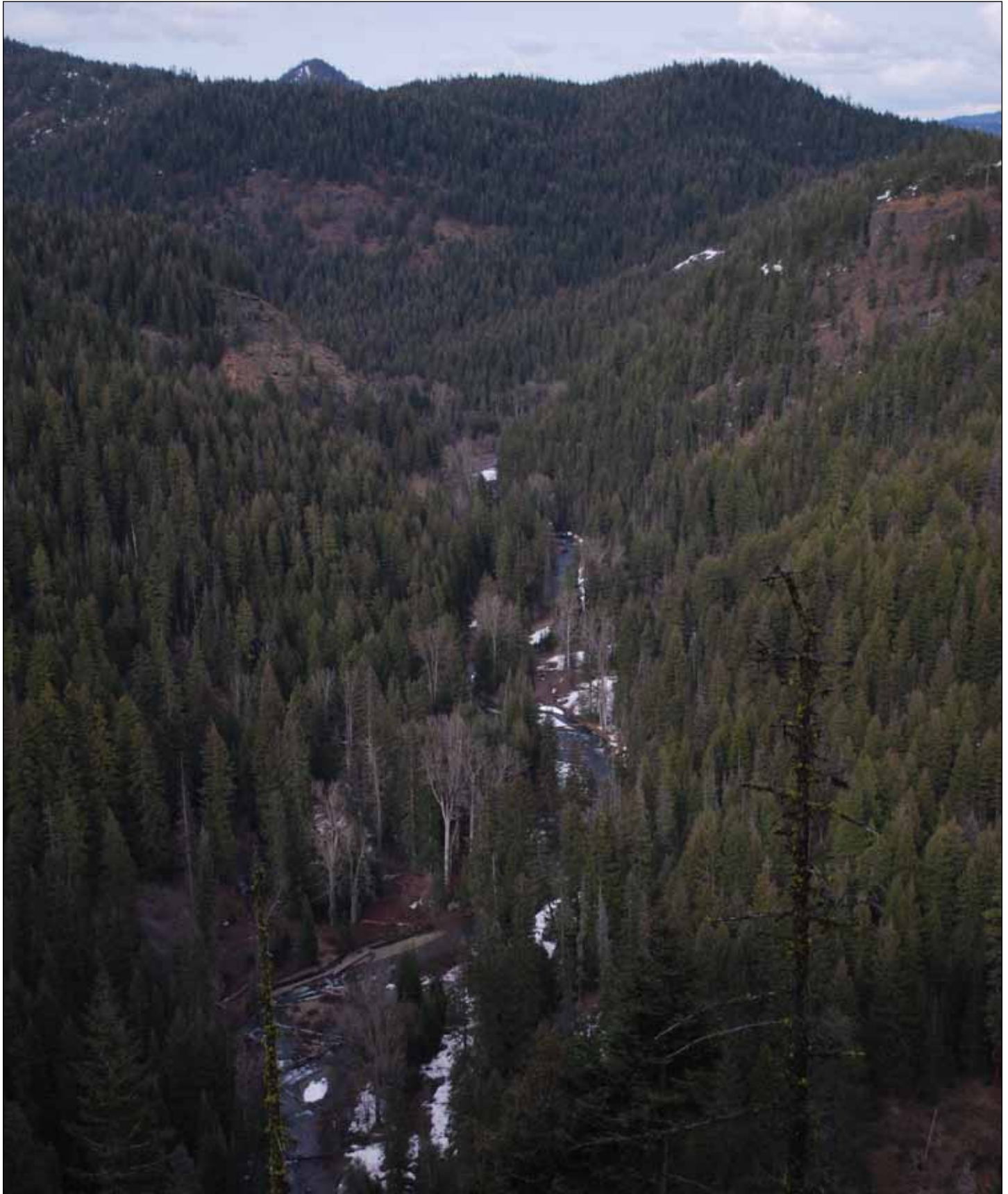

THE WILD CASCADES

THE JOURNAL OF THE NORTH CASCADES CONSERVATION COUNCIL SUMMER/FALL 2013



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COVER: AFLC private forestlands acquired by the State on Middle Fork Teanaway River from Yellow Hill. — KARL FORSGAARD PHOTO

The Wild Cascades

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, and wilderness values.” Continuing this mission, NCCC keeps government officials, environmental organizations, and the general public informed about issues affecting the Greater North Cascades Ecosystem. Action is pursued through administrative, legal, and public participation channels to protect the lands, waters, plants and wildlife.

Over the past half century NCCC 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.

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

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Founded in 1957
SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

The President's Report Summer/Fall 2013

A few years ago, I biked with my family on the Stehekin River road to the road's washout at Carwash Falls. The National Park Service, the Washington Trails Association and NCCC all agree that the road should not be rebuilt beyond the Carwash Falls washout.

This summer I backpacked to the alpine meadows north of Park Creek Pass. To get there I walked up the Stehekin River beyond Carwash Falls, bypassing the road for awhile via the Pacific Crest Trail, an old wagon road through mature forest, signed for use as a cross-country ski trail in winter. This pleasant trail would be obliterated if the Stehekin road were re-routed along it to bypass Carwash Falls, which is one of the reasons we don't want to re-route the road.

At Bridge Creek the Pacific Crest Trail swings north, and the route to Park Creek follows the Stehekin River road for a couple more miles, miles I had not walked in over thirty years. These miles have not been used by vehicles since the washout occurred at Carwash Falls; thirty years ago they were not being used because the shuttle bus wasn't running. Either way, it's a nice stretch with some good views of the Stehekin River rushing by.

It reminded me of traveling the Suiattle River road while it was closed by washouts, with the river rushing close by the road. In the public comment process for repairing the road, NCCC, Sierra Club and others advocated for the alternative that would repair it as far as the Green Mountain junction, allowing vehicles to get to the Buck Creek Campground as well as Green Mountain trailhead. Beyond that junction, the last four miles of road are less-visited and are more prone to washout near Downey Creek. That alternative was not chosen this time, so we will need to have that discussion again, the next time nature washes out the road near Downey Creek.

A similar approach was adopted for the Middle Fork Snoqualmie River road, when a consensus formed in the 1990s to improve and maintain the road and its adjacent recreation sites as far upstream as Dingford Creek, where a new gate would leave the uppermost, less-used stretch of road to nature. Perhaps that sort of consensus will emerge in the future for the Suiattle, if enough parties put in the time and effort to form a coalition and follow through. Road access to key trailheads is important for recruiting future generations of nature protectors by getting them out into the woods in the first place – the *100 Hikes* books called it “green bonding.” The *100 Hikes* authors lamented the trail community's loss of trail miles to construction of logging roads up our forest valleys – and on occasion we may be able to get some of those miles back, some of those acres restored to suitable habitat. I'm confident there will be more time to bring together a coalition for the Suiattle similar to the one that emerged for the Middle Fork, because nature will wash out the Suiattle road again.

