycle soon with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), so we also needed to discuss how best to coordinate our efforts in those negotiations. NCI, under the leadership of Executive Director Saul Weisberg, has been operating the North Cascades Environmental Learning Center on Diablo Lake since it opened in 2005. The Learning Center was one of the highlights of the mitigation resulting from Seattle's 1995 relicensing of the Skagit Hydroelectric Project. N3C was instrumental in helping the Institute secure funds as part of the FERC re-licensing for the ongoing impacts of the Skagit dams.

The ELC came about because of N3C's innovation, effort and advocacy in an epic process spanning a decade or more, not unlike the efforts to designate the Park and to halt High Ross Dam. In fact, N3C considers the ELC to be one of its greatest accomplishments! It also is a story of cooperation across many organizations, agencies and tribes to support education about both what was lost to the rising waters of Gorge, Diablo and Ross Lakes, and all that remains wild and protected in the ecosystem. It's a great success story, but for some reason it's rarely told. Sadly, it seems good news like this often gets overshadowed in the press and popular imagination. Or it's just taken for granted as the years pass. But the next re-licensing is ahead, so we thought it was a good time to re-open the story and start a new chapter.

The Wild Cascades covered the final agreement to build the ELC in the Summer-Fall 2000 issue, portrayed then as the hard-negotiated, hard-won deal it was. Then, N3C's Tom Brucker, who not incidentally litigated our case to stop High Ross dam and thereby helped instill an environmental awareness in the Seattle electric utility, eloquently recounted the whole story of the ELC's creation in the Winter 03-04 issue at a time when the ELC was nearing completion, and N3C's former President David Fluharty, one of the major players in the negotiations to obtain the



The N3C poster at the NCI Harvest Dinner in Trillium Classroom for Lauren Danner's talk in NOCA.

ELC, wrote more in the Spring 2005 issue (back issues of *TWC* are available free online at: <http://npsbistory.com/newsletters/the-wild-cascades>). Harvey Manning wove the story together like no one else could in his magnum opus, *Wilderness Alps*.

But we haven't said much about NCI in these pages the last decade or so. Let's remedy that now!

Mitigating with education

The idea for the ELC itself was brilliant, to say the least! When hydro projects are licensed in the modern era, they need to show that they are mitigating their environmental impacts. Other more conventional ways of doing so, such as adjusting flows for fish and not spraying herbicides under the power lines, just didn't seem to suffice. But how else could SCL mitigate the environmental impact of the dams and reservoirs, without building more infrastructure to impact the environment in a vicious cycle of sorts—unless perhaps that infrastructure served to educate the public about the ecosystem?

North Cascades Institute began as a dream of Saul Weisberg and a small group of friends in the mid-80s. With the support

of early North Cascades National Park leadership—John Reynolds, Bill Lester and Jon Jarvis, and Huxley College of the Environment John Miles—they envisioned a remote Field School that would offer natural and cultural history programs throughout the region, from Harts Pass, the Nooksack and Skagit Watersheds south to Glacier Peak. The Institute's first field programs were well received and in 1988 Saul and John Miles approached Dave Fluharty to discuss how NCI might propose, under N3C's umbrella, education as one of the mitigations for the new hydro license. While NCCC was searching for non-structural solutions, the NCI folks suggested an education center be part of mitigation. N3C worked together with SCL and the National Park Service in the negotiations to hammer out what the ELC could be, how it would be run, and where it would be built. The idea itself came to N3C from NCI.

Initially called the North Cascades Environmental Education Center and proposed to be adjacent to the Park Visitor Center, the concept was well received by the then-new administration at SCL. NCI was chosen as the operator of the new center, and it was built on the site of the

old Diablo Lake Resort. NCI's experiential learning mission fit the new education concept perfectly, and its programs have since led students of all ages "into the wild" through Mountain School and graduate M Ed. programs. You can even spend a weekend there, space permitting, and take advantage of staff naturalists in NCI's "Basecamp" program. The kitchen provides locally sourced, healthy and sustainable meals prepared by an expert chef and staff. The accommodations are dormitory-style. It's not a "resort," it's a

*We have much in
common and
much to share.*

learning center. The architecture is world-class.

We arranged for an overnight stay and went to Diablo Lake to meet with Saul at the ELC on a mild day in late August to talk about our mutual goals and the next re-licensing cycle. We spent several hours talking of the past, present and future, presented him with a poster about N3C for their main classroom space, and donated books to NCI's library. An NCI staff meeting was underway at the time, and Saul brought us in to talk to the staff about N3C and show them the poster. Our frank discussion centered on what we could do for each other, and we found we had much in common and much to share. We hope these talks will continue and pave the way toward mutual understanding and support as we move into the first scoping phase of the upcoming FERC re-licensing, which will culminate in 2025 and determine the next phase of the Learning Center and the Institute mission "to inspire and empower environmental stewardship for all through transformative educational experiences in nature."

Saul expressed interest in attending the next N3C board meeting to discuss how his goals align with ours, and we agreed that would help both of our organizations manage the challenges ahead. Watch future issues of *TWC* for reports on renewed N3C-NCI cooperation.

We hope you'll join us in wholeheartedly supporting the educational mission of NCI. Its programs for youth are outstanding, just what's needed to ensure "no child is left inside" and to develop the next generation of environmental educators and activists. Besides, it's a fun place in a beautiful setting! Info on NCI's programs can be found at: www.ncascades.org.



Last two miles of Baker Lake Road may be decommissioned

By Ed Henderson

Nationwide the U.S. Forest Service has over 400,000 miles of roads on the national forest. These roads were punched into the wilderness to provide access for "getting out the cut" logging! Incidentally these roads have provided access for recreation. Now that logging is no longer the main activity in the forest, the budget for maintaining these roads has been reduced. There is now a multi-billion dollar backlog of deferred maintenance for the Forest Service roads. The Mount Baker Snoqualmie National Forest (MBS), which has 2,500 miles of roads, only has enough money to maintain about 600 miles. Washouts and erosion from these poorly maintained roads are an environmental hazard. N3C has been involved in and supported MBS's program of Sustainable Roads to manage and reduce these risk.

Now the Mt. Baker Ranger District of MBS is proposing to decommission the last two miles of the Baker Lake Road (FS 11). The meandering Baker River has repeatedly washed out this section of road. The first 1.2 miles will be converted to trail and a new trail constructed to replace the final 0.8 miles that are threatened with washout. A new parking lot will be built at the end of the shortened road near Shannon Creek.

