

# THE WILD CASCADES

**THE JOURNAL OF THE NORTH CASCADES CONSERVATION COUNCIL**

**Fall 2022**



## THE WILD CASCADES ■ Fall 2022

- 3 **President's report** — Phil Fenner
- 4 **N3C Actions: July to October 2022**
- 6 **Unlicensed mine in Darrington**  
**State Supreme Court decision against the environment is actually a win for the environment**
- 7 **Fall 2022 Skagit project relicensing update** — N3C Board representative David Fluharty  
**Welcome to Olympic Park Advocates** — Tom Hammond and Tim McNulty
- 8 **Bolt Creek Fire confirms west side wet forest science** — David Fluharty
- 10 **Collaboration or collusion? The evolving saga of the Twisp logging agenda** — Rick Bailey
- 11 **Letter to District Ranger, Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest** — Ric Bailey  
**Help support legal precedents to preserve the Twisp Watershed**
- 12 **Corvid's eye**
- 13 **Documentary celebrates the life of environmentalist Stewart Udall**
- 14 **Book Review: *Tanum* by Susan Summit Cyr** — reviewed by Joan Burton
- 15 **Letter to the Editor** — David E. Ortman
- 16 **Highway 20 turns 50, began in 1893**
- 17 **Federal duplicity on the Mountain Baker-Snoqualmie NF** — Jim Scarborough
- 19 **Book Review: *National Parks Forever: Fifty Years of Fighting and a Case for Independence*** — reviewed by David Fluharty
- 21 **North Cascade Glacier Climate Project: Lower Curtis Glacier continues to recede** — Tom Hammond
- 25 **Seattle City Light to surrender the license for Newhalem Creek Hydroelectric Project** — David Fluharty
- 27 **N3C membership application**

*Dr. Ben Peltó surveys the terminus of the Lower Curtis Glacier on Mount Shuksan. The photo is taken from where the glacier reached just one year ago. — © TOM HAMMOND PHOTO*

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### The Wild Cascades

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*Journal of the North Cascades Conservation Council*

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### THE NORTH CASCADES

CONSERVATION COUNCIL was formed in 1957 "To protect and preserve the North Cascades' scenic, scientific, recreational, educational, wildlife, 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 last six decades 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: \$10 (Living Lightly) to \$100.

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Founded in 1957  
SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

## THE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

FALL 2022

I happened to be up on the banks of the Cascade River the day the Bolt Fire erupted, and the experience was second only to being in the path of a solar eclipse – darkness fell over the land in a matter of seconds. We were all hoping the pattern of heat, dryness and fire in recent summers wouldn't become the new normal, but clearly that's exactly what we have now. Luckily, the Olympics were clear and so I went there to be able to breathe and see. While I was there I was reminded how many of our issues mesh with those of our sister organization "Olympic Park Advocates," of which you'll read more in this issue.

The reactions that we're hearing now to this summer's spate of west-side fires on our unprotected public forest lands in statements by the US Forest Service and Washington State DNR may foretell worse outcomes than the fires. The chorus is rising that aggressive, large-scale forest thinning must begin, as if that will reduce fire risk and severity, when in fact many reports show that opening the canopy by thinning increases fire intensity by drying ground fuels. I'm reminded of the reflexive chant "we will rebuild" that seems to be heard after many natural disasters, when I hear "we must thin." Thinning is potentially more threatening to our ecosystem than the fires themselves. What's especially troubling is that several other (ostensibly) environmental groups are openly supporting thinning as a panacea.

Take a moment to read our open letter to those groups: <https://tinyurl.com/bdmze3f4>. We're challenging them to explain how they can support the thinning proposals by the Forest Service in the upper Twisp River valley which is already well fire-adapted. Their proposals even allow logging contractors to cut whatever trees they want, thanks to so-called "Conditions-Based Management," meaning the wrong trees will be cut — the larger, older and more commercially valuable ones. We have yet to hear a response from any of the organizations we sent that letter to, so if you are also a member of these organizations, feel free to put your name on the letter, re-send it to them and let me know if they respond to you. Beyond just "collaborating" with the agency, they've managed to embed themselves to the point of excluding the rest of the public from the decision-making process. Rectifying that is one of our top goals now, but it takes resources. In this issue you'll be asked to help — I hope you can.

And finally, I'd like to relate the story of a new member who joined N3C last month. Our Treasurer called this new member to ask how he'd heard of us, and it turned out he'd met one of our board members at a lookout he stewards in the North Cascades and said he "...realized in a flash how important it is to support organizations like N3C, particularly given his love over DECADES of the mountains and forests of Washington." I know many of us have had a similar moment of clarity like this new member had, when we realized how important it is to take up the cause of conservation. I hope you can reach out to others you know and when they have their epiphany, make it easy for them to see why N3C is the right place for them.

Phil Fenner

[pbilf@northcascades.org](mailto:pbilf@northcascades.org)



# N3C Actions

JULY to OCTOBER  
2022

*Advocacy carried out by dedicated N3C volunteers in the last four months to protect and preserve the North Cascades lands, waters, plants and wildlife. Also noted are several issues being monitored that may require action when fully evaluated and understood.*



## DEFENDING WILD AREAS AGAINST DAMAGING INDUSTRIAL USES

*Why it matters: resource extraction — mining, logging, hydropower — is the most harmful use of public land. N3C strives to save what remains wild, mitigate what's been lost, and restore what's been damaged.*

- Continued participation in the 5-year long Seattle City Light Skagit Hydroelectric Power Relicensing. N3C is on the Comprehensive Committee, which meets every two weeks to set goals for and approve provisions to be included in the Settlement Package submitted to FERC in April 2023.
- Attended Washington Wild event to celebrate the exclusion of mining from the Skagit Headwaters' donut hole.
- Signed on to Washington Wild letter supporting appropriate environmental review for an exploratory drilling proposal near the Buckhorn Mine in Okanogan County.



## ESTABLISHING, EXPANDING AND PROTECTING WILDERNESS AREAS

*Why it matters: federal land designation as Wilderness and Park is the gold standard of ecosystem protection, precluding most damaging industrial and commercial exploitation.*

- Provided statement to KIRO-TV 7 on our position regarding Glacier Peak seismic monitoring, that lightweight Li-ion batteries be used rather than heavy lead-acid ones to avoid using helicopters in Glacier Peak Wilderness.
- Participated in the 2022 season of the North Cascades Glacier Climate Project.
- Discussed the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT) in upper Stehekin River valley with PCT Association's NW Rep, to counter suggestions that the upper valley road be rebuilt/relocated onto the PCT alignment there, which would violate the National Scenic Trails Act unless the PCT was relocated. PCTA determined there is no route for the PCT other than its current alignment. N3C groundtruthing on the current route revealed exceptional groves of ancient forest which would doubtless be cut if a vehicle road were built there.

### Want to take actions that protect the North Cascades?

Join the N3C board.

Contact Phil Fenner for details at  
[philf@northcascades.org](mailto:philf@northcascades.org)



## PROTECTING ANCIENT FORESTS AND PROMOTING RESPONSIBLE FOREST MANAGEMENT

*Why it matters:* like real estate, they're just not making ancient forest anymore. We seek to restore watersheds and fisheries damaged from decades of heavy logging and road building and protect significant forests from degradation.

- ✓ Actively contributed to the U.S. Forest Service (USFS)'s objection resolution meeting for the N. Fork Nooksack Vegetation Management (logging) Project.
- ✓ Wrote Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest (OWNF) Supervisor Kristin Bail asking why the USFS deals exclusively with the North-Central Washington Forest Health Collaborative (NCWFHC) and excludes other publics like N3C. Her response dismissed our concerns. We are evaluating next steps.
- ✓ Wrote & circulated an open letter to NCWFHC members asking their rationale for supporting the USFS's Twisp "Restoration" Plan despite its negative impact.
- ✓ Consulted N3C legal team regarding options to halt destructive logging proposed for the Twisp River valley.
- ✓ Toured "Mission Project" underway in Libby Creek drainage near Twisp, as a preview of how the USFS will treat the Twisp River valley when and if "restoration" begins. District Ranger Furr indicated he was open to hearing N3C's alternative to their plan for the upper valley. Wrote Furr to request clarification of the process, no reply yet.



## PROMOTING ENVIRONMENTALLY SOUND RECREATION IN WILD AREAS

*Why it matters:* balancing access with economics and Wilderness preservation, we evaluate motorized use and places where it needs to be limited to reduce land impacts and recurring road repair costs.

- ✓ Submitted scoping comments on the draft Management Plan and Environmental Assessment for the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail.
  - ✓ Continued monthly conference calls with North Cascades National Park Superintendent Don Striker to discuss Skagit Hydro Relicensing and other Park management topics.
  - ✓ Held conference call with North Cascades Institute leadership to discuss common concerns.
- 
- ✓ Submitted comments to OWNF regarding proposed "Danger Tree Removal," expressing concern over the suggestion that logging contractors can decide which trees to cut, aka "condition-based management".
  - ✓ Filed Opening Brief with the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals in our appeal of the lower court's denial of our suit to stop the Forest Service's "Vegetation Management" (logging) project in the S. Fork Stillaguamish River valley.
  - ✓ Organized tours for four state legislators to encourage their support for DNR's trust land transfer (TLT) program.



## PROTECTING WILDLIFE AND WILDLIFE HABITAT

*Why it matters:* From microscopic fungi to top predators, the wilderness ecosystem's living members are interdependent, so keeping viable populations of each species is essential to preserve the ecosystem for future generations.

- ✓ Contacted USFS mine remediation official in charge of Monte Cristo operations and learned that final inspection of the waste repository will happen summer 2023. The track through Inventoried Roadless Area is blocked by many downed trees so there is no motorized access.
- ✓ Signed on to WashingtonWILD's letter thanking Sen. Murray & Gov. Inslee for their leadership on the Lower Snake River dams and urging them to move forward with a plan that includes breaching the four dams to prevent extinction of salmon.

- ✓ Continued leading the TLT advocacy coalition, including serving on DNR's TLT Advisory Committee and successfully encouraging Commissioner Franz to make TLT a DNR priority.
- ✓ Attended meeting with Rep. Alex Ramel of the 40th Wash. State Legislative district and local advocates to promote improved policies and full funding of TLT.



# Mine near Darrington operating without a County permit



106-acre jettystone mine on Mount Higgins above the North Fork Stillaguamish River. Snohomish County says this is a “non-conforming existing use” so no County SEPA review or permit action was required. However, County code requires a permit for operations of this scale. The Stillaguamish Tribe was not consulted, and is taking this issue up with the County.