Karl F. Forsgaard

Karl Forsgaard

Alpine Lakes Wilderness Bill gets House hearing, DelBene tours Middle Fork



Legislation to expand the Alpine Lakes Wilderness by 22,000 acres by addition of the Pratt River valley and other nearby areas in the Middle and South Fork Snoqualmie valleys has received a hearing in the House Resources Committee. The bipartisan effort to expand the Wilderness and also designate part of the Middle Fork as Wild and Scenic was originally sponsored by Republican Rep. Dave Reichert. His 8th Congressional District formerly included the areas, which after redistricting are part of the 1st Congressional District, now represented by Democrat Suzan DelBene, who has also signed on as a cosponsor of the bill. Reichert remains an active sponsor and supporter.

Senator Patty Murray has sponsored the bill in the Senate, which passed it earlier this session. Supporters are hoping that the House will act favorably on the bill.

Representative DelBene toured the Middle Fork valley on September 9, 2013, enjoying the spectacle of clouds clearing away to warm sun after heavy rains the day before, which served to put down the dust on the unpaved Middle Fork road. The tour was organized by the Sierra Club, many volunteers of which worked on DelBene's campaign. NCCC members and others also went on the tour.

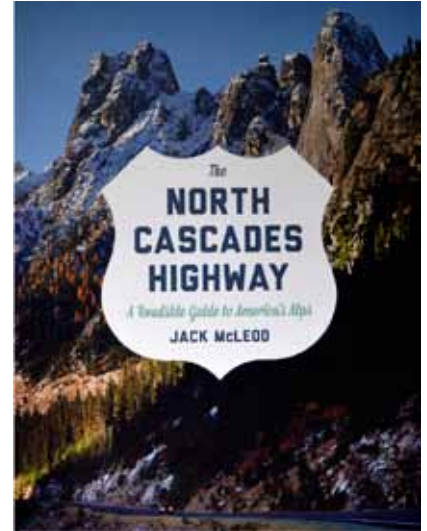
1st District Congresswoman Suzan DelBene surveys the southern end of her large district from the road bridge over the Middle Fork Snoqualmie, with Russian Butte emerging from clouds in the distance.

—TOM O'KEEFE PHOTO

DelBene heard the story of the “taking back” of the Middle Fork valley, the long and still ongoing process of blocking up public ownership, driving out target shooters and garbage dumpers, and developing the valley's recreational potential. The Congresswoman saw the new Middle Fork campground, the volunteer-built foot-bridge over the Middle Fork, forests inside the Wilderness proposal, and the giant Douglas fir trees at the confluence of the Taylor and Middle Fork rivers.

A splendid time was had by all. Conservationists are lucky to have such a knowledgeable and committed supporter representing the 1st Congressional District. Stretching from Interstate 90 north all the way to the Canadian border, the 1st District encompasses many if not most of the areas NCCC and other conservationists are concerned about. It's in good hands with DelBene.

Updates



McLeod releases SR 20 guide

Science teacher, photographer and NCCC member Jack McLeod has published *The North Cascades Highway*, an illustrated natural history guide that helps travelers and readers appreciate the deeper beauty behind the landscape. Organized as a series of stops at eye-catching sites along eighty miles of the highway, the guide tells the geological story of each location and describes how miners, climbers, and poets have been inspired by the geology and terrain of the North Cascades. Published by the University of Washington Press and available at bookstores and on Amazon.

Video celebrates NOCA's wilderness

Relive your favorite NOCA trails in the five-minute video, “North Cascades Park: Experience the Awesome.” The latest in a series of videos celebrating wilderness posted by the National Park Service, this one explores the park through the eyes of seasonal ranger Masyih Ford. Look for it on YouTube (www.youtube.com/watch?v=spmpiaHU3uo)



Pollution Control Hearings Board agrees: flow should not be reduced at Similkameen Falls

The Washington State Pollution Control Hearings Board (PCHB) agreed with a coalition of environmental groups, including NCCC, that the Okanogan County Public Utility District's plans to significantly reduce water flows over Enloe Dam and a nearby waterfall may not be adequate to protect both aesthetics and fish.

In a six-day hearing in May (testimony was summarized in *TWC Spring 2013*), river advocates asked the three-judge panel to revoke the 401 Certification (the water quality permit issued to the PUD) and remand the case back to the Department of Ecology to conduct appropriate data collection and modeling, and to ensure that all elements of water quality standards are met to promote the overall purposes of the Clean Water Act.

The Okanogan PUD had planned to reduce the flow of the Similkameen river from an average of 500 cubic feet per second (cfs) to just 10 cfs – a trickle that

would leave scenic Similkameen Falls essentially dry.

On July 23, the PCHB issued an order directing the Department of Ecology to do an aesthetic flow study if Okanogan PUD decides to build the project. The Board ruled that the water quality permit issued to the PUD does not protect the scenic and associated recreational values of the Similkameen Falls.

The Board criticized Ecology's after-the-fact evaluation of the minimum flow regime. The Board stated that "selection of a minimum flow in this manner results in Ecology considering the impact of aesthetic flows on the operation of the [Enloe Dam] Project, rather than considering the Project's impact on the aesthetic values of the flows. This is not the proper standard." (Decision p. 27).

The Board noted that Similkameen Falls, although remote, is attracting an increasing number of viewers due to devel-

Enloe Dam/Similkameen Falls.
—HYDROPOWER REFORM COALITION
PHOTO

opment of local and regional trail systems. The Falls' value as a scenic stop on the Similkameen River Trail is a factor to be considered in protection of flows over the dam as well as at the Falls. As well, the river is a valuable resource to the community for recreation, scenic values, and fish and wildlife.

As *TWC* went to press, the Okanogan PUD filed — and quickly dropped — an appeal to the PCHB's decision, so the decision is final.



NCCC Actions

JUNE —
SEPTEMBER
2013

Advocacy carried out by dedicated NCCC volunteers in the last four months to protect and preserve the North Cascades' lands, waters, plants, and wildlife.



EXPANDING, ESTABLISHING, 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.

- Continued advocacy to protect Alpine Lakes Wilderness in connection with the Icicle Workgroup's efforts to increase storage capacity of dammed lakes inside that Wilderness, including Eightmile Lake.
- Edited and signed onto group testimony for the U.S. House hearing on the Reichert bill to expand Alpine Lakes Wilderness.
- Participated in public meeting and submitted comments to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission opposing the proposed Sunset Falls dam on the Skykomish River due to the impacts that would result from damming and dewatering one of the region's most treasured free-flowing rivers, as well as the project's size and questionable economic justification.
- Signed onto a letter to the Mountaineers Foundation supporting Washington Wild's mapping for the Cascades Wild wilderness campaign.
- Submitted comments on the Forest Service scoping letter regarding the Green Mountain Lookout.