N3C applauds and strongly supports this project. It accomplishes two positive outcomes: eliminating the maintenance cost for the decommissioned section of road, and adding two miles of lowland hiking trail. Both the Baker River and the Baker Lake trails are low-altitude, all-season trails.

The converted section of decommissioned road and the newly constructed trail will both provide easy walking in the rich river valley and its stands of ancient cedar trees. The new trail will rejoin the existing trail just short of the bridge over the Baker River where the Baker River and Baker Lake Trails diverge. Because of their low altitude these trails remain snow free in mid-winter and provide an opportunity for people to get out and enjoy some truly spectacular old-growth forest.

Trees that were already huge when George Vancouver first arrived in the Pacific Northwest still tower over hikers along the Baker River trail, including this enormous western red cedar. Cedar is central and sacred to Indigenous coastal tribes, used for clothing, structures, canoes and ceremonial items.

—JIM SCARBOROUGH PHOTO

TWO CELEBRATIONS MARK NOCA 50TH ANNIVERSARY



—SUE SKILLMAN PHOTO

“Thanks to N3C we had a North Cascades National Park to celebrate this year. And thanks to N3C we also had a great kickoff to the next 50 years and beyond of saving this extraordinary wild and beautiful landscape for future generations.”

—ROB SMITH

Northwest Regional Director
National Parks
Conservation Association

The 50th anniversary of North Cascades National Park was roundly celebrated this Fall! First, a Town Hall Meeting was hosted in late August by the National Park Service at the North Cascades National Park Visitor Center in Newhalem. About 50 people gathered to hear five speakers share their perspectives on the Park’s creation, its unique Wilderness condition, and its future: Scott Schuyler, Natural Resources Director for the Upper Skagit Tribe; Peter Jackson, former editorial page editor of the Everett Herald and son of Senator Henry M. Jackson; former N3C president Dave Fluharty, a professor at the UW School of Marine and Environmental Affairs; Zoe Wadkins, a graduate student at Western Washington University who is part of the residential master’s degree program at North Cascade Institute and a volunteer interpretive ranger at NOCA; and Dr. William Halliday, a former NCCC Board member, who served on Governor Dan Evans’ committee to determine land use in the North Cascades.

Then in early October, close to the actual date of the anniversary, a Seattle celebration arranged by the National Parks Conservation Association at El Centro de la Raza on Beacon Hill. The title “Choose Your Adventure” hinted at three huge victories won on a single day in 1968 when the North Cascades National Park, the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and the National Scenic Trails Act were all signed into law by Lyndon Baines Johnson. N3C’s Brock Evans spoke at the Seattle event, along with former Interior Secretary Sally Jewell and, by recorded video, Senator Patty Murray.

Remarks by Scott Schuyler, Upper Skagit Tribe

What’s our connection to the North Cascades? We have some history here. Our ancestors lived, died, and thrived here for 10,000 years. Many places around here have Upper Skagit names still in use today, like Stehekin, Sahale, Stetattle, Shuksan. These words were our words, and they of course made it through the generations and are used to this day. These areas are very important to us. We defended these areas from our enemies to the north—they’re not our enemies anymore—the Thompsons from Canada. A large battle was fought at Stetattle, just down the road from here. And actually Newhalem was an Upper Skagit Village, that was dated roughly 3,500 years, I believe. So we’ve been around a little while, we’ve fished and hunted and gathered in these areas.

To show you how important this area was, when the Upper Skagit signed a treaty with the United States back in 1855 we still resisted the encroachment into the upper

Skagit valley. In fact, one of the last actions of the United States Army in 1860...was to send 200 Army troops up the Skagit valley to search us out and remove us from our upper Skagit places up river here. They weren’t successful, because, you know, you can’t catch an Upper Skagit in the mountains! They weren’t able to locate us and we just kept going further and further up river, until they eventually gave up and went back down river. They hoped we’d move down to Swinomish, or Lummi. But that didn’t work for us, for one simple reason—we’re not Swinomish, we weren’t Lummi and we weren’t Tulalip, and so we refused to go. It was very fortunate for us because we were able to preserve our identity throughout the generations. I can’t speak for our leaders who aren’t here anymore, but back in the 50s and 60s when the Park was first starting to be formed...there was concern about the loss of more additional ancestral lands. However the tribe did seek a settlement after the Park was formed, with the United States, and our members did receive com-

pensation...at 80 cents an acre. We had an attorney from Sedro-Woolley at that time, and they recommended that we take the settlement. And it worked out to roughly \$200 per tribal member.

But one thing I hope you walk away from here and understand is that we look back after these 50 years and look at this as a GOOD thing. The vision that the people proposed, and brought forth the Park and brought it to fruition, it worked out for all of us. Having these environmental protections associated with the Park and Recreation Areas over the years has saved us. It helped save my culture and saved the resources from environmental harm. Otherwise they wouldn't be protected. We look at many things that are occurring throughout the United States and are very thankful that we don't have coal up here or oil reserves because if we did our Park would be under attack. And so our vision for the future, for my tribe's future, collectively we all need to work together to preserve and protect through additional legislation to make sure the Park will NEVER come under attack, that we won't lose a single acre. And we can continue to protect the species that are being protected. I think long term, my goal is to make sure that things are here for my kids, and that should be all of our collective goal. Thank you.

Peter Jackson, son of Senator Henry M. Jackson

To Scott's point, and to preface this, I think the tribes were cut out from the beginning. At the time that my father [Senator Henry M. Jackson] was then the head of what was called the Interior and Insular Affairs Committee, it was such a primitive arrangement that tribal issues, including issues related to the Bureau of Indian Affairs, everything fell under this committee, and it was a committee that was established right after the Civil War, so literally up to and through the 1960s, until there was a Select Committee on Indian Affairs was created in 1977, tribal issues fell under the purview of the Interior Committee. So literally politicians equated land and America's indigenous populations as one and the same, and it really took a sea change that started actually happening not long after the creation of the Park in 1968, it happened around 1970 with the Indian Self-Determination Act and a variety of Indian health acts, that came about ironically during the Nixon administration. That actually marked the turning point.