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## State Supreme Court decision against the environment is actually a win for the environment

Earlier this summer, the Washington State Supreme Court issued a decision on a lawsuit with big implications for the state Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and state forests. While on its surface, a 9-0 ruling against several environment groups looks like a loss for us, the court’s decision actually made clear that the state has a constitutional mandate and broad authority to serve “all the people” and not just the narrow mission of maximizing revenue and logging from state forestlands. DNR and the Legislature can now very clearly manage state forests for all of us, allowing room for consideration of such benefits as ecosystem services, recreation, and carbon sequestration.

In the past, DNR and its commissioners have said that a Skamania County court decision, the state constitution and statutes required them to maximize revenue generation for beneficiaries and to do it by harvesting timber, above all else. Now, the court clearly has said timber cutting isn’t required to generate revenue (revenue can come from elsewhere like carbon markets) and DNR also has a duty to all the people, not just trust beneficiaries. It’s no longer a world where timber is king.

The 9-0 decision means that past DNR decisions on marbled murrelets and their “sustainable harvest calculation” can stand but the future of state forests is unwritten. The Legislature and DNR now need to define what forest management “for all the

people” means. We have the opportunity to shape that future, an opportunity that wasn’t available previously.

State trust lands and state forest policy are of utmost importance to N3C because they represent the largest swath of unprotected forests in the North Cascades ecosystems. Largely at low- and mid- elevations, state forests represent significant opportunities for conservation and protection. N3C has been and will continue to lead efforts to revitalize DNR’s trust land transfer program, a major conservation tool that has saved thousands of acres in the North Cascades. We’ll also be pushing for other reforms to protect the North Cascades – from top to bottom.

# Fall 2022 Skagit project relicensing update

By N3C Board representative Dave Fluharty

As reported in *TWC* Spring-Summer 2022 the Skagit Project Relicensing has entered the license and settlement agreement phase of the process. Unfortunately for reporting purposes, this part of the process is covered by a confidentiality agreement so I can't report on issues of significance. Suffice it to say that now is when position statements are starting to be advocated. The purpose of the confidentiality agreement is to permit the free flow of negotiations, which helps to develop better understanding of issues and will hopefully lead to better outcomes.

The trouble that N3C sees ahead is that Seattle City Light (SCL) is obligated by deadlines set by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to turn in a Draft License Agreement in December 2022, just one month from now, and few of the issues have been resolved by

the license participants so far. This leaves SCL in the awkward position of having to either state its own positions on license provisions or to leave big gaps in the document. License participants like the Tribes with Treaty Rights and federal and state agencies with conditioning authorities according to their statutory mandates are rightfully concerned that the SCL positions could be interpreted as agreed-to among the parties or that SCL would be somehow advantaged in that process. Worse yet is that including SCL's positions may preclude other ideas about the license provisions. N3C and other non-governmental organizations share such concerns about elements they would like to see in the new license. There is a lot of urgency around the Draft License Agreement document because the final License Settlement is due to go to FERC by April 2023.

In an interesting twist, a reporter used a Freedom of Information Act request to obtain information that the license participants assumed was covered by confidentiality agreements. This has resulted in premature publication and some ruffled feathers. Balancing the "freedom of the press" with the ability to negotiate in a confidential environment is a tough assignment given the desire of the public to know what is happening. See <https://themargin.us/features/opening-the-gateway> to understand what I mean in this context.

At this point, I will not comment on N3C's positions on any of the issues. However, by the next issue of *TWC* I should be able to report on the Draft Relicensing Agreement text because it becomes a public document when it is sent to FERC. Stay tuned!

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Welcome to



Olympic Park Advocates

By Tom Hammond and Tim McNulty

The founders of the North Cascades Conservation Council also founded Olympic Park Associates—nine years before the creation of N3C.

Men and women from a variety of conservation and outdoor groups came together in 1948 to form Olympic Park Associates (OPA). The name reflected colleagues united for a cause. It was apt enough for its time, but less specific as to the nature or purpose of the organization today. "Advocates" makes it clear. OPA exists to publicly support the park and its spectacular wilderness and defend it against incompatible uses.

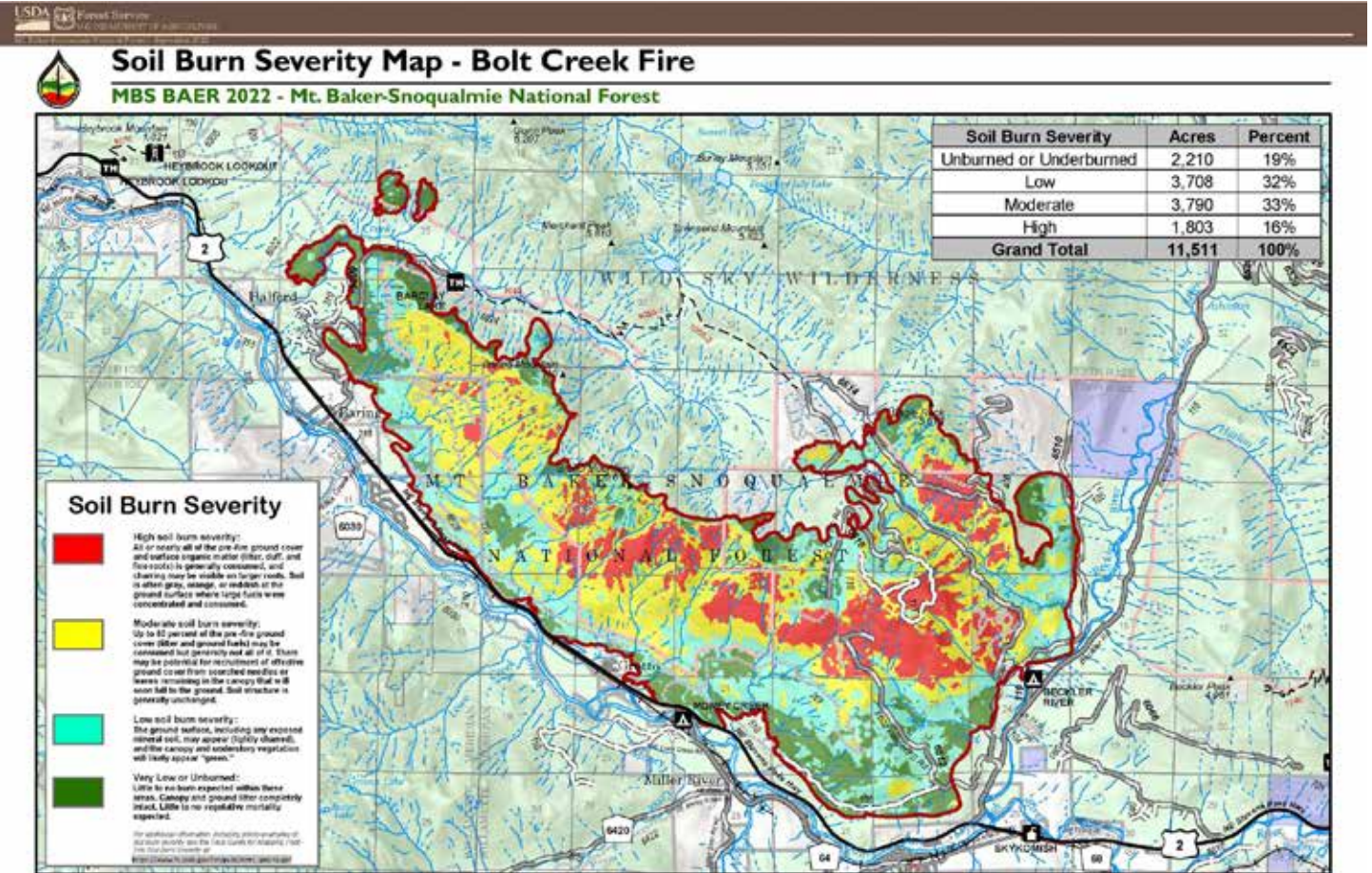
After more than 70 years of environmental activism in defense of Olympic wildlands, Olympic Park Associates has changed their name to Olympic Park Advocates. They're still OPA, the same scrappy grass-roots organization dedicated to protecting the wilderness and ecological integrity of Olympic National Park and the Olympic ecosystem. OPA's board of trustees, advisory board, and membership will remain. OPA will continue publishing *Voice of the Wild Olympics* and they'll continue to focus intensely on issues facing the park and surrounding public lands.

Please join OPA in this important work. Contributions and bequests made to OPA under either name will still go to the same place and fund the same important work. Bring OPA your ideas, and ask how you might become involved. Join OPA in our three-quarter-century long tradition of defending Olympic wilderness. Become an advocate for Olympic National Park! Contact us through our website: [olympicparkadvocates.org](http://olympicparkadvocates.org).



# Bolt Creek Fire confirms west side wet forest science

By David Fluharty



I am writing this as autumnal rains are ending an unprecedented fire season in the Cascades. Before we forget the summer heat and smoke and go about our busy lives let's reflect on what these fires are telling us.

I focus on the Bolt Creek Fire because it scorched an area I know very well. In 1966 I spent the summer as an engineering aide for the Skykomish Ranger District and have been a frequent visitor since. My last visit was October 16 when I drove through the smoking roadside and still blazing mountain tops shortly before Highway 2 was again closed. Another reason for discussing the Bolt Creek Fire is because it burned a very visible part of the Cascades stretching north of Highway 2 from near Heybrook Lookout to the Beckler River. The full fury of the fire and its aftermath of slow healing will be apparent to travel-

ers for the next 40 to 60 years.

The Bolt Creek Fire confirms what west side fire history and science tell us about the kind of fire to expect under conditions of drought, low humidity, high temperature and strong winds. The Bolt Creek Fire is a classic and reminds us of a number of important lessons that should guide future land use and fire planning especially because the conditions that caused the Bolt Fire to explode are expected to become more frequent and stronger.

The fire started on September 10. Post-fire cleanup and assessments tell us that the effects of the fire will be with us for years to come. The Bolt Creek fire has burned at least 14,600 acres (22.8 sq. mi) on federal, state, tribal and private land.

First, fire scientists tell us that large, fast-growing fires in west side forests are infrequent (fire interval of 150-300 years)

but devastating when they appear. Special conditions are needed to dry out west side forests to the point they can sustain an inferno like Bolt Creek. The thick bark of many coniferous trees protects them so fire does not spread rapidly when the forests are wet. (It will be interesting to find out if the groves of ancient forest above the town site of Grotto survived.)