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.

- Led conservation community presentations opposing the Yakima Water Plan proposal to create two new National Recreation Areas that would increase off-road vehicle use in the Teanaway, Taneum and Manastash basins of the Cle Elum District, at the Washington Water Law Conference, at the Washington Environmental Council board meeting, and at the Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs annual meeting. Co-led an outing in the proposed Manastash-Taneum NRA. As a result of our work, the Yakima Workgroup's Lands Subcommittee wrote to the Forest Service that it will not seek a Congressional designation of these lands while the National Forest planning processes are underway.
- Received a grant from the Mountaineers Foundation for legal and scientific advice regarding the Yakima Plan.
- Participated in public meetings and workshops of Mount Baker Snoqualmie National Forest on sustainable roads.
- Organized a meet-and-greet in downtown Seattle for NOCA superintendent Karen Taylor-Goodrich and staff.
- Participated in a workshop to identify opportunities for the Wilderness and Climbing communities to work together in Washington State.



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.

- ✓ Continued advocacy against the proposed Bumping Lake dam that would flood Critical Habitat for the northern spotted owl, including facilitation of an op-ed in the *Everett Herald*.



PROTECTING WILDLIFE AND 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.

- ✓ Commented on a proposed National Park Service plan to reintroduce the Pacific fisher to Mount Rainier and North Cascades national parks. The fisher is a member of the weasel family that occurs in low- to mid-elevation closed canopy forests with large trees and logs.
- ✓ Joined other conservation groups in urging the Northwest Power and Conservation Council to support its Protected Areas Program by addressing current river protection needs, data and science, including new Endangered Species Act listings and determinations regarding bull trout habitat, and expected changes to Pacific Northwest rivers and headwater streams due to a changing climate.
- ✓ Commented on North Cascades National Park Complex lake restoration efforts, including the use of the piscicide rotenone to remove a reproducing population of non-native Eastern Brook Trout from Sourdough Lake.
- ✓ Continued as a co-appellant in the Enloe Dam/Similkameen Falls proceeding, including filing a petition for reconsideration to make the decision even better. In a separate proceeding, joined in the appeal of the water right that Ecology issued to the PUD.
- ✓ Joined other members of the Washington Watershed Restoration Initiative in signing a letter to support a budget line item for the Legacy Roads and Trails Remediation Fund (LRT) in the FY 2015 President's Budget request, to help meet the objective of reducing watershed impacts due to the Forest Service road system.
- ✓ Signed onto a group conservation letter to Mt. Baker Snoqualmie National Forest submitting comments on the Environmental Assessment for the Skykomish Geothermal Leasing proposal.
- ✓ Joined conservation groups in supporting continued federal funding for the State & Tribal Wildlife Grants Program, North American Wetland Conservation Fund, Neotropical Migratory Bird Fund, Forest Legacy Program and Land and Water Conservation Fund when the House Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee proposed to eliminate funding for these successful and important fish and wildlife conservation programs next fiscal year.

State enacts HB 1632, a bad ATV law

By Karl Forsgaard

At the end of its 2013 special sessions, the Washington State Legislature passed HB 1632 regarding 4-wheeled All-Terrain Vehicles (ATVs) and Governor Inslee signed it into law. The new law allows ATVs on paved streets, roads and highways with speed limits of 35 miles per hour or less.

The opening of these roads to ATVs is automatic in counties with populations lower than 15,000: Skamania, Ferry, Lincoln, Pend Oreille, Columbia, Wahkiakum and Garfield. Larger counties and municipalities will have to “opt in” by passing an ordinance to open those roads to ATVs, and Okanogan County did so immediately; Chelan County is now considering it.

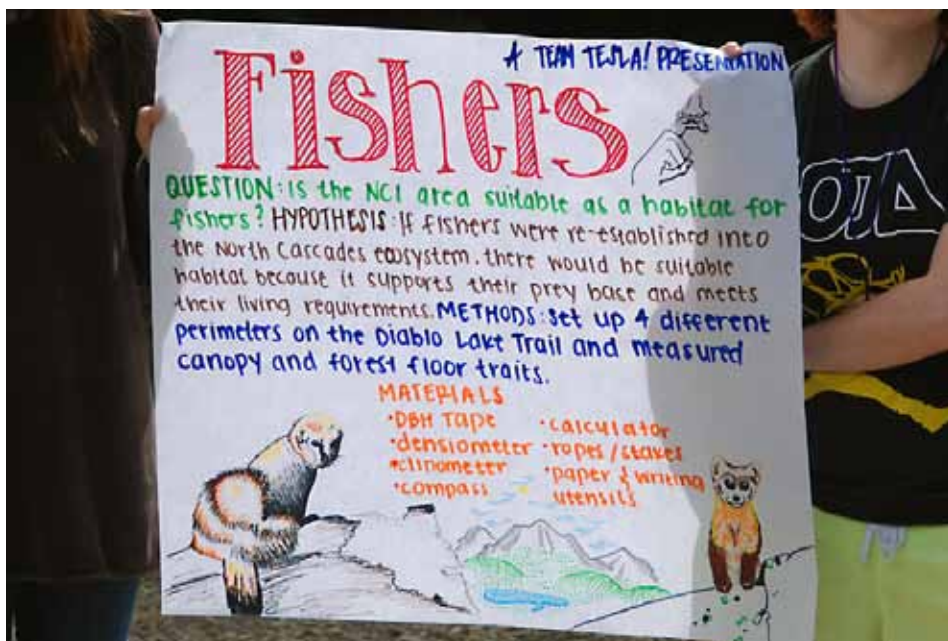
As previously reported in *TWC* Spring 2013, NCCC opposed HB 1632 and submitted testimony in February to the House Transportation Committee. We opposed this bill due to its negative impacts on public safety, as well as its negative impacts on waters, soils, vegetation, wildlife, and quiet recreation on our public lands. The Washington State Patrol testified against the prior version of this bill, and said it “will likely lead to chaos” and “you will be sacrificing safety if you adopt this bill.” The ATV industry says “Never ride on a public road.” In July, *High Country News* reported that “the ATV culture includes ... kids’ funerals.”