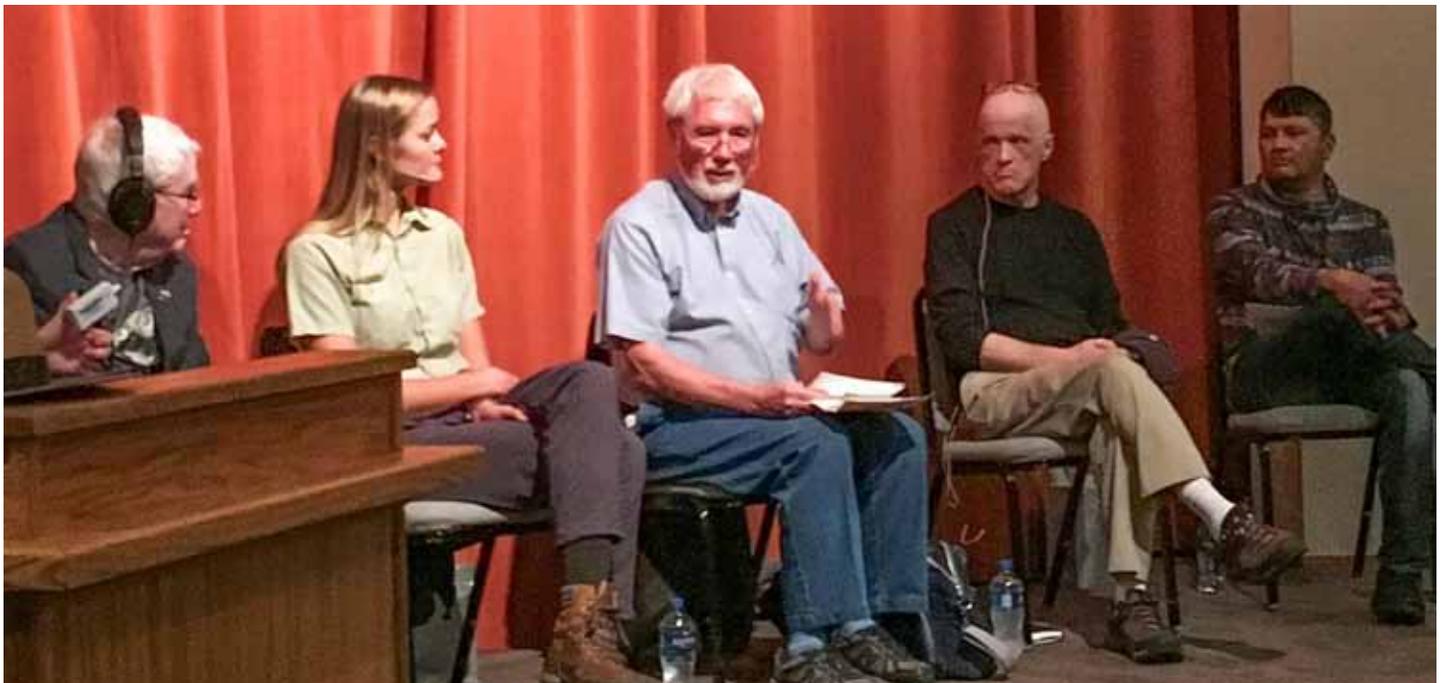
....And so it's important to remember that politicians almost always get the credit. Tribes may be involved for 10,000 years, North Cascades Conservation Council involved for about 10 years before the creation of the Park, and then in the end the politicians get all the credit. But all of the legwork, all of the "sweat equity" as grassroots activists call it, was done by

people like David Fluharty and others.

This Park isn't static. I know that's sort of an obvious thing, but the moment the Park was created, immediately there were questions of "Are there going to be trams in the Park, are they going to make it like an Alpine village?" These were some of the promises that were made to people in the local community, that there would be economic development. And a lot of these things, thank God, did not happen! They were ill-conceived, they might have been conceived to sell the idea. And there were issues like the High Ross Dam.... Nothing stops! And then finally, finally you have Tribes, who play such an instrumental role in stewarding the plan, and finally they have a say. And finally you have the creativity of organizations like the North Cascades Institute, people like Jerry Cook, who retired from the Park Service, and created that wonderful entryway [on highway 20] as you go into the Park. So, it's a dynamic place and for it to be preserved for generations we are going to have to maintain that dynamism. Thank you.

David Fluharty, former President of North Cascades Conservation Council

David recapped the history of NCCC's involvement in advocating for the Park and wilderness and challenging plans for the High Ross Dam, including pressuring Seattle City Light to establish an Environ-



Town Hall speakers included, from left, Dr. William Halliday, Zoe Wadkins, Dave Fluharty, Peter Jackson and Scott Schuyler.

—PHIL FENNER PHOTO

TWO CELEBRATIONS MARK NOCA 50TH ANNIVERSARY

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

mental Affairs Division that would handle the FERC relicensing.

...A number of years later, Seattle City Light's license had run out. And so we again stepped in and said "We are intervenors, along with the Tribes, and with the State, in these proceedings, and we don't want to do the kind of mitigation that puts picnic tables and parking lots and things like this, what we want is real mitigation for the kinds of things that have been lost by the flooding of this tremendous upper Skagit Valley." And the Environmental Affairs people said "We hear that, and we'll do studies," and we did a lot of studies and we did a lot of work over a period of about five years, that led to a settlement agreement with Seattle City Light that they claim cost them about 100 million dollars. And that brought the money, the funding to build Saul Weisberg's North Cascades Institute buildings. City Light owns the buildings and the Park Service owns the land. And NCI makes sure people like Zoe Wadkins have a wonderful place to learn about the environment.

...So again, the next time NOCA came up with a General Management Plan, we said to the Park Service, "You haven't really identified the impacts of your own activities." And they said, "We did an Environmental Impact Statement, or an Assessment", which was a requirement of another thing that Peter's father, Senator Jackson took the lead on, the National Environmental Policy Act, which requires an Environmental Assessment for all Federal Actions. We said, "Yeah, but look at what you're proposing, and let's really examine what the environmental impacts are." So instead of an 80-page report, we ended up with a 400-page report! And we knew a whole lot more and a lot of policies were changed, and a much better policy emerged. And that action by our organization, challenging the National Park Service, changed the way NPS did its NEPA compliance across the nation.

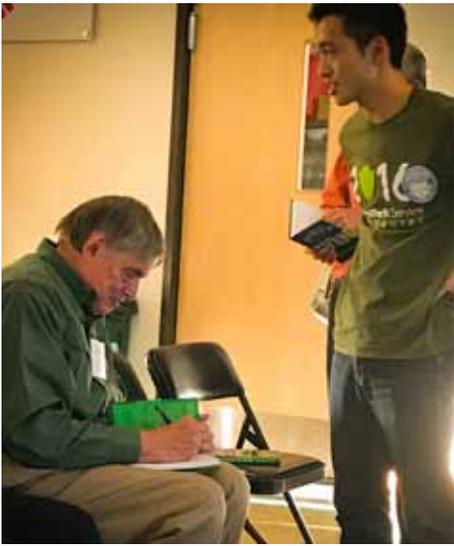
These are things we look back on and we say, "Did we really do that?" So to wrap things up, what are we still doing? We're looking ahead, we agree with Scott that we don't want to lose a single acre of this place, but we're also saying the Park



Browsers at the N3C booth.

boundaries are not based on ecosystem principles. We really need to rethink what those boundary issues are. If you've been reading the newspaper lately you realize that logging in Canada is affecting the Upper Skagit Watershed. This is the area where around 2000 we were pushing to get an international Park between Canada and the U.S. so that those areas would be

protected. In the trans-boundary area. We're still in favor of that, we still would like to see that. We're still looking for ways that ecosystem boundaries can be both beneficial for the wildlife and for the people, as well as for the land management agencies.