Second, once a conflagration gets started in dry timber and is wind driven, almost nothing can be done to arrest its spread. It is irresponsible to send in fire fighters to these steep forested slopes, and dropping water or (heaven forbid) a slurry of chemical retardants is not possible due to the terrain. Even well-designed systems of firebreaks (if such existed) are limited in utility given the ferocity of the fire.

Third, the primary source of ignition of fire in the west side forest is lightning,



which normally strikes at higher elevations. So far, one of the most alarming reports is that the Bolt Creek fire ignition is most likely human caused. We hope forensic analysis allows apprehension of the guilty parties. Unfortunately, the incidence of human-caused fires is also increasing with more and more users enjoying the outdoors via networks of unpatrolled roads without the knowledge to deal responsibly with fire (or sanitation for that matter).

The source and location in the terrain of ignition matters a lot. A lightning strike on a mountain ridge, in a pocket of trees in a meadow or a tall tree in the midst of a wet forest, is less likely to spread than a human-caused fire at a low-elevation site. That's because, in general, it is harder for a fire to burn down slope than to burn uphill. Thus, when a low-elevation ignition occurs in a dry forest and is assisted by high winds, the fire spreads rapidly—quickly wrapping around a mountain and racing upslope until it tops out along ridgelines. This is exactly what the Bolt Creek Fire has done. Fortunately, Highway 2 allowed access by fire fighters and to a large extent served as a fire break to protect human habitations. In places, I suspect that the Skykomish River also played a role.

Fourth, according to state climatologist Nick Bond, and as experienced by most readers, the spring was wet and cool, while the summer and fall have been dry and warm—breaking records for number

of hot days and for lack of precipitation. To paraphrase, Bond calls this a dress rehearsal for longer fire seasons and longer periods of incessant smoke as a consequence of a warming world. Every year will not be the same but we can expect more of our climate to play out like this year. (Seattle Times, 10/19/22).

Fifth, the aftermath of a big fire like Bolt Creek on the slopes of Mount Baring and Grotto Mountain will be flooding and landslides on Highway 2. Already, fallen trees from fire burning their roots have crumpled metal guardrails along the highway and who knows when large boulders destabilized by the fire will bomb the route.

What does this mean for fire management and N3C's efforts to protect the Cascades?

Fire does not respect boundary lines drawn on the forests for Wilderness, public or private property when it is so dry, warm and wind-aided. And it cannot be contained when it is roaring. Fire preparedness and control efforts should focus on protecting lives and property.

This is an important lesson. For our west side wet forests, prescribed burning and thinning over large tracts of land, as currently proposed by the USFS, will not stop the type of fire we are experiencing now, and may actually exacerbate the drying conditions by reducing overstory. The current emphasis of the "healthy forest initiatives" results in the sale of smaller trees

so that other trees will grow faster and be logged sooner. This is not protecting the forests from fire.

Another important lesson for N3C is that protecting forests from logging is increasingly important. While the Bolt Creek Fire and others like it are contributing to the release of carbon emissions, there is increasing scientific recognition that the forests of the Pacific Northwest are one of best ways to sequester carbon that is known (even more effective than the vaunted Amazon rainforest). Thus, N3C's Board action to call for the Mt. Baker Snoqualmie National Forest (MBSNF) to become a Carbon-Watershed Reserve (see TWC Spring-Summer 2022) takes on added importance because it reduces the pell-mell increase of greenhouse gasses in the atmosphere.

N3C recognizes that the Bolt Creek Fire has had multiple negative impacts. Nearby residents faced real and potential property loss and evacuations, local businesses lost customers, travelers faced lengthy detours, smoke congested the air across the Puget Sound lowlands, etc. Thankfully, according to official reports, no lives were lost and, as far as reported, no homes have burned, although there are terrifying stories of survival. See <https://wildfiretoday.com/2022/09/13/hikers-who-escaped-from-bolt-creek-fire-documented-and-now-explain-the-ordeal/>. Our appreciation goes out to all the emergency responders and fire fighters for keeping the public safe under very difficult circumstances.

Unfortunately, little can be done to control the types of fires projected to be more common in our future. The best we can do to prevent fire damage is to try to keep people and property safe and out of harm's way by employing tools like zoning, protective buffers, and conservation acquisitions. We can also designate the MBSNF as a Carbon-Watershed Reserve and contribute materially to slowing the seemingly inexorable race to a warmer, more fire-prone world.



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*The Bolt Creek Fire was not this summer's only conflagration. Looking south across the Glacier Peak Wilderness from the summit of Snowking, smoke rose out of the Buck Creek valley from the Lake Toketie fire. —JIM SCARBOROUGH PHOTO*

# Collaboration or collusion?

## The evolving saga of the Twisp logging agenda

By Ric Bailey

None of us wants to be accused of being a conspiracy theorist. Still, the Forest Service's public process for developing its euphemistically challenged "restoration" projects on the Twisp River is contributing to such a theory. The Service has partnered exclusively with the North Central Washington Forest Health Collaborative to develop massive logging projects, and has relegated the rest of the public to shunned bystanders.

The collusion began after the Service made the covert decision to split the proposed 77,000-acre Twisp Restoration (logging) Project into two separate decisions. Methow Valley District Ranger Chris Furr gave a presentation to the Collaborative at its November 3, 2021 meeting. He boldly revealed a new plan to advance a 24,000-acre Twisp Restoration Project (TRP) with a speedy decision, and log the remaining 53,000 acres in a separate project called Midnight Restoration.

No other publics were contacted about this plan, but N3C found out about it after obtaining the minutes to the Collaborative meeting. Phil Fenner and I set up a call with Ranger Furr on December 8. We asked him to disclose the information he'd shared with the Collaborative, and to open a full public involvement process. He refused.

Three months later on January 26, 2022, the rest of the public was informed of the decision to reduce the size of the TRP via a virtual presentation by Ranger Furr and his staff. However, to our dismay, no mention was made of the pending Midnight project that would log the areas eliminated from the original TRP. As this issue goes to press, the Service has still made no public announcement of the existence of the Midnight project.

After the January announcement, Phil

Fenner listened in on the April 13 North Central Washington Forest Health Collaborative meeting. The group discussed plans to develop a Proposed Action for the Midnight project, and to unilaterally conduct much of the NEPA analysis. Meanwhile, the Forest Service nonchalantly keeps the rest of us in the dark.

The Collaborative is involved in the creation of the Midnight project in the development phase, while the rest of the

public will only be able to comment on a Proposed Action that the agency and the Collaborative have already finalized. History tells us trying to make significant changes to a Proposed Action is a fool's errand.

During a September 16 tour of logging units in the Mission project in the

Twisp Watershed with the Forest Service, I asked Ranger Furr whether N3C could develop a Proposed Action for Midnight as the Collaborative is. He declined to give a direct answer, which precipitated our letter requesting validation for the exclusive process now being used to create Proposed Actions (see next page).

N3C has repeatedly attempted to contact the Collaborative via the email address and phone number on its web site, but has never received a response. N3C thus sent a letter to the organizations that belong to the Collaborative: The Wilderness Society, Conservation Northwest, Trout Unlimited, and Methow Valley Citizen's Council (<https://tinyurl.com/bdmze3f4>). We have not heard back from them. These former allies have not shown any interest in communicating with N3C or the many local landowners in the Methow Valley who are concerned with the plans to log the entire Twisp River Drainage.

While the exclusive relationship between the Forest Service and the 24 organizations, companies and agencies that compose the Collaborative is clearly

unfair, it remains to be seen whether any law is being violated. N3C's attorneys are working on a case against the April 30, 2022 TRP decision. They are investigating whether the privileged access to information and influence being afforded to the Collaborative violates the Federal Advisory Committee Act, and the National Environmental Policy Act.

Many prominent ecosystem advocacy organizations, including Oregon Wild, the Greater Hells Canyon Council, and WildEarth Guardians have terminated their involvement in similar collaboratives. They have expressed frustration with the single-minded purpose of the collaborations as per Forest Service control of the agenda, which is limited to concocting massive logging projects with minimal environmental analysis.

N3C would enjoy working with the Forest Service, for example, to repair trails, decommission logging roads, eradicate weeds, and replant riparian areas. Unfortunately, these bonafide restoration activities do not fit into the logging agendas of the Forest Service and the North Central Washington Forest Health Collaborative.

N3C still intends to submit our alternative for restoration of the Twisp River Watershed to the Forest Service, and insist it be included in the Environmental Analysis for the Midnight project. In the meantime, we'll be testing the legality of the Collaborative process.



Formerly a *Pinus ponderosa* on the Twisp, done in by the Forest Service. —PHIL FENNER PHOTO





*Founded in 1957*  
**SEATTLE, WASHINGTON**

Post Office Box 95980, University Station  
Seattle, Washington 98145-1980

To: Chris Furr, District Ranger  
Methow Valley Ranger District  
Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest

September 20, 2022

Dear Ranger Furr: Thank you for the tour of the Mission Restoration Project area September 16. All of us who attended were honored by the presence of many of your resource specialists. Despite the differences of opinion aired during the event, the tour was enlightening.

During the tour, you acknowledged that the North Central Washington Forest Health Collaborative is developing a Proposed Action for the upcoming Midnight Project. I asked about the opportunity for North Cascades Conservation Council to develop a Proposed Action for the project. You said if we were to develop such a proposal, you would be open to listening. We therefore request clarification regarding the process for developing and presenting a Proposed Action.

What is the regulation or authority that allows the development or to assist in the development, of a Proposed Action for a NEPA document by a party or entity apart from the Forest Service?

If an independent entity were to develop a Proposed Action, how will they know the Forest Service will assist in its development, and that it will be considered as the actual Proposed Action for the project?

If more than one Proposed Action is created, how will the Forest Service decide which one to use? Can two or more Proposed Actions be presented in a NEPA document?

If you are not open to our development of a Proposed Action, what is the rationale for allowing or disallowing independent Proposed Actions among interested publics?

We wish to develop a Proposed Action for Midnight, and seek some surety that were we to develop one, you would work with us, and it would be accepted and considered on equal ground with any other.

During our discussions, there was an issue over possibly conflicting science regarding the effectiveness of fuels reduction treatments in reducing the size and severity of wildfires. I've taken the liberty of attaching one of the studies I was alluding to, and an editorial by former forest supervisor Jim Furnish.

Again, thank you for yours and your staff's time and the candid discussion during the tour.

I look forward to your reply.

Ric Bailey

North Cascades Conservation Council

## Help support legal precedents to preserve the Twisp watershed

The Twisp Watershed is one of the most threatened places in the North Cascades Ecosystem. More than 100,000 acres are beset by three projects that will incise logging roads and clearcuts, all in the name of "fuels reduction treatments".