One of HB 1632’s principal proponents was off-road vehicle advocate Ted Jackson, who has been seeking to facilitate a new ATV network between rural communities in the Skykomish River valley adjacent to Reiter Forest, the Wild Sky Wilderness and Alpine Lakes Wilderness. To do this, he enlisted the help of Conservation Northwest (CNW) and Trout Unlimited, who were seeking to require visible license plates on all ATVs. When the new law was signed, CNW’s leader wrote “I couldn’t be happier” and predicted the new law “will change the way that people recreate on All Terrain Vehicles in Washington.” Yes it will, and that’s the problem.

As NCCC stated in its testimony, HB 1632 will make it easier for ATVs to illegally access public lands (and private lands). Land managers will be unable to patrol the lands that are illegally accessed, and thrill seekers will create new illegal trails, including streambeds.

Ironically, CNW adopted NCCC’s points when CNW filed a lawsuit challenging the Okanogan County ordinance that opened roads to ATVs under the new law that CNW helped create. In its new lawsuit filed in August, CNW alleges that opening Okanogan County roads to ATVs “substantially increases the potential for illegal and damaging [ATV] use by broadening the scope and manner that [ATVs] can access sensitive wildlife habitat across large and remote areas of Okanogan County.” It appears Conservation Northwest has only itself to blame for that result. We hope CNW will take responsibility for fixing the new law’s defects in the next session of the State Legislature.

Fisher reintroduction announced



Have you ever seen a Pacific fisher (*Pekania pennanti*) in the North Cascades? Some of our senior members might have been so fortunate. It was declared extirpated in the 1990s, and none have been observed there since. In 2004 this member of the weasel family, which occurs in low- to mid-elevation closed-canopy forests with large trees and logs, was placed on the federal Endangered Species list. North Cascades National Park and Mt. Rainier National Park are teaming up with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and others to reintroduce fishers into known previously occupied habitats starting in 2015. NCCC was among many groups to submit comments in support of Pacific fisher reintroduction. Find more details at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/RestoreFisher>

After learning field work techniques and tools, high school students researched and presented their findings on fisher habitat in the Diablo Lake area at the end of their three-day Mountain School experience at North Cascades Institute. Their conclusion? Yes, there is suitable habitat and they think it would be a good idea to reintroduce fishers in the North Cascades. —JACK MCLEOD PHOTO

Native vegetation service projects continue long NCCC tradition



Last fall, NCCC volunteers (shown below) stepped up to assist National Park Service staff with a revegetation project inside North Cascades National Park Complex, planting native plants at Diablo Overlook. But replanting is not a new idea! Joe and Margaret Miller's Cascade Pass revegetation project, launched in 1970, sought to improve alpine and subalpine meadows damaged by backpackers and horse parties. This photo, taken almost a year later, confirms that following practices outlined by the Millers in their 1977 paper, "Suggested Revegetation Practices", gave the Diablo Overlook plants a good start.

"All of us working together can help heal the scars of man's unthinking overuse of the mountains and backcountry," said the Millers in their introduction. Sadly, the Cascade Pass project planned for September 28 was cancelled due to poor weather. If October weather conditions are favorable, NCCC plans to pack subalpine plants up to Cascade Pass and plant them in an old trail now being decommissioned, or tackle a similar native vegetation planting party at a lower elevation near the Environmental Learning Center at Diablo Lake.



THE WILD CASCADES

August - September 1984



We are sorry to announce that NCCC cofounder and board chairman Patrick Goldsworthy, shown with President Johnson when the law designating North Cascades National Park was signed October 4, 1968, passed away on October 5. A memorial to Pat will be a significant part of *TWC* Winter 2014.

NCCC challenges motocross decision

On October 2, NCCC and Pilchuck Audubon joined in an appeal filed by the Mountain Loop Conservancy, challenging a Snohomish County decision to rezone and conditionally permit a motocross racing facility on forestland on the Mountain Loop Highway without requiring an Environmental Impact Statement. We previously reported on how the facility could harm water quality and how racing events could significantly back up traffic on this two-lane highway (*TWC* Summer/Fall 2012). The parties believe that the proposed site (near Granite Falls and Robe Gorge) is not suitable for a motocross racing facility, and the mitigation suggested by the applicants and the county in its Mitigated Determination of Non-Significance is insufficient to protect the way of life and safety of Mountain Loop residents, as well as wildlife habitat. Visitors come to this area for the unique environment and beautiful, quiet

Continued on page 23

The Sustainable Roads Project

By Ed Henderson

Following up on the fall 2012 meeting at REI (see *TWC* Winter 2013), the Forest Service staff of the Mount Baker Snoqualmie National Forest (MBS) is conducting a series of workshops to gather public input on the maintenance of the road system on that national forest. Faced with budget cuts that will dramatically reduce the number and miles of roads it can afford to maintain, the MBS staff is calling on the public to help determine which roads should be maintained and which should no longer be kept up.

The Forest Service is responsible for more than 400,000 miles of roads on the national forests throughout the nation. There are over 20,000 miles of road on national forest land in Washington State, 2,500 miles of which are located in MBS. Almost all of them are decades old and in poor condition. Nationally there is a multi-billion dollar backlog of deferred maintenance on national forest roads. Crumbling roads are responsible for washouts, erosion and landslides. The recent washout on the Cascades River Road in the North Cascades National Park and mudslides that closed state Highway 20 twice this summer forcibly remind us that roads are but temporary fixtures in a dynamic mountain landscape.

MBS candidly admits that these roads were built for the short-term goal of “getting the cut out.” That is, to provide access for cutting down trees and hauling the logs away. The roads were never intended to afford access for recreation and other uses for many years into the future. With the decline of logging, the trees having been cut down, subsidies for maintenance have been severely reduced. MBS estimates that it will only have funds to maintain about 25% or 628 of its 2,500 miles of roads.

The Sustainable Roads Project is part of the response to the federal 2005 Travel

Management Rule. The Rule mandated that all national forests develop a Motor Vehicle Use Map and create a sustainable roads strategy. Based on its Minimum Roads Analysis, MBS produced its map in 2009. The final strategy, due to be completed by 2015, will inform future decisions as to which roads to maintain and at what level. Decisions on the closure of individual roads will require the normal NEPA evaluation.

Public workshops solicit input

To involve the public in developing the strategy, MBS has been holding a series of eight public workshops. Through

September 24, seven workshops have been attended by over 240 people. Each workshop begins with introductory remarks, followed by background explanations and instructions. Participants, seated in groups of six, are asked to identify as many as eight destinations each in the forest that are important to them. Then they are instructed to mark with color-coded hi-lighters the roads on the national forest they use for access to these areas. The roads and

areas are both marked on a large map for the group and individually reported on separate worksheets.

Each group of participants then discusses and responds to three major topics.