Brock Evans autographs his book Fight and Win, Strategies for the New Eco-warrior.



Former Interior Secretary Sally Jewell implored the crowd not to lose hope in this regressive time, and to keep resisting.



Special thanks to Nancy Weidman for this composite photo, appearing L to R: Lisa Bergman, Ron Eber, Linda Garcia, Brock Evans, Mary Brucker, [kid goat supplied by Nancy Weidman using Adobe Photoshop(r)], David Rudo, Cathy Brant, Allison Brucker, Phil Fenner, David Fluharty. Also present at the reception but missing from the photo: Marc and Lynn Bardsley, Ed and Molly Henderson. Lorna Smith, Rick McGuire, Mr. and Mrs. Roger Leed, Roger Mellom, and David Knibb. —LISA BERGMAN PHOTO



2018 Glacier Report:

Lower Curtis Glacier likely to disappear in 30 years

By Tom Hammond

2018 marks the 35th year of the North Cascade Glacier Climate Project (NCGCP), and my 15th consecutive year as a team member. Each year the NCGCP utilizes several field assistants to complete the annual glacier surveys. This year the team consisted of Mauri Pelto, Director, Jill Pelto, Field Artist and Scientist, Mariama Dryak, UMaine graduate student and Erin McConnell UMaine graduate student.

The project involves visiting the same eight glaciers over a two-and-a-half week span in early August—a physically challenging and mentally stimulating endeavor that includes more than 100 miles of hiking and 30,000 feet of elevation gain. The glaciers are selected to provide a wide range of data points such as location in the range (from south to north and wet west to dry east), aspect (direction the glacier faces as well as where it is positioned on the given mountain), type (avalanche fed or slope) and elevation. Note there used to be 10 glaciers as a part of the project, but two have completely melted away: the Lewis and Spider glaciers are no more. The glaciers in the order they were measured in 2018: Easton Glacier on the south side of Kulshan (Mt. Baker); the Rainbow and Sholes Glaciers on the north side of Kulshan; the Lower Curtis Glacier on the SW flank of Mount Shuksan; the Columbia Glacier in the Monte Cristo group; the Lynch Glacier on the NW flank of Mount Daniel; and the Daniels and Ice Worm (Hyas Creek) glaciers on the E side of the crest/E flanks of Mount Daniel. Key measurements include: mass balance, longitudinal profile, some lateral profile, crevasse stratigraphy and stream flow/water discharge/meltwater runoff.

The glacier

I was on the field season for only the Lower Curtis Glacier—four days out of a total field season of two and a half weeks. Words fail to describe how fast this glacier is disappearing... The loss of mass and volume in a single year is incredible and disturbing—I would never have believed

it could happen so fast. I was standing on exposed rock that just one year ago was under 12-15 meters (40-50 feet) of blue ice. The terminus has retreated (another) 5-10 meters, while the western margin of the glacier has also retreated laterally a similar amount. Again, we're not just talking distance, we're talking volume! To that point, the glacier has thinned such that it has become apparent for the first time in the 35 years of the study that more than half of the glacier (which measures roughly one kilometer by one kilometer, up to 30 meters thick), the entire west and north sections, is disintegrating. The eastern

All eight glaciers had significant negative balances.

component of the glacier is overrunning the rest of it—the last remaining portion that has less negative mass balance. This is instructive in that the north portion of the glacier should be/used to be the main body of the glacier, fed by avalanche from the Upper Curtis Glacier. That is, this glacier is no longer avalanche fed (more like avalanche starved) from the former main source. It is now avalanche and snowfall fed from the east. Walking the undulating, obviously collapsing (“deflating”) structure evoked a strong emotional response in all of us, even the normally staid scientists.

As we stood under the east couloir of the glacier, gazing out and down on the glacier, Mauri stated the glacier likely won't exist in 30 years (at least as we've known it since the first Europeans arrived or earlier)—the flat, deflating, dis-integrating central, western and northern sections will become a lake or lakes, with a rim of glacier ice and firn bordering the eastern area.

Not 130 years from now, 30 years. Just a few years ago we were talking about time scales of centuries, now we're talking decades, and very few at that.

Standing there, one can't help but feel in a very primitive, fundamental way why it matters: the largest native salmon runs in the lower 48 are supported by this glacier, and hundreds just like it. Waters from this glacier flow through two hydroelectric dams. Countless farms, including the famous Tulips of the Skagit Valley, depend on these waters. From sport fisherman to broccoli farmers to data centers, our lives and livelihoods depend on this irreplaceable resource.

The heat

The heat was punishing two of the three days I was on the project, and indeed, the team endured record-breaking heat for the first week-plus of the project. The heat pushed Mauri to get an early start for the relatively straightforward approach hike in to Lake Ann. The team broke camp at 5 a.m., while I was on the road. Even still, we were forced to crawl into the waterfalls along the route, seeking shelter and relief in the ice-cold water before it was even noon... The waterfalls were raging as I've seldom seen them (except for last year and 2015), even kicking up roostertails as they roared off the spectacular fangs and cliffs of Mount Shuksan.

The smoke

For the third time in four years, we were under the pall of intense smoke from forest fires. In 2015 it was smoke from fires in eastern Washington/east slopes of the Cascades. In 2017 it was smoke from fires in far-flung reaches of British Columbia. This year it was smoke from fires in California—southern California too, and B.C. So you tell me: is the distance between Orange County and Prince George BC “local”? “Regional”? No, by any measure these events are GLOBAL in nature. It was stunning to once again strain to see the massive, brilliantly white stratovolcano that is Kulshan so close by/very proximate to us—wreathed in gray smoke such that it was an apparition at times—a ghost in the haze.

In the 15 years I've been on the project, I've never seen the likes of what is now

Lower Curtis Glacier terminus.
— © TOM HAMMOND PHOTO

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happening pretty much every year and Mauri confirms it. Times are changing, and the planet is too, and not in ways that are advantageous to humans, from everything I can see, know and experience. Meteorologists note that the smoke reduced high temperatures. Well, that same smoke prevented nighttime cooling. Friday morning at 8 a.m. near the margins of the glacier it was about 75°F.