N3C is on the path to setting some nationally important legal precedents that could thwart U.S. Forest Service shortcuts in its analysis of the environmental impacts of logging projects in the Twisp and beyond. Our efforts will also expose preferential treatment the agency is giving to select public interests that support its logging agenda.

We've raised \$25,000 from select donors in the Methow Valley and beyond. Yet despite the generous hourly discount our attorneys are giving us, we need to raise more to complete the effort. Your tax-deductible donation earmarked Twisp Watershed Campaign will be critical to completing this promising campaign.

Send a check with a note indicating your Twisp earmark to our mailing address, or visit our donations web page: <http://www.northcascades.org/wordpress/join-us>

Click "Donate Now" and put "Twisp" in the "In Honor/Memory of" box. Thank you!

# Corvid's eye

Earlier this year, N3C quietly adopted a new position statement regarding management priorities for the vast Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest (MBSNF) moving forward. Stretching northward from the outer slopes of Mount Rainier all the way to the Canadian border, this rugged, wet belt of deep woods, complex watersheds, and steep mountains is a peerless marvel. With its irreplaceable habitats for native terrestrial and aquatic species, its array of ecosystem services, and its countless opportunities for personal transcendence of these misbegotten times, the Pacific Northwest possesses an enviable gift to wake to each morning.

N3C's position statement for the MBSNF, in humble recognition of these priceless attributes, advocates for eliminating all future commercial logging and mining on these 1.7 million acres, while redoubling efforts toward restoration of aquatic/riparian and terrestrial habitats through permanent removal of all but essential trunk roads. In other words, the wild and intact core areas of the MBSNF would be allowed to carry on in their resplendence without further direct threat, while conditions would be set for long-term natural recovery of areas previously damaged and degraded by extractive activities.

It has perhaps not escaped the reader's attention that no other entity in our region is proposing anything of the sort for the MBSNF. Many, including many who should know better, typically express relative contentment with the current state of affairs. Such an ignoble status quo was in fact

part of the motivation for N3C to draw a distinction. Now nearing two-thirds of a century of unabashed activism, N3C has long stood outside the inert consensus of polite society, often choosing to give the zeitgeist a well-timed shove rather than taking the easy way of submitting to it. Given that idealists like the corvid have been waiting since circa 1980 for a new world to be born, as the death grip of the old grows ever tighter, such a shove seems advisable and may not be the last.

And what of these sclerotic times, these days of zombie conformism and undead socioeconomic guardrails? They are of course the product of entrenched power



and money, which seeks above all else to expand or at least preserve its privileged place in the grand pecking order. Although more decrepit and absurd with each passing year, this oligarchy in all but name desperately and malevolently hangs on. When wondering how entire communities and their ecosystems can continue to be colonized and wantonly exploited, to the point of risking the integrity of the biosphere itself, know well that those who've been in charge for far too long are the culprits.

In the North Cascades, and more specifically the MBSNF, this status quo spent nearly fifty years gouging out logging roads and shipping as many of our trees to the mill as it could muster, until finally arrested by its own excesses as the

twentieth century drew to a close. Since then, it has worked tirelessly to restart this engine of exploitation, and is now on the cusp of regaining dominion over these public lands. Three huge logging projects—in the Stillaguamish and Nooksack basins—are poised to become reality, all slathered in euphemisms to suggest that only new logging can solve the problems of previous logging. The Forest Service, an agency bankrupt of vision, is happy to play along. So, too, are the courtiers, including several of the best-known conservation organizations in our state, whose primary concerns are keeping the lights on and making payroll. Their curtsying and genuflecting are instinctual.

N3C with its volunteer emphasis and lack of entanglements is fortunate to retain a clear view of both history and a possible future free of entrenched, exploitative interests. Self-evident is the MBSNF's impressive capacity to sequester carbon dioxide, supply clean and abundant water, provide secure habitat to vulnerable fish and wildlife species, and offer opportunities for compatible human recreation. There should be no controversy in asserting that industrialization of these lands and waters for another era of intensive logging would directly undermine each of these clear priorities. Yet power does not rest, and power with its many hangers-on believes firmly that every acre and creature should prepare to be reaped to sustain the old order.

Few now believe that society is on a straight path to enlightenment, equality, or harmonious relations with Nature. It's a mistake to assume that future generations will necessarily tend the few promising shoots from seeds planted today. Things can always regress, as they have, and right before our eyes. Friends are found to consort with habitual colonizers for their own near-term comforts, public institutions quickly fall in line when power and money exert themselves, and Nature's promise of life is disregarded and replaced by a base desire for material riches. Still, one is no more likely to be accurate in forecasting a wretched future than a propitious one. And so N3C, with humility, despite a hot east wind desiccating the soil, plants this seed of hope in a still-hushed North Cascades valley.

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*Power does not rest,  
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# Documentary celebrates the life of environmentalist Stewart Udall



## Screening November 10

John de Graaf's new film "Stewart Udall and the Politics of Beauty" celebrates the life and legacy of the former Interior Secretary and environmental and social justice advocate. This is the first and only film to follow the trajectory of Udall's life from childhood through his years as Secretary of the Interior and climate activist and public official.

Udall was a visionary—a politician, statesman, peacemaker, cultural humanitarian, and arguably the most effective environmentalist in American history. He fought tirelessly against greed and injustice, and for the protection of our planet and its natural beauty. He was the first public official to speak out against climate change in the 1960s. His rich legacy is well known by historians but not so much by the public at large—until now.

In the 1960s, when America was first awakening to the unfolding destruction of its paradise, Stewart Udall had big ideas about how to stop it. At a time that was far less polarized, he secured bipartisan support. His entire life was spent in the service of the positive common good. Few American political figures stand more in contrast

to the partisan, divisive politics of today, than does Stewart Udall. That makes him, and this story, supremely relevant—both to history and as a valuable lesson for today.

Seattle documentarian and activist John de Graaf has secured and filmed many insightful contributions from those who knew, worked with, and followed after Udall. He has captured the early birth pangs of the environmental movement in America and that period during the sixties and seventies when the movement truly came of age, showcasing the victories and defeats with which Udall was intimately connected. The film examines Udall's long arduous fight to win compensation for Navajo Indians and "downwinders" who got cancer from their exposure to radiation during the Cold War without being warned of the dangers. It also showcases his commitment to racial justice by integrating the National Park Service ranger corps, forcing the integration of the now-renamed Washington NFL football team, and promoting Native self-determination in the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Learn how Udall advocated for clean air, clean water, conservation, racial and environmental justice, and peace....led the way for transformative

environmental legislation...and was the first public official to recognize, write about, and speak out against global warming. As Secretary of the Interior during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, Udall aggressively oversaw expansion of federal public lands, adding countless national parks, national monuments, seashores, lakeshores, recreation areas, historic sites, and wildlife refuges.

Many of the environmental gains that Stewart Udall made possible are now under threat, both from politicians on the political right and, more dangerously, from the Supreme Court. America, and all of humanity, needs Stewart Udall. In his absence, we need this film. Watch the trailer at <https://tinyurl.com/3929jjus> and come to Seattle University for a screening on November 10.

### Where and when

Stewart Udall:  
The Politics of Beauty

5:30 pm Thursday,  
November 10

Wyckoff Auditorium  
(Bannan 244)

Seattle University  
901 12th Ave  
Seattle, WA 98122

*Documentarian John de Graaf  
will be present*

# BOOK REVIEW

## *Tanum* by Susan Summit Cyr

Reviewed by Joan Burton

Susan Cyr has written a book, titled “Tanum” about the history of Bumping Lake that is part personal memoir, part regional history, and part tribute to the beauty of the place. She alternates her own lived experiences with those of other heroic characters in Bumping Lake’s past. It is a beautiful book about a beautiful place.

Cyr documents overcoming the problems of construction, such as building the dam during sub-freezing temperatures in 1910 with minimum equipment. Later, fishermen, trappers, herders, miners, and prospectors came to the lake, where they met Jack Nelson, the first Bureau of Reclamation dam overseer, and his wife Kitty, proprietor of a guest lodge.

Jack and Kitty had spent their honeymoon in the overseer’s cabin at Bumping Lake. In their first winter they explored the forests around the lake and found a magnificent grove of old growth hemlocks and pines. They were so massive and inspiring that they named the place the Sanctuary. It is still there today. In addition to Kitty’s lodge, other manmade features include a campground and a lakeshore resort, now closed.

Miners excavated a good amount of gold and silver before the dam was built and later built a high mining camp called Copper City. Cyr has found evidence of the claims and blazes used by prospectors in the 1890s. Without heavy equipment, more than 300 miners relied on hand work and dynamite. One miner, Tom Fife, who wanted to show his patriotism, gave 10 acres of his claim to the Boy Scouts for a permanent summer camp. In 1915 tungsten was discovered. Though it was recognized as potentially valuable for weaponry, mining it and getting it down from 4500 feet proved dangerous. Occasional avalanches exacted a deadly toll.

The water impounded by the dam was intended in part for Yakima orchard growers and farmers. It was the first of a series of six planned dams, which would eventually flood many more acres of forest

and mountains. That plan has never been withdrawn, though the need for the water has dwindled. Homeowners today dread the possibility of the raising of the existing dam to 138 feet and protest the economic justifications given by the Bureau of Reclamation as untrue and unnecessary.

Bumping Lake was known for its abundant stocks of fish. Fishermen came from miles away to catch Chinook salmon, sockeye or kokanee, and trout. But because “scrap fish” had also begun to appear in Bumping Lake, a massive fish poisoning by state fish biologists, approved by the Bureau of Reclamation, killed every fish in Bumping Lake. Cyr reports that fish have never again been as abundant as they once were.

The Depression brought widespread hunger, poverty, and trappers who lived off the land year-round. As in much of the rural west, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) was introduced to build and help maintain government structures. A CCC camp was built and local outdoorsmen were recruited to run the camp. Boys who were residents later remembered the hard work that helped prepare them for

adulthood and the beauty of the place.

Several miles down the road from Bumping Lake at Goose Prairie lived two women, Kay Kershaw and Pat Kane, later replaced by Isabelle Lynn, who helped build and open a popular guest lodge, the Double K, in 1947. Retired lodge cook Kitty Nelson shared her recipes and helped Isabelle prepare herself to feed her guests. Because they wanted their guests to know and appreciate the wilderness around them, the women took them on high horseback trips to see it for themselves. However, the “Double K girls” were horrified when U.S. Forest Service clear cutting came to Bumping Lake. They had thought it was immune from logging. They fought the Forest Service to stave off more encroaching clearcut logging and road building.