1. What are the consequences of a reduced road system?

Not surprisingly, the loss of motor vehicle access heads the list, followed by a wide range of both positive and negative effects. These range from negative economic impacts on rural communities as a result of reduced visitation, crowding on the remaining accessible sites, and loss of fire protection to the reduced introduction of invasive species, improved wildlife habitat and increased opportunities for non-motorized recreation.

2. What criteria should be used when analyzing the road system?

The participant groups have responded with a strong element of realism. The first criterion mentioned is a cost-benefit analysis, followed by consideration of the local economic impact, the importance of the area accessed, and the on-going maintenance cost. Environmental effects, both positive and negative, must be considered, many participants say.

3. What are some strategies and opportunities for maintaining the road system?

While many schemes for raising money have been proposed, more pragmatic ideas include “Adopt-a-Road” partnerships between local groups and the Forest Service for particular roads and lowering maintenance criteria on some roads to allow more miles to be kept open.

The workshops also provide an opportunity for the participants to identify problem roads and roads they believe should be closed.

Not part of the workshop discussions is the fate of the remaining 75% or 1,972 miles of MBS roads that will not be maintained. There appear to be three options:

- The roads may remain open without maintenance.
- The roads may be closed to motor vehicle traffic and blocked with gates, with the option of being reopened at some future date.
- The roads may be decommissioned with culverts removed, natural drainage restored, the driving surface removed and native vegetation planted. These roads would be removed from the inventory and never restored. Decommissioning will require a NEPA process.

NCCC encourages everyone to advocate for the responsible decommissioning of the unnecessary and environmentally damaging, crumbling roads on our national forest, as well as the responsible maintenance of roads whose important uses include connecting people with nature. After the workshops close, you can express your views on the Sustainable Roads Blogsite on the MBS website. As of September 26, more than 627 people had posted comments on the future of forest roads.

The Forest Service is responsible for 400,000 miles of road throughout the U.S., including 20,000 miles of roads in Washington State

What are logging roads made of?

By Rick McGuire

Logging roads on the National Forests are not like “regular” roads. They were built on the cheap during the great logging frenzy of 1950-1990, for one purpose only: hauling timber. Success in the Forest Service of those years meant “getting out the cut.” That cut was more quickly gotten out by building a larger network of inexpensive roads rather than a smaller network of well-constructed roads.

But just how do they differ from other roads? Any road starts out with, and on top of, the native earth that it traverses. Some places lend themselves well to roadbuilding, with stable, solid, well-drained ground and gentle terrain. Other places have unstable, soft and/or poorly drained soils and/or steep terrain. By far the greater part of the National Forests in the Cascades offer the more difficult terrain—very to extremely difficult, in fact.

The basics of roadbuilding are not complicated. Mostly, they consist of clearing the way and laying down lesser or greater quantities of fill material depending on how stable the terrain is, and making sure that water flows away from it as much as possible. Large rocks are used for the bottom layers, with smaller rock for upper layers and fine gravel or pavement on top. The amount of rock fill is critical to how long a road lasts. More is better, and it needs to be rock, not wood or whatever kind of material happens to be at hand.

A sufficient rock-only base is what’s missing from most Cascade logging roads. Rock is expensive, whether manufactured locally with portable crushers, or hauled in via dump trucks. Cascade logging roads have bases comprised of varying amounts of rock mixed with stumps, logs, woody debris, duff and whatever other kind of “dirt” happened to be right there, with a surface of rock on top. Organic material rots, and is precisely what one does not



John Warth photos, circa the late 1950s.

want for a long lasting roadbed. Yet that is what at least partially underlies most Cascade logging roads. Those stumps, logs and other kinds of organic debris have been in place for half a century or more, and are now rotting away.

That rotting means failing roads. When woody debris rots away it leaves voids where water can easily erode remaining material. Bottomless potholes can form, channeling water right through the roadbed. Often roadbeds simply disintegrate, or fall off a mountainside, sometimes quite spectacularly, sending tons of material downhill and smothering fish habitat.

Poor quality fill is not the only problem with Cascade logging roads. As everyone knows, creeks and streams are everywhere in the Cascades. And water is the enemy of roads. Culverts are cheaper than bridges, and innumerable stream crossings in the Cascades that should have been bridged have culverts instead. Small culverts are cheaper than big culverts, and many if not most of the culverts below Cascade logging roads are undersized (many culverts also need to be modified to allow salmon to pass). Culverts, especially small ones, need frequent maintenance. They are not getting it.

The Cascades are also a tough place just because of the steep terrain that throws

floods, rockslides and debris flows at roads on a regular basis. Considering the challenging terrain and the poor construction, the remarkable thing is not that roads fail, but that any are still drive-able. Time is catching up with them, though, and failures are becoming more and more frequent.

The money and resources to keep patching together this crumbling network will never be there. Difficult choices have to be made. Roads that are some people’s favorites will have to be closed. In many cases they are already closing themselves.

NCCC has long maintained that resources need to be put where they will do the most good. That means directing the ever-shrinking road budget into those roads that serve the most people, and have the best chances of holding together. Trying to keep everything open won’t work, and will result in less motorized “access,” not more. Many new trails and other recreational opportunities need to be developed, in places people can get to, now and in the future.

NCCC is, and always has been, dedicated to finding ways of getting people out and on to their public lands. Public use and enjoyment of public lands has always been one of the main foundations of the conservation movement. NCCC hopes that means can be found to keep open the most important roads in the Cascades while minimizing damage from the many that will need to be closed. Together with a program of new trail construction, such an approach offers the only real hope for a sustainable way for the public to reach and enjoy these lands we all own in years to come.





State funds Yakima Plan “early action items”

by Karl Forsgaard

In late June, the Washington State Legislature concluded its 2013 session by appropriating \$132 million in the capital budget to fund Yakima Plan “early action items.” These include State acquisition of Teanaway private forestland for almost \$100 million, early stages of Yakima River Basin water projects including water conservation and fish passage projects, and feasibility studies of the proposed irrigation storage dams that threaten ancient forest at Bumping Lake and shrub-steppe habitat at Wymer.

Unfortunately, by making the appropriation (and the related policy bill), the Legislature institutionalized a severely flawed Yakima Plan process that set many bad precedents for federal policies on forests, water, endangered species, off-road vehicle recreation, environment (NEPA) and advisory committee meetings (FACA). Furthermore, Plan proponents now see themselves in a stronger position to seek federal funding for the Plan, which has an estimated pricetag of \$5 billion.

In June the Yakima Plan proponents also retreated somewhat from their ill-advised National Recreation Area (NRA) proposal, although the two bad NRAs remain in the Yakima Plan.

Also in June, NCCC and allies received a grant from The Mountaineers Foundation to pay for scientific and legal advice regarding the Yakima Plan.