The people

I listed the team members, but let me state the obvious in a more, well, obvious way. For the first time in project history, the field team was all female. Mauri and I discussed this in detail—so very exciting and wonderful to have young women involved in planetary science in such a meaningful way! The flip side of that is that not a single male applied for the field season—again, a first in the 35 years of the project. Mauri believes it is because more guys are focusing on athletics (stick and ball sports, and climbing as a recreational/personal activity) and “professional gaming.” At first I thought he was joking, but no, very serious and if people aren’t programming/gaming, they’re playing video games...for a living.

So once again something that has great upside and a reason to celebrate—women in science and women in the field (remember, the North Cascades provide a

very challenging field)—also comes with a harbinger of things not so good: where have all the men gone...

Before departing for the field season, I asked both Erin and Mariama what mountaineering experience they had. Both ticked off places around the world with glaciers and mountains, so I felt pretty good about sending them off. When I asked them again at the base of Mount Shuksan, both breathlessly expressed wonder at how steep, rugged and challenging these mountains are compared to others around the world. Yep, that’s what I’m talkin’ ‘bout!

Wildlife

The team saw a herd of about 25 goats at the Rainbow camp—no others seen at any location. Marmots seem to be making a moderate comeback, as we saw a few at Lower Curtis and the team reports same for pretty much every location. Same is true of pika, whose numbers are perhaps even a bit better numbers. No other encounters, and even bird numbers seemed down. Amazingly, the bugs weren’t bad at the shade boulder, though all three of the major irritators were in evidence (mosquitoes, black flies, deer flies), mosquitoes at/after sunset. Notably, bug activity picked up when the marine influence showed up.

There were tons of blueberries, but the vast majority were shriveled and tart—the record dry and heat manifest in their sta-

Lower Curtis Glacier drains to Shuksan Creek, Baker River headwaters. — © TOM HAMMOND PHOTO

tus. They spanned quite an elevation range (and trail distance), lining the trail at easy reach. I found a few bushes that had near-normal sized berries, and super tasty too.

Epilogue

As Trump and his administration’s Russian masters tear at the fabric of American society and push backward policies that actively go against science and observation, so too humans are pushing the life support systems of planet Earth to the breaking point—at least as far as human civilization is concerned. From fires that engulf the entirety of the western portion of the North American continent, to people literally jumping into the sea to avoid death by fire in southern Europe; and from heatwaves that are planet wide to Scandinavian reindeer seeking shelter from the sun in highway tunnels, the observable facts and events around us are clear to see, except perhaps for the most ardent Fox “news” devotees.

The time to act is now. Vote. Volunteer. Make a difference, for inaction is surrender in a fight we cannot afford to lose.

I am thankful to Mauri for inviting me on the project and sharing these amazing experiences. The bonds of friendship and love were unexpected and unforeseen 15

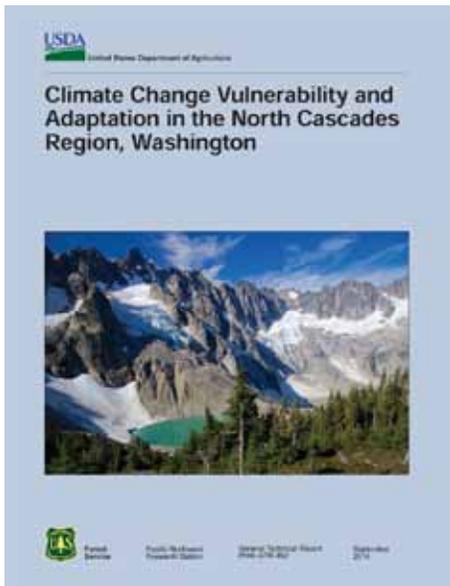
years ago. I am in awe of such meaningful connections, and am humbled by same. I am also deeply grateful for the ability and desire to continue to do this stuff—truly life-defining experiences.

Mass balance numbers

Preliminary mass balance data shows that all eight glaciers had significant negative balances, that given normal summer conditions going forward will yield losses in excess of -0.5 m. All glaciers fall into the range of -0.5 to -1.2 m water equivalent. There was exceptional avalanche accumulation on a portion of Columbia and Lower Curtis Glacier that is preventing a more negative balance. We observed some extra accumulation on the upper Lynch, Daniel and Ptarmigan Ridge Glacier that along with the aforementioned suggests a series or a single major snow event with a different wind pattern than is typical.

For more information, please see:
<https://glaciers.nichols.edu/>

Climate change impacts



Climate change report looks at impacts on wildlife, vegetation, roads

Published in 2014 but more relevant by the day, this report from the North Cascadia Adaptation Partnership (NCAP) looks at impacts of climate change on roads and structures, fisheries, vegetation, wildlife and hydrologic systems and proposes solutions that will facilitate the transition of our region's diverse ecosystems into a warmer climate. It's probably time to give it a close read. Find it at https://www.fs.fed.us/pnw/pubs/pnw_gtr892.pdf

Op-ed by Craig Romano in the *Seattle Times*, October 5, 2018

It's time to speak up about preserving Washington state's pristine areas and the protections that keep them that way.

Thirteenmile Canyon is one of the wildest places in northeastern Washington, with its towering old-growth ponderosa pines, granite ledges, stunning views from an old fire lookout site and along the canyon rim, and miles of resplendent wildflowers in the spring. It's home to a large array of wildlife. It's easily accessible, traversed by a historic trail. And it's one of the few places in the state where you can truly feel all alone. Yet, lands like this don't remain pristine by accident. It takes a concerted effort to actively ensure that these lands remain unspoiled and undeveloped.

Thirteenmile Canyon, like the nearby Kettle River Range, the Olympic Peninsula's Moonlight Dome, South Cascades' Silver Star and other public lands throughout the state are too special to open up to logging and mining development. The federal government identifies these places as "roadless areas," and they receive special protections under the federal Roadless Rule, an executive order enacted in 2001 by President Clinton. Not only are there no roads on these public lands, but these places are also some of the wildest in the country. I know. I have hiked hundreds of miles through these areas.

I applaud Washington's U.S. Sens. Patty Murray, Maria Cantwell and 15 of their colleagues for supporting legislation to codify the Roadless Rule — to make it law. There are nearly 60 million roadless acres across the United States, including nearly 2 million acres in Washington. Six of Washington's 119 roadless areas are in the top 5 percent wildest places in the contiguous United States.