A frequent guest was Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas, who became a friend to them and to Bumping Lake. For decades he escaped to its beauty from pressures of judicial work. He bought land adjoining the Double K lodge and built a cabin of his own. He believed the entire area should be set aside as a wil-



*Justice Douglas flanked by the Double K girls at Goose Prairie.*



derness. Several times he issued Supreme Court decisions by long distance phone from Goose Prairie, once briefly stopping the bombing in Vietnam.

The original Wilderness Act required that sections of untouched land in different regions be set aside. Kay and Isabelle, the Goose Prairie Girls, drafted a proposal that the primeval forests of Bumping Lake area be defined and saved as the Cougar Lakes Wilderness. The ultimate land to be set aside was 125,000 acres. Justice Douglas joined in the battle. Though it was sponsored by N3C, the Wilderness Society, and many other groups, the measure was not passed.

Douglas was undeterred. He contacted the head of the Forest Service, the Secretary of Agriculture, and Senator Henry Jackson and organized other local conservationists into a team. The Double K Girls led pack trips into the wilderness they called "field studies" to familiarize more people with the area. One trip led to a disastrous exposure of logging damage already underway. Douglas was outraged, and brought pressure to prevent three more timber sales from taking place.

In 1964 the Wilderness Act was passed, but without the Cougar Lakes proposal. Douglas didn't give up. He wrote editorials and summoned heads of government agencies to Goose Prairie to talk about saving the wilderness. His health began to fail and he had a massive stroke. He resigned from the Court when he became incapacitated, and died in 1980.

In 1984 the Washington Wilderness Act was finally passed, this time including the Cougar Lakes Wilderness area. After 24 years of struggle the Double K girls rejoiced, and remembered the influence of Justice Douglas in its support. It was named the William O. Douglas Wilderness in his honor. The Bumping River region, or Tanum, had been saved.

The remaining threat today is the continuing possible raising of the dam and subsequent flooding of the forest lands, campgrounds and mountain ridges around it. Opposition to the heightened dam continues.

## Letter to the Editor

August 22, 2022

Editor:

Thanks to N3C and Dr. Miles McPhee for his Spring-Summer *TWC* article, "How 'non-use' value of restoring salmon made a questionable project 'cost effective'." N3C members will be particularly interested in the WSU Water Research Center's (WRC) 2014 B-C Analysis of [Yakima Basin Integrated Plan] YBIP Projects (pp. 108-109). In addition to looking at the Yakima Plan's sockeye salmon value estimates used to justify billions of dollars of new storage dams, the WRC estimated that using the same methodology (willingness-to-pay to protect 1,000 acres of ancient forest to be flooded by new Bumping Reservoir) the damages (costs) from this lost ancient forest was estimated at \$1.85 billion. This lowered the Benefit/Cost ratio of a new Bumping Lake dam to a range of five to two cents of benefits for every dollar spent. A thousand acres of ancient forest worth \$1.85 billion is another reason for saving ancient forests. (Ref

[https://wrc.wsu.edu/documents/2014/12/ybip\\_bca\\_swwrc\\_dec2014.pdf/](https://wrc.wsu.edu/documents/2014/12/ybip_bca_swwrc_dec2014.pdf/))

As Dr. McPhee noted, past studies, going back over a half century, of a new Bumping Lake Dam never penciled out. As a result, in January 2008, the Bureau of Reclamation (BuRec) and Department of Ecology (Ecology) issued a Draft Planning Report/EIS Yakima River Basin Water Storage Feasibility Study, Yakima Project, Washington. The BuRec eliminated a new Bumping Lake Dam as an alternative for a number of reasons, including that the William O. Douglas Wilderness Area, approximately 170,000 acres, is adjacent to the existing Bumping Lake (pp. 2-109 to 2-112). (Ref: <https://www.usbr.gov/pn/studies/yakimastoragestudy/reports/eis/draft/draft-pr-eis.pdf>)

However, Gov. Gregoire, blocked from proceeding with a massive Black Rock dam/storage project east of Yakima, required a separate Ecology FEIS in June 2009, which included a new Bumping Lake dam and outlined all the Yakima Plan elements that were later rubber stamped by the Bureau of Reclamation and Ecology's Yakima Workgroup. Ref: <https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/publications/documents/0912009.pdf>

The Washington Legislature only got around to approving the Yakima Plan

in 2013, in order to purchase 50,241 of privately owned cut-over forests (the Teanaway Community Forest) for close to \$100 million, which had little to nothing to do with new water supplies. RCW 90.38.120(1)(a) also made clear that the Washington state taxpayers would pay for half of the billions that the total Yakima Plan would cost (although state taxpayers could pay 100 percent of any individual projects, such as a new Bumping Lake dam).

For a large collection of national, regional, state, and local environmental and conservation organization opposition to uneconomical and environmentally damaging water projects in the Yakima River Basin see: [http://www.ucrsierraclub.org/ucr/yakima/water\\_overview.html](http://www.ucrsierraclub.org/ucr/yakima/water_overview.html)

For N3C members following Ecology's efforts to grab more water out of the Alpine Lakes Wilderness, see: <https://crosscut.com/2015/09/the-search-for-peace-on-icicle-creek>. In 2006, the Legislature gave Ecology a new mission: "to aggressively pursue the development of [new] water supplies," by, in effect, creating a state version of the Bureau of Reclamation. RCW 90.90.005(2). In addition, the Legislature required Ecology to complete a Columbia river water supply inventory by November 15, 2006, to be updated annually (RCW 90.90.040(2)), and a Columbia river long-term water supply and demand forecast (Forecast) by November 15, 2006, to be updated every five years (RCW 90.90.040(3)). Ecology finally issued the latest Forecast in August 2022, nearly eight months late and without, as of mid-August, any response to the numerous public comments and concerns submitted on the draft Forecast. <https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/publications/documents/2112006.pdf>

Even though the Forecast did not consider the potential for water conservation by either municipal or agricultural users to alleviate some of the supply and demand vulnerabilities and ignored new dam proposals in the Yakima Basin and water grabs in the Alpine Lakes Wilderness, it is still worth reviewing to gain an insight into how far Ecology has strayed from the mission of environmental protection it projected over the first four decades of Ecology's existence.

Finally, although the accompanying article "Maykut family among those

CONTINUED ON PAGE 26

# Highway 20 turns 50, began in 1893

An excerpt from *Wilderness Alps: Conservation and Conflict in Washington's North Cascades* by Harvey Manning



Above: SR 20 under construction, 1965. —THE SEATTLE TIMES PHOTO

With a vision toward introducing the wheel to this rugged wilderness, the Washington legislature in 1893 earmarked the new state's very first highway appropriation, \$20,000 for a road across the North Cascades. Descriptions of two routes were published. The February-March 1973 *TWC* quoted one: the road was to extend "From the north fork of the Nooksack River and Glacier Creek, by the Pass north of Mount Baker." Never mind that there is no pass to eastern Washington anywhere near Mount Baker. The December 1962 *TWC* quoted the other route. The Cascade crossing was to consist of (1) "a trail from the summit of the Cascade Mountains, connecting with the Methow road, and reaching to the Skagit River"; (2) "improvement of present trail up the Skagit River from Goodall to Ruby Creek"; and (3) "a wagon road from the present wagon road on the Methow [near Mazama] to the summit of the Cascades [Harts Pass], there connecting with a road leading to the Skagit." Those acquainted with the geography of the mountains today may find these descriptions amusing, yet it's pleasant to recall how wild and unknown the North Cascades were not much more than a century ago.

By 1895 the legislature had learned a little more about the country, but still envisioned a road "between Marble Mount, Skagit county, and the confluence of the Twitsp[sic] and Methow river, Okanogan county." The state road commissioners were directed to "examine the route up the Cascade river and over Skagit [Cascade] pass; the route via North Fork of Thunder Creek [that would be problematic] and the route via State Creek." A field party found the "Twitsp pass, down Bridge Creek, up the Stehekin river over Cascade pass" route to be "the shortest and most feasible and practicable"....

[Between 1922 and 1932] The Cascade River road received particular attention. Funds from the federal Public Works Administration and Civilian Conservation Corps improved the ancient "wagon road" (actually a trail) up the river as far as Sibley Creek, attained in the 1930s....The Cascade Wagon Road remained on maps into the 1960s and beyond, sometimes qualified as "under construction" or "proposed" but on many maps shown as wide-open to tourists. Early in the 1980s, on a fine day in May, this historian plugged steps in snow up the road to the foot of Johannesburg. On his return he met a couple in vacation togs, Easterners doing the West. As he jumped down from the snowbank onto the snowfree roadway where their car was stopped, they held up a gasoline-company road map and complained bitterly that they had motel reservations for the night in Chelan and were going to be late. "What do you mean, there's no road over Cascade Pass?" they chimed. "I suppose you're going to tell us there's no car ferry on Lake Chelan?"

Bottom, left: Highway 20 slices through State Creek valley as viewed from the shoulder of Hinkhouse Peak above Washington Pass. Oh, but for a glimpse of this magnificence before the asphalt arrived. May peace one day return to it. —JIM SCARBOROUGH PHOTO





# Federal duplicity on the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie NF

By Jim Scarborough

Recent management decisions by the U.S. Forest Service around the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest have thrown the agency's renewed penchant for aggressive resource exploitation, its favoritism toward narrow commercial interests and connected supplicants, and its hermetic posture toward all other concerned members of the public into stark relief. Such moves are of a piece with the Forest Service's increasingly antisocial and regressive behavior all across the nation, notably also in the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest as described in these pages. Importantly, this is not a story about individuals per se—essentially all of N3C's board representation and membership would enjoy a shade-tree conversation with virtually any Forest Service employee—but about the worsening illness within the institution itself.

Let us recount the sorry circumstances just over this past summer. Readers of *The Wild Cascades* will recall that N3C had lodged a formal objection to the Forest Service's logging proposal for the North Fork Nooksack River basin, a project rife with problems including the pointed risk of triggering a massive landslide into Canyon Creek. Although Regional Forester Glenn Casamassa dismissed most of N3C's arguments, he did see fit to throw us one bone. N3C had expressed puzzlement (due to unclear agency documentation) over whether the project would result in increased road density within this tier 1 Key Watershed, which would violate the Northwest Forest Plan. Mr. Casamassa directed Forest Service personnel to acknowledge the Key Watershed designation in the final environmental assessment and clarify how new logging road construction would comply with the road density requirement.