Teanaway acquisition

The State acquisition of 50,272 acres of forestland managed by American Forest Land Company (AFLC) in the Teanaway River Basin is described in more detail in the companion article by Rick McGuire. It was reported in several newspapers and online blogs, and described as the state’s largest single acquisition of land in over 50 years, and one of the largest in state history. On July 15, the *New York Times* reported that when AFLC’s principal owner John Rudey listed his Connecticut home for sale at \$190 million, it was proclaimed

Lake Cle Elum, in the Yakima Basin, with Teanaway peaks and Stuart Range in the distance.

—KARL FORSGAARD PHOTO

the most expensive home ever formally listed in the United States. It carries more than \$120 million in debt, so paying his lenders was reportedly the reason Rudey was selling most of his Teanaway lands. Rudey and AFLC will retain a 900-acre block at the south end of the Teanaway valley that is the site of a proposed solar energy project.

The State will manage its Teanaway forestlands as a Community Forest, the State’s first use of the Community Forest Trust land management designation created by the Legislature in 2011 to protect working forests (i.e. loggable forests) with a high risk of conversion to non-forest uses, and with important value to the local community. The Department of Natural Resources and State Department

of Fish and Wildlife will co-manage the Community Forest, engaging the local community in setting priorities. The State will establish a local advisory committee, the Teanaway Community Forest Advisory Board, to provide advice on post-acquisition management.

The local community (upper Kittitas County) clearly cares enough about management of these newly acquired forestlands to provide detailed input to the State. In the public meetings conducted by Kittitas County under the Growth Management Act (GMA) in 2009-2010 regarding AFLC's proposal to develop these same lands with a "fully contained community," the Teanaway Grange hall was always full of Kittitas County residents and their Seattle-area allies advocating to protect the rural character of the Teanaway River valley. Under the GMA, Kittitas County had already designated most of the area as forestland of long-term commercial significance before Rudey bought it from Boise Cascade in 1999. Thirteen conservation organizations including NCCC, Kittitas Audubon, Kittitas County Conservation Coalition and Friends of the Teanaway opposed the "fully contained community" because the area can continue to be managed for commercial forestry, and conversion to other uses would adversely affect habitat for a wide range of species including bull trout, steelhead and spotted owls. The owl habitat on AFLC land is relatively unlogged compared with the rest of the heavily logged AFLC land; the owl circles are in the northern part of the AFLC land, near the boundary with federal land (the proposed NRA) where there are additional owl circles.

The legislation provides that after 12 years (by June 2025), if Yakima Plan water projects totaling 114,000 acre-feet have not been permitted and financed, the State can change the Teanaway land designation from Community Forest Trust to common school trust (i.e., fewer restrictions on logging), or dispose of it. Plan proponents say this acre-footage is the "exact" amount of the Cle Elum pool raise and Kachess inactive storage components, and that this provision is an "incentive" for the Teanaway community to support completion

of those water storage projects. However, the Kachess inactive storage component has not yet been designed, nor has it been subject to feasibility analysis or cost-benefit analysis, let alone project-level environmental review. Furthermore, we question whether the State agencies, after 12 years of engaging the local Teanaway community in forest management decision-making, would want to antagonize that community by downgrading the Teanaway Community Forest in 2025.

Water project cost-benefit analyses and feasibility studies

In addition to the Teanaway acquisition, the Yakima Plan "early action items" funded by the Legislature include construction prep for a fish passage project (at Lake Cle Elum); geotechnical analysis and initial design for other fish passage projects (at Keechelus, Kachess, Tieton) and for operational modifications (the Keechelus-to-Kachess pipeline); construction prep for some storage projects (Kachess inactive storage, and Cle Elum pool raise); feasibility studies

for the two storage dams (Bumping and Wymer); and complete construction of certain agricultural conservation projects and tributary/mainstem habitat enhancement projects.

The capital budget also includes \$300,000 for the Washington Water Resource Center to prepare separate benefit-cost analyses by December 2014 for each significant water project proposed in the Yakima Plan. Located in Pullman, the Center was established by Congress and is a joint agency of Washington State University and the University of Washington. Section 5057 provides that the Center "must measure and report the economic benefits of each project on a disaggregated basis, so that it is clear the extent to which an individual project is expected to result in increases in fish populations, increases in the reliability of irrigation water during severe drought years, and improvements in municipal and domestic water supply." The cost-benefit analyses will be conducted on these projects:

- a. Tributary/mainstem enhancement
- b. Box Canyon Creek

- c. Subordination of power generation (Roza and Chandler)
- d. Aquifer storage and recovery projects
- e. Agricultural conservation
- f. Municipal conservation
- g. Water bank exchange programs
- h. Cle Elum reservoir
- i. Keechelus, Kachess, Tieton reservoir
- j. Keechelus to Kachess pipeline
- k. Wymer reservoir
- l. Bumping reservoir enlargement

In addition to the analyses of the dams at Bumping and Wymer, it will be interesting to see the cost-benefit analysis for the Kachess reservoir's inactive storage project, as some Plan proponents have informally said that due to its large capacity (200,000 acre-feet) and because they say it is relatively benign and cost-effective, it is more likely to be built sooner, and perhaps instead of, the dams at Bumping and Wymer. They informally refer to the Plan as a 40-year project, with Phase I consisting of ten years of projects costing \$700 million (including Kachess inactive storage), followed by the least-unpopular dam (ostensibly Wymer) with the most-unpopular dam (ostensibly Bumping) postponed until around 2040. For the remainder of the \$5 billion pricetag, they speculate the costs may be shared 50-50 federal-local.

Section 3016 provides funding to the Department of Ecology for completion of BuRec's "Yakima River Basin Water Storage Feasibility Study," including environmental review under NEPA and SEPA, "to evaluate potential in basin storage facilities such as the proposed Bumping Lake and Wymer reservoirs and other reasonable alternatives that will enhance water supplies and streamflows in the Yakima Basin."

Plan proponents have informally referred to this feasibility study as geotechnical investigations beginning in summer 2013 to evaluate whether the sites proposed for the Wymer and Bumping dams have "fatal flaws," from an engineering and safety perspective, anticipating that if either site is "fatally flawed" then it would be dropped. Concerns include the nature, depth and permeability of glacial sediment at the Bumping dam site, and the nature of the basalt flows and faults at the Wymer site. Their objective is to know by the end of two years which dams to advance to a formal feasibility study, which will then take about five years.

In August, the federal Bureau of Reclamation and U.S. Forest Service jointly sent

The Plan was developed by a defective process, and with defective economic analysis. Notably, Senator Karen Fraser removed herself as a co-sponsor of the policy bill.