These public lands make up much of our loved national-trails system, including the Appalachian Trail and the Pacific Crest Trail. National forests contain all or portions of 354 watersheds that serve as drinking water sources for 60 million people nationwide. These areas serve as critical habitat for threatened or endangered animals such as Canadian lynx, grizzly bears, woodland caribou, Pacific salmon and bull trout.

When the Roadless Rule was adopted, it had overwhelming bipartisan support. The rule was the result of more than 600 hear-

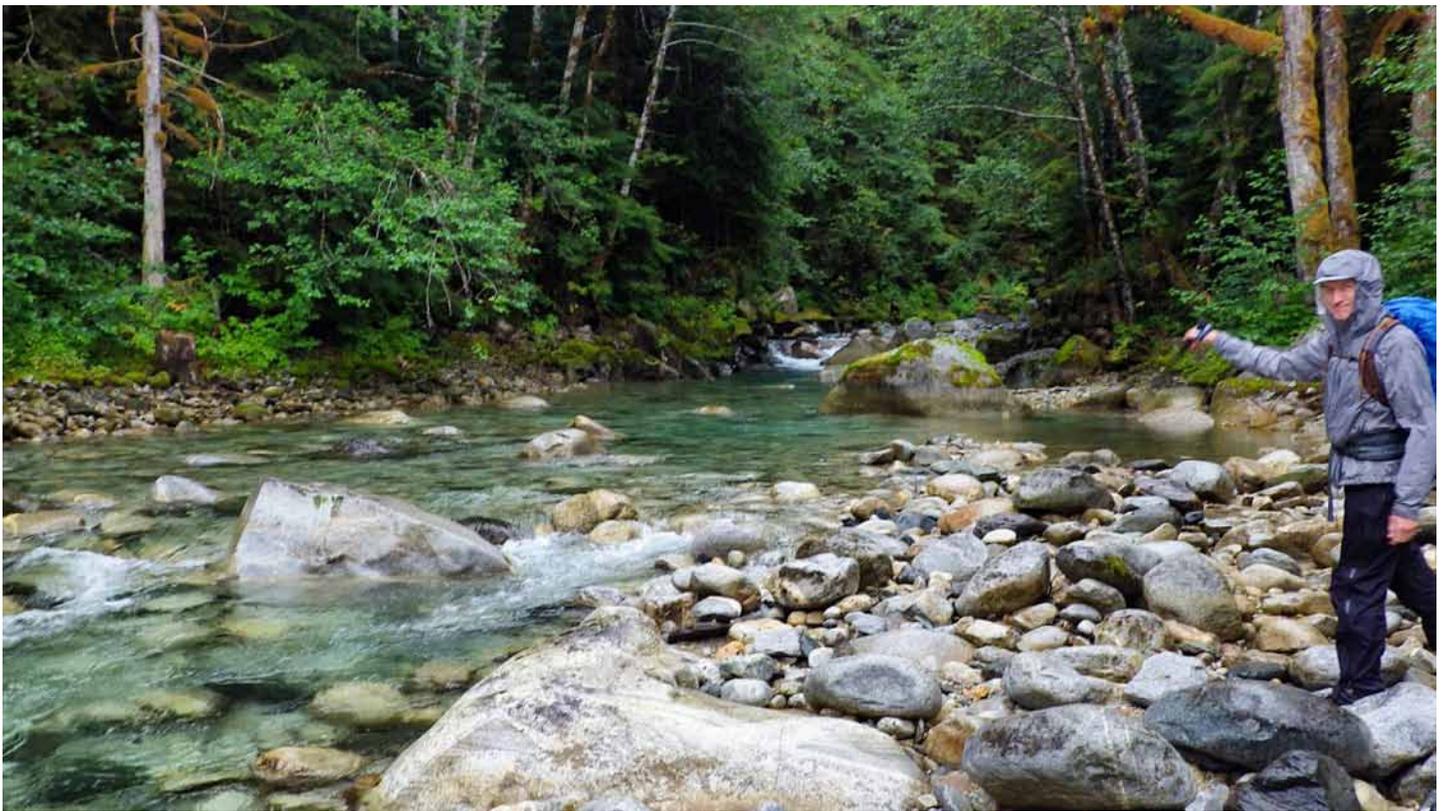
ings around the United States and 1.6 million public comments. For two decades, this rule has safeguarded roadless federal forestlands from logging, mining and drilling for oil and gas. While Washington's two senators are working to make the rule permanent, other members of Congress and the Trump administration are trying to erode its effectiveness.

Just recently, the state of Alaska — thanks in large part to U.S. Sen. Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska — entered into an agreement with the U.S. Department of Agriculture to review whether The Last Frontier should be exempt from the Roadless Rule, hence diluting the protections in Alaska, but also threatening protections everywhere. At stake are 9 million acres in Alaska's Tongass National Forest, the country's largest national forest, which contains portions of the largest intact temperate rain forest in North America. Exempting such a significant portion of the nation's roadless areas would render the rule essentially moot and serve as a green light to other states also interested in exemptions from the federal rule.

Utah Gov. Gary Herbert has publicly stated his plan to petition the federal government to exempt his state from the Roadless Rule. Meanwhile, the Farm Bill, the multiyear funding legislation that directs what happens in the Department of Agriculture, is littered with controversial forestry measures that would open up 9 million acres of roadless areas in the Lower 48 to logging, and weaken review standards for thinning projects.

Now, more than ever, it's time to speak up about preserving these pristine areas and the protections that keep them that way. An attack on the Roadless Rule anywhere is an attack on roadless forests everywhere. Tell the U.S. Forest Service to retain the 2001 Roadless Rule protections in Alaska, and also urge your Congressional delegation to make these protections law.

Craig Romano is an author of more than 20 outdoors guidebooks. A resident of Mount Vernon, he has hiked more than 25,000 miles in the Evergreen State from the Olympic Peninsula to the Blue Mountains.



Return to Lucky Son

By Rick McGuire

Readers of *The Wild Cascades* with very long memories may remember what is commonly referred to as the “spotted owl wars” of the late 1980s and early 1990s. This was when the end of the old-growth forests in the Cascades seemed not only imminent but inevitable. One of the places on the chopping block was the “Lucky Son” timber sale area.

Located up one of the North Cascades’ major west side valleys, this area of splendid old-growth forest had been repeatedly left out of the Glacier Peak Wilderness in 1960, 1964 and 1984. Those were the days when the politically powerful timber industry was able to keep most areas of “commercial” forest out of protected areas. Lucky Son, named after the timber sale that the Forest Service laid out there, was one of those places.