More telling on the Nooksack, though, was the Forest Service's utter disinterest in revisiting its proposal to extract trees up to 26 inches in diameter in designated Late Successional Reserve (LSR) stands of less than 80 years of age. Until now, the Northwest Forest Plan had forbidden removal of trees larger than 20 inches diameter in LSR, a zoning explicitly intended to pre-

serve old-growth characteristics in intact forests and promote such development in younger forests. The Forest Service has rigidly clung to its preferred tree density goal in these project units and claims that too many vigorous trees of greater than 20 inches diameter are currently standing. This of course makes not the least bit of sense in the context of an LSR, and contra-

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*“Is there anything in particular you want me to say at the public meeting?”*

*—Darrington District Ranger Greta Smith to Sally Bernstein of Sustainable Northwest, a Portland-based group actively promoting increased National Forest logging.*

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dicts the agency's own well-established (albeit specious) argument that commercial thinning is needed in younger LSR stands to “release” those trees whose growth is being stunted by their neighbors. Conifers reaching two feet in diameter in less than eight decades are hardly stunted.

Worse, the Forest Service blithely waved away N3C's suggestion that, if the agency could not restrain itself from the felling of perfectly healthy, larger trees in these second-growth LSR stands, then it should simply drop and leave them. This would allow the Forest Service to retain its frankly autistic stand density goal, while potentially enhancing another important habitat feature. Key components of old-growth forest include copious amounts of down wood and biomass accumulation on the forest floor, which these trees could have contributed to. But the Forest Service would have nothing of it. The agency wants to get these sawlogs to the mill, post-haste, thus fully revealing the exploitative mindset behind the green uniforms. Institutionally, the Forest Service's commitment to intact, native forests on

the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie is about as genuine as a predatory sociopath bringing flowers to a first date.

As an aside, the Forest Service was equally dismissive of separate objections filed by the Lummi Nation and Nooksack Tribe for this grievous project. One cannot help but wonder if the agency would perhaps become somewhat more accommodating if the prospect of a co-management paradigm with regional tribes was within the realm of possibility. Perhaps the tribes should ponder this idea or, at minimum, threaten it.

Let's now head a-ways down south to the North Fork Stillaguamish River basin, where the Forest Service has recently proposed a massive logging show in what's known as the Finney Block of the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie, situated between Darrington and Concrete. As usual, the Forest Service has deployed euphemisms with great flourish here, proclaiming its intent to somehow “restore” the forest that it previously decimated decades ago by cutting it once again. But the big story here is how this nascent project, orders of magnitude larger than the Nooksack mess, came about. In order to get a better sense of the machinations behind the veil, N3C filed a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request for email exchanges between the Forest Service and the Darrington Collaborative (DC), a consortium devoted to boosting economic activity in the Darrington area.

The emails received by N3C were, shall we say, revealing. Rippling out from the ill-conceived Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Act of 2009, it turns out that the North Fork Stilly egg was laid, incubated, and hatched by the DC, then presented to the Forest Service, which enthusiastically adopted the voracious vulture chick having emerged with beak agape. The DC is composed in part by a Hampton Lumber executive, other timber industry businesses, and local politicians, no surprise. Yet when gleaning addi-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18



# Federal duplicity

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 17

tional participants on the DC, including Washington Wild, The Wilderness Society, American Whitewater, and The Pew Charitable Trusts, one starts to get a sense of what's happening in contemporary versions of the smoke-filled room, where itchy backs assemble for a good mutual scratching.

Perhaps most active among the DC's participants, though, is Sustainable Northwest of Portland, which bills itself as bringing "entrepreneurial solutions to natural resources challenges to keep lands healthy and provide economic and community benefits." Repeated emails from Sally Bernstein, the public forestlands program manager for Sustainable Northwest, to the Forest Service reflect where much of the energy behind the gnawing hunger for logging the North Fork Stilly originates. In one representative email, Ms. Bernstein scolds the Forest Service for being insufficiently responsive to the DC's ambitious aims. And in another email pertaining to an upcoming gathering, Darrington District Ranger Greta Smith, apparently now grasping the hierarchy of influence, asks Ms. Bernstein: "Is there anything in particular you want me to say at the public meeting?"

N3C and our partners have also proposed highly specific management actions for the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie, but are fortunate to even receive a "we'll get back to you on that, maybe..." from the Forest Service. The stench of favoritism, of certain members of the public being far more equal than others in the eyes of the agency, is tough to miss. Still, a precious few self-interested businesses and conspiring non-governmental organizations attempting to wrest control of major management actions on the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie appears to be basically legal. And once again we see how regional tribes are mostly shunted out of the way or become subject to tokenism, even as the DC earnestly reads from its land acknowledgment boilerplate. Despite the Forest Service claiming in its initial scoping letter that the North Fork Stilly proposal involved direct tribal participation, obtained emails reveal that Forest Supervisor Jody Weil didn't contact the Sauk-Suiattle Tribe until after

the DC had been working on its proposal for roughly two years; while another email from the DC suggested that the Tulalip Tribe needn't be bothered with at all. Ambitious? For sure. Inclusive? Not even close.

Time now to make the drive east from Darrington up the Suiattle River road to near its end, where the lightning-caused Downey Creek fire in 2020 burned the steep slope above the road, mostly between Downey and Sulphur creeks. The affected area is almost entirely within a segment of the Skagit Wild & Scenic River corridor, continuing into a portion of the Glacier Peak Wilderness. The Forest Service, with an outright minimum of public notification (packaged as it was among a district-wide slate of "hazard tree abatement" actions), opted to initiate salvage logging of those burned trees accessible from the road which were deemed either dead or likely to die within five years. Crucially, this logging has recently taken place in previously untouched, LSR primary forest, with reduced stream buffers; purportedly for purposes of public safety, but certainly also to feed the mill with the sort of old trees which are coveted but rarely obtained.

This would all be noxious enough, but things got more sordid when Pilchuck Audubon merely sought a copy of the Forest Service's "letter to the file" for the Downey salvage logging. Given that the agency could not trouble itself to complete an environmental assessment for this extraordinary action, this "letter" was the only Forest Service documentation available that might reveal the agency's rationale. However, District Ranger Greta Smith steadfastly refused to provide this basic public document, insisting instead that Pilchuck Audubon laboriously submit a FOIA request for it. When this document finally arrived several weeks later from the Region 6 office in Portland, its hurried, slapdash quality was soon noted, as was the Forest Service's inexcusably erroneous statement in the text that the project area was not located within a Wild & Scenic River corridor. The agency proceeded to gear up for the salvage logging this summer now past, apparently before it had received required consultation from other federal agencies regarding impacts to avian and aquatic species listed under the Endangered Species Act.

Around the dawn of the 21st century, the Forest Service on the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie could rightly claim that it was among the most forward-thinking and progressive within the entire National Forest system. Now, with its bunker mentality and reflexive secrecy, its disingenuousness, its marked favoritism toward certain influential groups, and its dogged attempts to resume levels of logging not seen in over 30 years despite an objective and ongoing collapse in Earth's biodiversity, the Forest Service has moved beyond being a callous and indifferent neighbor to something like an emerging menace. N3C understands that we're living through an age of often atrocious behavior in both the public and private sectors; but rather than going rogue, agencies like the Forest Service must absolutely regain their scruples if we're to have any hope for a livable future. Lacking a federal conscience for the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie, N3C and our partners will necessarily have to provide one in the interim.

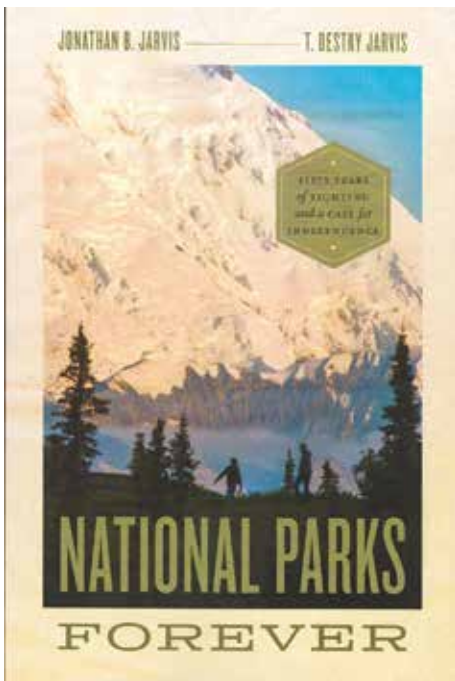


*Douglas-fir stand near Lake Metan. —JIM SCARBOROUGH PHOTO*

## BOOK REVIEW

# *National Parks Forever: Fifty Years of Fighting and a Case for Independence*

Reviewed by David Fluharty



The saga of North Cascades Conservation Council more than parallels the careers of the two tireless defenders of the National Parks who co-authored *National Parks Forever*. As the authors relate insider views of the issues, people and politics affecting the National Parks, their experience parallels ours. I highly recommend that anyone interested in the past and the future of the National Parks read this fascinating account.

At the outset, I offer a disclaimer. I have known both authors over the course of their careers. My engagement in issues has been tangential to theirs. Jonathan Jarvis, director of the U.S. National Park Service under President Obama, was a key natural resource lead for North Cascades National Park when I was N3C president. His brother Destry was a key player in the National Parks and Conservation Association during my term. While their worlds have expanded and moved to the highest levels of National Park policy engagement, we at N3C have been close to the issues that they have experienced first-hand. I have nothing but the greatest admiration for them and their involvement in policy settings in the National Parks but my biases do nothing to add to or diminish the sharing of their extraordinary careers. Both authors make a strong point of sharing the credit for the events and actions described with their many dedicated colleagues. The book is not so much autobiographical, rather

they use themselves and their experience as the scaffolding to tell the National Park story.

*National Parks Forever: Fifty Years of Fighting and a Case for Independence* is a retrospective assessment and a bit of a tell-all narrative seen through the lens of two brothers whose careers spanned those 50 years of NPS history. Jonathan writes from the perspective of a career NPS employee and Destry from the perspective of a career non-governmental organization employee and consultant with a brief cameo as an agency insider. The book is organized so that similar issues in NPS management are viewed from their parallel career perspectives. Their experience with the politics surrounding the National Parks takes the reader through the highs and lows of struggles to protect the integrity of the National Parks. They dispel the view that the National Parks are universally loved with their critical appraisal of those administrations that were hostile and wanted to dispose of the National Parks altogether.