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Yakima Plan

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a letter to “parties in the immediate vicinity of Bumping Reservoir Dam,” i.e., Bumping Lake cabin owners. The letter said BuRec “will be conducting geotechnical investigations downstream and in the general vicinity of the existing ...Dam over the next 2 years. The investigations will use a mobile drilling rig ... and a backhoe...” Several years of data gathering, numerous additional studies, and an EIS lie ahead. “None of these studies are yet scheduled for initiation because Reclamation must first assess if the Bumping Reservoir Dam proposal is feasible.”

In a June 7, 2013 letter to State Rep. Hans Dunshee, Sierra Club’s Washington State Chapter wrote “We do not support the overall Yakima Plan as proposed and remain opposed to funding in the budget for expansion of Bumping Lake and Wymer dams.”

In addition to the capital budget appropriations, in late June the Legislature also passed the policy bill regarding the Yakima Plan. The policy bill endorsed the Plan, and thus it endorsed all of the Plan’s defects – two new dams, destruction of 1,000 acres of ancient forest (including Critical Habitat for the northern spotted owl), two new NRAs for off-road vehicles (ORVs), inadequate water conservation,

and inadequate wilderness protection. The Plan was developed by a defective process, and with defective economic analysis. Notably, Senator Karen Fraser removed herself as a co-sponsor of the policy bill.

In September, the Washington Environmental Council (WEC) Board of Directors decided to remain neutral on the Yakima Plan. WEC Staff had recommended that the Board vote to support the Yakima Plan, but the Board declined to follow that recommendation, after listening to pro-and-con presentations by a Plan proponent and NCCC. For more than a year, the Yakima Plan campaign website had erroneously listed WEC as a supporter of the Plan, but the WEC Board had never voted to support it. After its September meeting, WEC was removed from the Yakima Plan campaign website’s list of Plan supporters.

National Recreation Area proposal

The Yakima Plan’s proposals for federal land designations to be made by Congress, including the NRA Proposal for promoting off-road vehicle (ORV) use on National Forest lands of the Cle Elum District, were published by the Workgroup’s Lands Subcommittee in January 2012.

A year and a half later, in June 2013, the Workgroup’s Lands Subcommittee sent a letter to the Forest Service asking that the Lands Subcommittee proposals be included in the upcoming Forest Plan Revision DEIS alternatives, and “The Workgroup currently has no plan to seek formal Congressional designation for these lands as the Forest Plan Revision and Travel Management Planning processes go forward. Rather it is our intention to defer as these administrative processes develop ...” This looks like a substantial adoption of one of our main points about the Lands Subcommittee’s NRA Proposal, that it undermined those ongoing National Forest planning processes. It also reflects input from many conservation organizations during the informal Ross process. The threat of a Congressional bill to enact the NRA Proposal has now been “deferred.”

In late June, the Yakima Plan supporters’ and opponents’ perspectives were presented at the Washington Water Law Conference at the State Convention Center in Seattle. In response to the presentation of negative impacts of ORV use, the Yakima Plan representative said “we could not agree more,” and also agreed with our objections about process. Indeed, the supporters’ submission of written materials included their recent “rebuttal” article in the Water Report, a journal on water

law in the west, in which they said nothing about their NRA Proposal, even though they had been criticized for it in the prior article they were supposedly rebutting.

Although their letter to the Forest Service is a positive step by the Plan proponents, the NRAs are still a bad idea, and we do need to continue opposing the NRA Proposal. Because it does not require State funding, the NRA Proposal received very little attention in the State Legislature’s processing of the Yakima Plan. Because it is not a water project, the NRA Proposal is not subject to the cost-benefit analysis described above as required for major water project components in the Plan. The NRA proposal is still part of the Yakima Plan, so we need to continue opposing the Yakima Plan itself.

Don’t support the March 2012 Yakima Plan

Especially since the proponents themselves are now backing away from the bad parts of the current March 2012 EIS version of the Plan, there is no reason to support it; the March 2012 version is not the one that will get federally funded and built. Despite the State appropriation of over \$100 million for “early action items,” our Congressional delegation is not rushing to seek federal appropriation of the remaining \$4.9 billion of the \$5 billion price tag. Parties who withhold support for the Plan (i.e., parties who oppose it or are neutral) have more leverage to improve the Plan than parties who have already promised to support the old version.

Although as of late September the Seattle news media had yet to begin covering the Yakima Plan controversy, in August and September the *Everett Herald* newspaper published an editorial, an op-ed from Plan supporters, and an op-ed from Plan opponents (see page 21). Remarkably, the Plan proponents’ op-ed did not mention Bumping Lake, did not mention Wymer, did not mention the proposed NRAs – in other words, the proponents’ story omitted the biggest, most expensive and most controversial parts of their Plan. Their sales technique is interesting, to say the least.

The Yakima Plan is the largest project in Washington State since WPPSS. It is highly significant and highly controversial. A large volume of information is available at the Sierra Club website on the Yakima Plan:

www.washington.sierraclub.org/uppercol/ucr/yakima/water_overview.html

What you can do:

Send Governor Inslee a strong message:

- Support water conservation and water banking in the Yakima basin.
- Oppose new money-losing dams in the Yakima Basin.
- Oppose new off-road vehicle designations in the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest outside of the existing National Forest planning process.
- Support Wilderness protection for roadless areas in the Yakima Basin, including the ancient forest surrounding the existing Bumping Lake.

Comments may be sent through the following website:

www.governor.wa.gov/contact/default.asp

State purchase of Teanaway lands raises disturbing questions

By Rick McGuire



The Washington legislature has approved funding for the public purchase of approximately 50,000 acres of land from American Forest Holdings LLC* in the lower Teanaway watershed near CleElum. The price paid for these lands, once owned by Boise Cascade, is almost 100 million dollars.

While NCCC is a big supporter of public land acquisitions in general, this purchase has raised a number of disturbing questions for NCCC and many other conservation groups.

This purchase is a central part of the “Yakima Integrated Plan,” an effort to provide more water to Yakima valley irrigators. Although there is nothing in the legislative language describing it as such, the Teanaway purchase is a clear political quid pro quo for the destruction of well

over a thousand acres of ancient forests for a new dam at Bumping Lake in the South Cascades east of Mt. Rainier.

Many believe that the tradeoff is a bad deal for the public, and for the cause of forest preservation. Although only a fraction of the acreage of the Teanaway purchase, the ancient forests at Bumping are arguably far more valuable, some of the best remaining in the state. Celebrated by Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas in *Of Men and Mountains*, the Bumping Lake forests are home to species from both sides of the Cascades. A natural multi-aged mosaic, with some trees over 800 years old, they are all the more rare for growing on mostly flat ground.