The U.S. Forest Service had gotten into the timber business in a big way following World War 2. They never made any money from it, but it didn’t matter because huge subsidies from Washington D.C. underwrote everything. Road budgets ran into

the hundreds of millions of dollars, real money back then. “Getting the cut out” was the path to career success, and it was taken up with enthusiasm. With every passing decade, roads pushed farther into formerly wild country as ancient forests diminished.

This reached a frenzy in the 1980s as the inevitable end, when all the old-growth forest that could be cut would be cut, came into view. By the late 1980s, timber sales such as Lucky Son were laid out in just about every remaining forested area. The bottom of the barrel was fast approaching as the speed of the cutting grew ever faster.

Conservationists realized that unless something was done, there would be essentially no old forests left outside of parks and Wilderness areas, most of which had boundaries drawn specifically to

exclude forests. It is commonly thought that the spotted owl and Endangered Species Act were the means used to slow the cutting. It was actually the National Forest Management Act (NFMA), a 1970s law that mandated that the Forest Service maintain viable habitat for all native species throughout their ranges.

The opening shot was fired by none other than the Pilchuck Audubon Society in Snohomish County against the “Olo Too” old-growth timber sale. Soon other, larger groups joined in, and the legal measures broadened as everyone realized that old-growth cutting had to be stopped before it was all gone. Better late than never, and the hour was very late.

One of the responses by the Forest Service to the legal barrage was to involve

We inevitably started wondering if this was really the best day to set off to ford a good-sized creek and walk a long ways through wet brush. A long warm summer can do that. But then Jim arrived, made of sterner stuff than we, and modestly suggested that we at least take a look at the creek. So we did. —PHIL FENNER PHOTO

conservationists in deciding where and how much to cut. So called "Section 318" advisory boards were set up for most of the "owl forests" which produced most of the cut. With representatives from the timber industry and conservationists, these boards were to advise the Forest Service on where and where not to go.

The Section 318 board for the Mt. Baker Snoqualmie National Forest was presented with a long list of timber sales. Had all gone ahead, it would have spelled the end of the best of the remaining ancient forests on the west side of the North Cascades. There was no way that conservationists could agree to even a substantial fraction of these timber sales. The story of the various ins and outs would fill a book. Suffice it to say here that the Mt. Baker Snoqualmie was fortunate to then have a Forest Supervisor who realized that the MBS was an "urban forest" and that liquidating the last best old growth would be politically disastrous for the Forest Service. Some of the sales did go ahead, but the majority did not. The timber targets were not met, and the cut was greatly reduced. One critical place that managed to survive was the forest where the "Lucky Son" timber sale had been laid out.

I was one of three conservation members of the MBS Section 318 board. As part of the timber sale review process, the Forest Service presented us with maps and aerial photos of their proposed timber sales. Many were bad, but none seemed worse than Lucky Son. It pushed right up against a protected area. It was obvious from the aerial photo that it was quite a forest. I had explored many of the unprotected forest areas on the MBS, but had never been to the Lucky Son area. This was a situation that several of us soon remedied.

In 1990 the road extended closer to Lucky Son than it does today. Two creeks were still spanned by bridges that are long gone today. The road ended in a logged area that was still basically a "clearcut" 25 years after being logged. There were smallish trees but they did not yet form a closed canopy, thus there was plenty of brush. We had to thrash our way across this clearcut to get to the ancient forest beyond. It was well worth the effort. There were a number of enormous Douglas firs with the trademark large limbs that usually take 500 or so years to form. More numerous were the large cedars, not yet old enough to have enormous girth but very tall and still growing. The forest was

also remarkable for having perhaps the biggest yew trees I have seen in the North Cascades. Yews in the North Cascades are often more bush than tree, near the northern end of their range. The larger ones at Lucky Son reached probably 40 or more feet high, definitely trees, not shrubs.

The ancient forest at Lucky Son was not the most impressive such place we had ever seen, but it was certainly right up there. How can one rate or even compare such outstanding places? It was a splendid example of the kind of forests that once covered much of western Washington, all the more valuable for being one of the last survivors.

There were times during the 1980s when saving ancient forests seemed impossible. It really looked like they would be finished off. It was a near miracle that we managed to save what we did. Compared to what once existed, they are not much. Most remaining old-growth forests are on poor or high elevation sites, since the Forest Service obviously went for the best areas first, and managed to cut nearly all of them. But not quite all. Even the small amount of surviving forest is far better than none, which is how much remains in most other places. And Lucky Son was located on a good site, on relatively gentle "toeslopes" between steep mountains and river flats. The efforts to save it and other places were well worth it.

Once Lucky Son was spared—not "saved"—I didn't go back for 27 or 28 years. It was in a faraway spot, not very easy to get to. But I did occasionally tell people about it, and after all those years, N3Cers Phil Fenner, Jim Scarborough and I decided to try to go back there and take a look. A friend of Phil's had a cabin down-valley from the site, and he didn't need much of an excuse to go stay there.

The appointed day brought the first real rain after the hot, smoky summer of 2018. Pools of standing water were along the roads, and windshield wipers were needed after months of disuse. When I made it to the cabin, Phil was enjoying a pleasant fire as rain pounded on the roof. We inevitably started wondering if this was really the best day to set off to ford a good-sized creek and walk a long ways through wet brush. A long warm summer can do that. But then Jim arrived, made of sterner stuff than we, and modestly suggested that we at least take a look at the creek. So we did.

It was about knee deep, not really hard to get across, and of course since we were there we had to cross it. Putting one foot in front of the other, we started off, and the going proved to be less difficult than we had imagined. There was of course wet brush, but what had been a "clearcut" 28 years ago was now "woods" with a closed canopy to shade out much of the brush.

The downpour lessened as we walked on, drawn by a renewed desire, thanks to Jim, to see this forest after so many years. The old roadbed turned into what looked like an old cat track, then it was just straight ahead through the second-growth woods. Finally we reached the end of the old logging, and we were into the ancient forest.

It did not disappoint. Big, impressive trees, and of course that indescribable something only found in undisturbed natural places. The only real difference seemed to be the presence of more fallen trees, making travel more difficult, but perhaps I had simply forgotten them. We traversed the slope a ways, then went down to a spot where we could look across the river floodplain. It looked rather too brushy for such a wet day, so we stayed on the lower slopes. The biggest trees in such places often seem to grow on these lower slopes, where cold air can drain away, rather than in the river flats where it drains to.