Following a fast forward through NPS history, each chapter consists of an essay by each author with a concluding joint statement: 1. Growing the System; 2. Alaska: Doing it Right; 3. Politics of Park Policy; 4. Best Available Science; 5. Ecosystem Thinking; 6. (Political) Interference in the Mission; and 7. Independence. This unique structure results in a remarkable lack of redundancy (although there is some) and the construction of a revealing and intimate knowledge of the NPS.

A review such as this cannot do justice to the detail and complexity of the text. Sometimes it soars with insight and sometime it bogs down in administrative processes that stifle NPS reform and performance relative to core principles. The parts I most enjoyed and learned from were vignettes about the individuals

leading the NPS and the presidents and secretaries of the Department of Interior under whose administrations they served. These portraits were delivered at the national level but easily translated to policies that affected National Parks in Washington State. I found it extremely gratifying to read how the authors describe N3C's use of best available science in our settlement negotiations over the inadequate nature of the North Cascades National Park Complex General Management Plan and how it contributed to the recognition of the need for (and policy changes to acquire) baseline scientific information for management decisions in the Park system nationwide. Of course, N3C settlement negotiations involved other NPS policies with respect to firewood, fish stocking, and minerals management. However, for N3C to receive credit as an example of an organization that helped to develop NPS science-based decision making is a testimony to the value of a small, single-purpose, volunteer public organization.

Destry Jarvis writes that there are six categories of organizations that partner with the National Park Service: 1) non-profit cooperative associations that operate NPS bookstores and publish educational material; 2) friends, funds, conservancies and foundations that raise funds; 3) public-private collaborations; 4) partnerships with state and local agencies to manage natural and cultural properties not under NPS control; 5) partnerships with other federal agencies for landscape/ecosystem conservation; and 6) partnerships with Native Americans/Alaskans to co-manage traditional lands. This attests to the complex arrangements that the NPS has developed over time. What surprises me about this list is that it does not seem to include the seventh category of

CONTINUED ON PAGE 20

## National Parks Forever

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 19

non-profit advocacy organizations like the National Parks Conservation Association, N3C and others who serve as the National Parks' most sincere critics and their most effective political advocates. It may be that these are not formal organizational partners for the NPS, but that omission is hard to understand considering that the role of such organizations is credited throughout the book.

The single most important chapter of National Parks Forever is Chapter 3, Politics of Park Policy. Most of its text focuses on the eternal debate about the so-called dual management objective of the NPS, "to preserve unimpaired.... for the enjoyment of future generations."

Perhaps the widest swings in political engagement in the management of National Parks revolve around the way the Department of Interior has chosen to interpret this mandate from the 1916 Organic Act under different administrations. What a huge difference it makes if the management objective is to "preserve unimpaired" versus "manage for the enjoyment of future generations". Is this a mandate to balance policies to serve preservation while maximizing visitor use? Or does it mean that visitor use is subservient to the policy to preserve the Parks unimpaired? This chapter is a highly adapted discovery of how policies have changed over time. At present, the authors see the pendulum swinging in favor of preserving unimpaired, if I read correctly.

As stated in the book's title, the authors build a case for making the NPS an independent agency, to remove it from the Department of Interior and thus eliminate the bureaucratic excesses that require seven to nine layers of sign-off to do anything significant. A strong case is also made to insulate the NPS, with its forever mandate, to preserve unimpaired the magnificent ecosystems of the National Park System. Why should the NPS be subject to the political whims of alternating Presidents and Secretaries of Interior? The authors ask, "Why shouldn't the NPS be a stand-alone

independent agency given its mandate from the 1916 NPS Organic Act? Didn't Wallace Stegner call the U.S. National Park System America's 'best idea'?"

Chapter 7, Independence, contains the case for and the potential organizational structure that the Jarvis brothers have discerned is necessary for creating a politically independent NPS. I am frankly intrigued by the concept but daunted by the task outlined. Unfortunately, I remain unconvinced that the brothers Jarvis with all their political insight and policy acumen have identified the NPS structure that would work. They propose a stand-alone agency with a complex governance and advisory structure, somewhat along the lines of the Smithsonian Institution, which seems to me to be fraught with expectations. Maybe they have more to say that

would convince me they offer the best solution to the NPS woes. What other alternatives did they consider, e.g., revising the reporting structure within the Department of Interior? The jerking around by different Presidential administrations, as incomprehensible and unhelpful as it is, leads to periods of significant advances for the NPS and serious setbacks. As noted, the NPS responds to positive vibes by expanding its roles and to negative vibes by bureaucratic resistance. Agreed, that is not an ideal approach for a forever protection mandate but it represents typical bureaucratic behavior that stays the course.

While the book ends with the change of administrations in 2016, it is useful to reflect on the litany of harms to the National Parks during the Trump years. For example, no NPS director was appointed for four years, the egregious ban on discussion of climate change affecting the Parks, opening oil and gas drilling near Chaco Culture National Historic Park, 80% reduction in the size of Bears Ears National Monument, etc. It has taken the Biden administration several years to restore National Park policies.

In the meantime, I would go back to the words of George B. Hartzog, Jr. NPS director 1964-1972 as cited by the authors, "Policy without budget is just conversation: show me your budget and I will tell you

your policy." Congress controls the budget allocations to the NPS. Because the NPS has units in all States political support tends to favor support of the NPS budget. However, with partisan politics playing an ever-increasing role in the operations of the NPS, I do not see how Congressional politics would not still drive NPS processes using the budget mechanism in an independent National Park Service. After all, it is the President's annual budget request that sets the tone for budgetary discussions.

Leaving aside the valid complaints about the existing system for the NPS and the Jarvis brothers' solution, one of the tenets of NPS reform that is elevated in importance by both authors is an increased role for Native Americans/Alaskans in management or co-management of the national park system—especially in the large national parks of Alaska and the Western continental U.S. Jonathan acknowledges the inglorious history of the NPS and indigenous people and asks if it is not time to reconsider that relationship in order to improve national park management. I wish more had been written about the potential for expanding these relationships. The perspectives shared in National Parks Forever constitute a valuable start for a conversation that is long overdue and likely to be uncomfortable but it points to the future.

In conclusion, I encourage all who care about the "real" history of the NPS over the last 50 years to obtain this book for its insights into the past as well as toward the next 50 years for directions on how to proceed. If you do not find satisfying answers, you must take up the fight for the changes you want to see. Be sure to let N3C know your responses.

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*A must-read for those who care about the "real" history of the NPS over the last 50 years—and its future.*

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## North Cascade Glacier Climate Project: Lower Curtis Glacier continues to recede

By Tom Hammond

2022 marks the 39th year of the North Cascade Glacier Climate Project, the longest-running study of slope and alpine glaciers across an entire mountain range. Founded in 1984 by Professor Mauri Pelto of Nichols College in Dudley, Massachusetts, the NCGCP is unique in that the study covers glaciers from the wet, cool(er) west side of the North Cascade range to the dry, warm(er) east side, from north to south, and perhaps most importantly, includes glaciers of all aspects. From sun-exposed south-facing slopes to more protected north-facing slopes, and critically, windward glaciers to the more snow-laden leeward glaciers, the study is designed to provide a holistic understanding of how glaciers reveal climate patterns.

Anyone who watches a weather forecast or pays attention to the seasons is aware of season-to-season and year-to-year variability: one winter can be cold and snowy and the next mild with little snow. This is called weather. The long-term aggregate of

weather is called climate, and glaciers are an excellent reflection of climate: they don't respond to season-to-season or year-to-year variability, they tell the long term story of climate in a most compelling, unassailable way. The key measurements are mass-balance (measuring snow-depth with high accuracy to determine how much a glacier gains or loses in a year), longitudinal profile (length per laser-range finder and inclinometer), crevasse stratigraphy and crevasse depth.

The 2022 field team consisted of Professor Pelto, Jill Pelto (resident artist, geologist and Project Coordinator) Echo Ellen from U California-Berkeley, Ella Hall from U Colorado-Boulder, and Jenna Travers from U Oregon. The young women are impressive for their motivation, interest and willingness to explore the world under very challenging circumstances: more than two weeks hiking around the high North Cascades requires exceptional effort, and each brought that with a good attitude!

Other artists, scientists and contributors joined for various segments/glaciers during the two-and-a-half weeks of the field season, including myself on behalf of N3C for the Lower Curtis Glacier segment. It is troubling that not a single male student has applied for field work in each of the past five years. One year is strange; five years is a problematic trend.

This was my 19th year with the project and I can report it was great to see Mauri and all of his kids. Ben and Megan joined for Lower Curtis as well. The Pelto's are like family to me and vice-versa—heck, I

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*Members of the 2022 North Cascade Glacier Climate Project field team explore the rapidly disappearing lower portion of the Lower Curtis Glacier on Mount Shuksan. It would have been unthinkable (too dangerous) to approach this section of the glacier even five years ago.*

—©TOM HAMMOND PHOTO

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22

## North Cascade Glacier Climate Project

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 21

helped teach Ben (2005) and Jill (2009) mountaineering skills such as self-arrest on their first field seasons as high-schoolers. I was amazed and pleased at how quickly we all meshed and “got caught-up” without effort or pretense. Very refreshing indeed.

Better still, to have the reunion below the spectacular, jagged, vertical spires of Mount Shuksan. Mount Shuksan is the most glaciated non-volcanic peak in the range, and really is the Flagship of the North Cascades. Shuksan rises more than a vertical mile above deep forested valleys on all sides—and the local relief is enhanced by a cloak of hanging glaciers, ice-falls and waterfalls all over the place. Shuksan means “Thunder Mountain” in native Salish/Nooksack, not due to lightning, but due to avalanching ice. In 2022, Shuksan didn’t thunder but a couple of times—the Upper Curtis Glacier is a thin shadow of what it used to be—thinning and in repose with few icefalls.

As with all mountain trips, weather plays a key role, and August 7-9 found us hiking into basecamp under an excessive heat advisory—not just for urban areas, but for the North Cascades. The advisory would be in place for two of the three days on the Lower Curtis. It was hot to be sure, and carrying a full pack had us hydrating and seeking shade—until the bugs swarmed us and forced us to move on. Wildflowers were prolific, with a dozen or more species in evidence, all buzzing with pollinators—most excellent.

I was struck by the number of people, and more so the number of dogs on the trail and at the lake. Hundreds of people and dozens of dogs.

Lake Ann was still mostly covered with ice, but that patina of pristine blue and white could not hide that the area was covered with human waste, toilet paper and doggie-do. In more than two decades of visiting this place, I have never seen it so overrun and abused. It was disturbing and heartbreaking. In years gone by, the entire



*Bumble bees are key pollinators in the North Cascades, seen here on a flower of a native thistle. —© TOM HAMMOND PHOTO*

basin was alive with the whistles of marmots and the squeaks of pikas. Now there are none. There used to be ptarmigan here and there. Now there are none. They’ve all been chased off by dogs and their owners.