Even though a few rays of sunshine came through as we explored, it soon started raining again. Had the day been dry we would have lingered and explored more fully, but we were taking on water. So back we went, back across the creek, greeted by the sight of the first dusting of snow on the slopes far above. Then out of soaking clothes into dry ones and a return to the cabin where a welcome fire was built right away. We hadn't covered as much ground as we hoped, but we had an excuse to come back and look further on a hopefully drier day.

Although Lucky Son was spared in 1990, it was not and still is not permanently protected. Back in 1990 the Japanese bubble economy was just bursting, after years when some predicted they would soon buy the entire world. That didn't happen, but towards the end there were cases of them paying as much as \$20,000 dollars

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22

Improvements planned for Morning Star Natural Resources Conservation Area

You might remember that awhile back, we reported that a few NCCC members had been working for over a year with the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to develop a strategy for managing the Morning Star Natural Resources Conservation Area (NRCA). The focus has been to come up with an environmentally friendly approach to handle trail planning, overnight camping, waste disposal, helicopter usage, and other recreational issues.

The committee of stakeholders working with the DNR included groups such as the Washington Trails Association, Snohomish County PUD, U.S. Forest Service, a local climber's group, Pilchuck Audubon and others. The general consensus was that

the priorities for the DNR to concentrate on were:

- Gothic Basin overuse (highest priority)
- Trail improvements to access Boulder and Greider Lakes
- Low-impact camping and preservation strategies at Ashland Lakes
- Waste disposal alternatives in areas with heavy camping impacts

Recently, the DNR announced its short-term plans (1-2 years) to accomplish these and other goals within available budgets.

Primarily, DNR would place an environmentally friendly toilet in Gothic Basin, called a "urine diverting toilet." If this device is considered successful, more will

be installed at other locations. Use of this feature, while more expensive, is expected to reduce the number of helicopter trips for maintenance, etc. Intensive planning for Gothic Basin is envisioned for Fall 2018 and beyond that will require some helicopter and drone use. The possible use of permits or other access restriction techniques will be deferred at this time.

The trail to Boulder and Greider Lakes will be upgraded at selected locations.

Improvements to the Walt Bailey Trail will include installation of three bridges.

Planning with the USFS will be conducted for key parking areas that access portions of the Morning Star NRCA.

Lucky Son return CONTINUED FROM PAGE 21



Like Lucky Son, these western redcedars (*Thuja plicata*) at the north end of Baker Lake are huge, ancient and rare. Lucky Son's cedars are not yet as old, so they haven't the huge girth of these at Baker Lake, but they're very tall and still growing vertically.

—ETHAN WELTY PHOTO

for top quality individual old trees as the last few were cut off private lands.

The Japanese appreciated and were willing to pay for top quality old trees. That market has mostly dried up with the decline of their economy. In 1990 there were dozens of old-growth mills in the Northwest. Hardly any remain. The American market has traditionally viewed wood as a generic commodity and seldom offered much premium for top quality,

tight-grained old wood. There is so little old growth left that it seems improbable that tooling mills for it again would ever look profitable.

But anything can happen. There is a big push to again start major cutting of old growth in southeast Alaska. If successful, those logs will go somewhere. For the time being, the major threat to National Forest lands in the Cascades seems to be the trend to ever more massive timber

sales that purport to improve upon nature by selective logging. The timber industry will never say no to subsidized wood, where they get the profits while the public pays the costs. The push is on again to "get the cut out." The threats receded for a number of years, but sadly, they always seem to come back.

Marbled murrelet

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

to support strong measures on state trust lands for protection of the marbled murrelet.

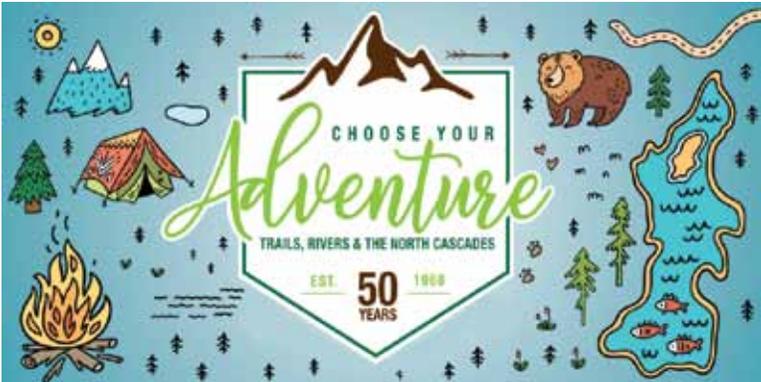
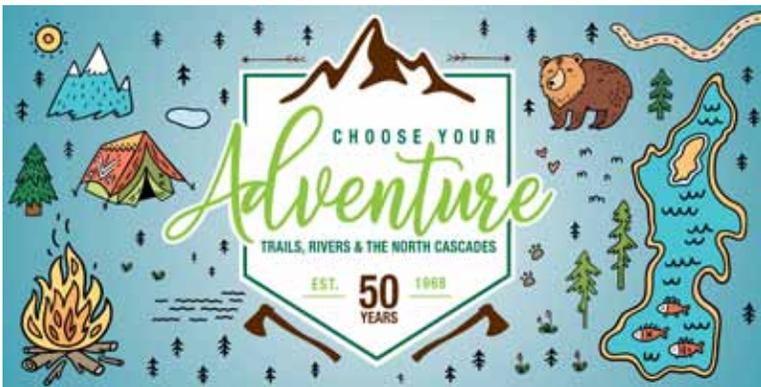
Learn more:

Draft EIS statement and portal for comments: <https://www.dnr.wa.gov/long-term-conservation-strategy-marbled-murrelet>

One-page summary with steps for action: <https://wecprotects.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Marbled-Murrelet-One-Pager-V2-2018.pdf>

Informative one-hour webinar: www.wecprotects.org/marbled-murrelet

Marbled Murrelet Story Map: <http://wadnr.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapJournal/index.html?appid=f9b0c468cad84168a292708ebc7012b9>



We axed the axes!

When presented with the upper, official version of the banner for the October event, we'd just gotten back from a long bushwhack through a ghost forest of huge old stumps in search of a certain grove of ancient trees, ones that scraped the sky and supported an intact ecosystem. So the long-handled axes included in the banner, well, they bothered us. Crosscut saws would have been worse, as would chain-saws, certainly, but we would have preferred fern fronds, or cedar boughs. Time was short and we had to publish a banner, so after discussing it with the event organizer, they agreed it was fine if we just removed the axes in the version we published, so away they went! We're sure the organizer's graphic designer had the best intentions, and we doubt many folks gave those axes on the official banner a second thought, but as true tree-huggers, we felt better after they were gone.



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Lucky Son trees. —PHIL FENNER PHOTO