As a conservationist I find it infuriating that animals trying to scratch out a living three months of the year—the only three months of the year available to them to “make hay”—are displaced by pets that will have a full dish of food waiting for

them at home. So sad.

Wildfire smoke, which has plagued the Project many of the past seven years or so, was evident in the upper atmosphere in the form of lovely sunsets and sunrises, but thankfully was not a factor for us or for air quality.

The team was at the Lower Curtis Glacier well before the sun rose over the ramparts of Shuksan. The amount of recession is stunning. The west side of the glacier is completely collapsing—pulling away from the lateral moraine and disintegrating at a pace that is obvious year-to-year. The terminus is retreating

5-10 meters (15-30 feet) each year. Keep in mind the glacier at these points is about 15 meters (40-50 feet) thick. The recession isn’t a flat surface, but a volume that would fill a building. There are mounds of terminal moraine from 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021 visible as piles of dirt and rock to mark the passage of time and the glacier. After surveying the terminus, we were up on the glacier for the mass-balance and profiling. We walked the entire glacier, one team working mass-balance probing as gridded transects while another did the profile. The northwest portion of the glacier is a real hothouse—it is proximate to steep rock cliffs on nearly three sides and gets no wind. Temperatures on this section of the glacier reached 90 degrees F as we did the survey. Indeed, we all wear long sleeves, long pants, wide-brimmed hats and gloves for most of the time not to stay warm on the ice, but to keep the sun off. For that section, we warned the young students they would want to shed clothes, which drew quizzical looks. Once they arrived there, they understood—broiling!

The survey took about seven hours, then we retreated to the western moraine to cool off, find some shade, and wait out the heat of the day. At this point, camp would be unbearable due to bugs and

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*There used to be  
ptarmigan, marmots  
and pikas here. Now  
there are none.*

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*Evening alpenglow is reflected by Lake Ann. —@TOM HAMMOND PHOTO*

heat—better to stay by the glacier with a cool breeze, except the breeze was spotty. So hot next to a glacier that measures nearly a square kilometer!

We decided to head down “early” and find a cool spot by a small stream in the shade of boulders. As we hiked, I was miserable. It was hotter than Hades, bugs were bugging and the area we were headed held nothing but human fecal matter and barking dogs.

I don’t think I’ve ever felt so bad so close to Shuksan. Check that: I have never felt so bad so close to Shuksan.

Mercifully, thankfully, the area by the stream was relatively bug-free, cool and pleasant. Eventually it was just Ben and me sitting there—at times sharing a thought, but also just being quiet. Then a most remarkable thing happened. A water

ouzel (common name “dipper”) flew up the stream and perched on a boulder not 3 meters from us! I breathlessly brought my camera to bear. It was so exciting to have this most amazing mountain bird so close! I figured the motion would scare it away, but no, just as the ouzel came into focus, there was a flash of action and another ouzel perched on an adjacent boulder! Two of the most retiring, reclusive, amazing birds were right there, dipping and diving in the water in search of a snack. Anyone who is familiar with the Island of Misfit Toys (Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer) knows that there is a bird that swims. Misfit not! Truth is, there are REAL birds that swim, and fly like jet fighters too—they’re called Ouzels! Polly and Jonny Dyer loved Ouzels, and in that moment, I could feel both of them next to me, putting their arms around me and telling me it would

be okay. My sunglasses could not hide the tears running down my cheeks.

Earlier I mentioned year-to-year variability in weather. As many Northwesterners know, the past spring was notably cool and wet—not just for a few weeks, but pretty much the entire spring. This mattered not to the snowpack, as the repeated heatwaves of summer reduced any gain to loss in a matter of weeks. As I have written previously, and professors of Atmospheric Sciences will tell you: summer heat usually dictates mass-balance (snowpack) more than a good snowy winter or cool, cloudy spring. As Ben noted, the cool, cloudy Spring did spare us from the worst of the wildfires—a welcome reprieve.

Wildlife: as mentioned, there are no marmots or pikas or ptarmigan to be

CONTINUED ON PAGE 24



## North Cascade Glacier Climate Project

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 23



*A nesting pair of water ouzels (cinclus mexicanus--commonly known as American dipper) hunt in a small snowfed stream on Mount Shuksan. This retiring, shy bird typically nests closely behind waterfalls and regularly dives to catch insects. Yes, a mountain bird that swims! —©TOM HAMMOND PHOTO*

found or heard. Megan did see two pikas on the moraine close to the Lower Curtis Glacier. There were four goats on the cliffs above Shuksan Creek—we've seen them or their relatives pretty much every year in the same area. As well, two grouse in the

usual spot through the steep woods.

Of interest was the change in bugs. On the hike in Sunday, we were covered at times with black flies. On the hike out Tuesday, the black flies were gone, replaced with a fresh hatch of

deer flies. Deer flies are the worst. They deliberately fly at high speed into eyes, nose, mouth, ears—any opening is an attack vector, and no bug juice can stop them!

I saw many pollinators, including a real honeybee.

I am very mindful of my good fortune to be a part of the North Cascades, and the NCGCP. I am thankful and humbled.

### Glacier Mass balance (thickness):

Columbia: minus one meter

Rainbow: minus half meter

Sholes: minus one meter

Lower Curtis: minus one meter

Easton: minus one meter

Daniel: minus half meter

Lynch: minus half meter

Ice Worm (aka Hyas Creek): minus half meter

Lewis: no longer exists

Spider: no longer exists

**Epilogue:** As smoke descended on the entire western United States in October, turning skies to apocalyptic scenes of surreal and premature sunsets, one cannot ignore that there had been no precipitation to speak of in the mountains, and with relentless heat. Apocalyptic indeed...

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# Seattle City Light to surrender the license for Newhalem Creek Hydroelectric Project

By David Fluharty

The Newhalem Creek project facility started operations in 1921 to supply power to the Seattle City Light (SCL) company town of Newhalem, its base for construction of Gorge Dam and Powerhouse. It produced power to build the Skagit Project for nearly 100 years and contributed on a small scale (less than 5 MW) to overall SCL power supply to Seattle. The project consists of an overflow dam at the top of a 100 ft. waterfall on Newhalem Creek, an intake structure to an unlined tunnel that shunts water down to the powerhouse and from there through a tailrace channel that discharges into the Skagit River. The area is accessible to visitors by foot from Newhalem.

In April 2021 SCL gave Notice of Intent to surrender its license to operate the Newhalem Creek Hydro Project No 2705 to FERC following an engineering analysis in 2020. In January 2022, SCL applied to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to surrender its license to operate the Project. Then in April 2022 FERC gave notice of SCL's application to surrender its license and invited public comment by the end of May. SCL was given the opportunity to respond to the comments received and responded on July 1. This article is a synthesis of these documents.

The Newhalem Creek hydro project has been inoperable on a consistent basis for 12 years because of leaks in the power tunnel, maintenance needs at the diversion dam and the powerhouse, as well as safety concerns on the access road. SCL has determined that the cost of relicensing the project and restoring the project to operate under current standards is uneconomical. Therefore it proposes to surrender the license and to remove many of the project structures. N3C, the Upper Skagit, Sauk-Suiattle and Swinomish Tribes, the National Park Service, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, American Rivers, and American Whitewater all support SCL's intent to surrender the license. However, there is disagreement over how the project would be decommissioned. There are three alternatives offered:

Alt. A: Full Retention of All Project Features—a “placeholder” that has no support,



Alt. B: Full Removal /Abandonment of All Project Features—supported by N3C and the other intervenors in the project such as the Tribes and National Park Service,

Alt. C: Partial Removal/Abandonment of Project Features—supported only by SCL.

SCL argues that only 0.16 of the original 6.4 acres of the project's footprint would be retained by their preferred Alt. C, and only to serve as reminders of the historic role of hydroelectric power generated at the site. This would mean removal of the diversion dam, headwork structures, tailrace fish barrier, overhead transmission lines, and access road. The tunnel would be sealed. But the tailrace, powerhouse and penstock would remain. SCL claims that the hydroelectric engineering significance of the site justifies retaining and interpreting its history with the remaining structures as the centerpieces. The longstanding tendency of SCL to idolize all its facilities as “engineering marvels” seems to be dying hard. It is worth noting in that regard that the building housing the Newhalem Creek generators is not the original one; it was rebuilt and thus of highly questionable historic value. N3C feels that what is clearly of much greater importance is the natural setting and hydrologic function of Newhalem Creek, and the more completely that is restored the better.

The Upper Skagit and other Tribes likewise argue that all the structures should be removed to restore the site to its nat-

ural landscape condition. They maintain that full removal is the only course for adequately protecting cultural resources and treaty rights for fishing, hunting and gathering rights. Further, they call attention to the National Park Service's Trust responsibilities to protect tribal rights.

The National Park Service has determined that its Trust responsibilities to tribes as federal land manager outweigh its previous support for preservation of these historic project structures. This stance is a disappointment to SCL because of multiple statements in past NPS planning documents that support the project structures as worthy of historic preservation and interpretation. With respect to the other intervenors, it is clear that tribes are effectively protecting their Treaty Rights. This includes reminding the NPS of its Trust responsibilities vis-à-vis tribal rights. It also means that NPS now gives more weight to its statutory mission to maintain and restore national park areas unimpaired for future generations than to its prior efforts to balance protection and visitor use.

N3C agrees strongly with the Tribes and the Park Service on the above reasons to remove the entire set of structures, and hopes that FERC will adopt Alternative B. Presently, all parties are awaiting FERC's decision to accept the SCL application to surrender its project license and which alternative is chosen, thus setting the conditions under which that surrender would take place.





*Yellow Aster Butte hike in Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest, this page and next. —PHIL FENNER PHOTOS*

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## Letter to the Editor

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15

objecting to raising Bumping Dam,” (p. 17) mentions that the Bumping dam was built in 1910 and was later “remodeled to help provide power and help in the restoration of sockeye salmon runs,” a review of Bureau of Reclamation studies and documents does not indicate any later remodel, power generation, or sockeye salmon restoration, and remains a barrier to sockeye salmon runs.

N3C member David E. Ortman  
Seattle

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*The water level at Baker Lake is very low, and hundreds of stumps are sticking out of the mud now, revealing the ghost forest under the modern reservoir, logged in 1959. —CHRIS LEBOUTILLIER PHOTO*