Any attempt to nail down a hard number for loss of ancient forests at Bumping does not do justice to the scale of the destruction that a new dam would cause.

This part of AFLC (now state) lands, also shown on the cover, had its old-growth forest logged decades ago. The second-growth forest seen in the photo survives because of spotted owl circles where state regulation kept more recent cutting at bay. It is perhaps the most scenic part of the acquired lands, and not at all typical of the otherwise heavily logged landscape there. —KARL FORSGAARD PHOTO

The actual expanded reservoir footprint would be 2800 acres in addition to the 1300 acres occupied by the existing lake. There has been very little logging in the entire Bumping basin, and most of what would be flooded is unlogged, natural forest. As with all virgin forests, it is a mix.

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State purchase

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Timber magnate John Rudey has two companies referenced in these articles. American Forest Holdings LLC, which owns the land, is the seller. American Forest Land Company (AFLC), which manages the land, is far better known to the public, because it has had a local office and employees and is named on the signs people see on Teanaway roads.

Some places clearly merit being called “cathedral forest.” Other places have smaller trees, and most of the forest is a mix of the two. There is no one single, universally accepted definition of “old growth” or “ancient forest.” But you know it when you see it, and the forests at Bumping have it in plenty.

No one seems to know quite how the forests at Bumping escaped logging. One explanation that seems to ring true is that the Forest Service was reluctant to cross swords with Douglas, who for many years had a retreat at nearby Goose Prairie and loved the place. Just about every other part of the Naches District with trees was roaded and cut, but not Bumping. Whatever the reason, there is nothing else quite like it in the Cascades – a large, spacious valley with a great, sweeping extent of real ancient forest growing on mostly flat land. Expansion of the reservoir would have effects extending well beyond the actual inundation zone. An expanded reservoir will cut the heart out of the Bumping valley, taking the lowest elevation and best forests there. To destroy what many consider to be the finest remaining example of east side Cascade forests, for an expanded reservoir that would seldom even fill, would be tragic.

The newly purchased Teanaway lands could hardly be more different than those around Bumping Lake. Apart from some limited areas that spotted owl regulations kept from being completely cut, the Teanaway lands are among the most heavily logged in the state. Everything of value that could legally be cut has been taken. Supposedly now preserved as a “working forest,” the lands have been so thoroughly worked over that even proponents admit

that there will be nothing to cut for at least 50 years.

The Teanaway lands are to be jointly managed by the state’s Departments of Natural Resources and Fish and Wildlife. Any management activities will be a net drain on state coffers for the next 50 years. Some of the lands are at the dry lower limit of where trees can grow, at the forest/shrub-steppe boundary. Logging has been so severe that trees may never grow back there, with shrublands forming instead.

An alarming part of the deal is the breathtaking \$2000 per acre paid for the Teanaway lands, a price far above what any comparable “understocked timberland” or “stumpland” would fetch on the open market. Although there is some residential development potential on a limited number of choicer sites, the Teanaway price per acre is about eight times what King County paid for the development rights to the Hancock Snoqualmie Tree Farm, which is far more developable and much closer to Seattle.

The comparison between the two purchases is not quite exact, since the Teanaway was a full fee-simple purchase, while the Hancock purchase was for development rights only. But given the denuded state of the Teanaway lands, their value as timberland is not very high, so the comparison is useful, if still perplexing.

Traditionally, the state has picked up logged-out lands for low prices. In years past, many simply reverted to public ownership in lieu of unpaid back taxes. At a time of collapsing roads and bridges and extreme budget stress for the state, the amazing price paid for the Teanaway lands is one of the many credulity-stretching facets of the Yakima Plan. The Plan also calls for the establishment of large National Recreation Areas dedicated to off road vehicles, north of I-90 in the Teanaway (on National Forest lands, not on the lands newly acquired by the State) and south of I-90 in the Manastash area. Both areas are already suffering greatly from ORV impacts, which will multiply if the NRAs are established.

Sacrificing your backyard to save mine

There is also a large question of “sacrificing your backyard to save mine.” Some groups have signed on as supporters of the Yakima Plan because they regard the “benefits,” such as the Teanaway purchase, as falling within their area of concern, while the costs, such as losing the ancient forests at Bumping, are somewhere else.

A little over a decade ago, NCCC was heavily involved in two land exchanges, between the Forest Service and Weyerhaeuser and the Forest Service and Plum Creek Timber. Both exchanges started out with plans to acquire lands mostly near Interstate 90 in exchange for National Forest lands elsewhere.

Many of the National Forest lands proposed for trading away had significant areas of ancient forests. An outcry soon was heard. The town of Randle, Washington, in the Cowlitz valley, was slated to lose scenically forested Watch Mountain, which stands right above the town. Never previously known as a hotbed of conservation, Randle rose up and said heck no, we are not going along with a plan to sacrifice our forests in order to preserve views from I-90. Defenders also rallied to save other forests near Mt. St. Helens and Mt. Rainier from being traded away and cut.

Eventually, almost all of the ancient forests slated to be traded away were removed from greatly slimmed-down land exchanges. If not everyone was happy about the outcomes, at least few were very unhappy. A general consensus seemed to emerge that it really wasn’t right to trade away other people’s backyards in order to save one’s own.

Although the Bumping for Teanaway trade isn’t quite as explicit and has more moving parts, the same questions arise. Some people gain from the Teanaway land acquisition. Property owners in the lower Teanaway will no longer need to worry about other houses in their views. More squares on the map near I-90 will be colored in green, and perhaps someday enough trees will grow back in the Teanaway to make it more attractive for recreation other than hunting or snowmobiling. But can that really be worth trading away the best ancient forests on the east side of the Cascades?

The forests at Bumping are of far greater importance and extent than those that were threatened by the I-90 land exchanges. It may not say it on the label, but everyone knows that the Teanaway purchase was done as a political sweetener to smooth the way for a new dam at Bumping. Is there any reason to celebrate a land acquisition that comes at the cost of sacrificing one of the last and best ancient forests left in the Northwest? Is that any way to run a “conservation” movement, or to protect anyone’s backyard?

Ironically, if the Yakima Plan’s main intended beneficiaries, the agribusi-

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NCCC, coalition address concerns around proposed Skykomish Geothermal Consent to Lease

A recent letter to the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest from 13 conservation organizations, including NCCC, provided comments on the Environmental Assessment (EA) for the proposed Skykomish Geothermal Consent to Lease process. The Bureau of Land Management is seeking to lease these lands for geothermal exploration in the area.

The Skykomish Ranger District is studying the potential impact of allowing leasing of subsurface lands for geothermal exploratory drilling on 12,000 acres of land located in “Wild Sky Country.” Over the last decade, this area has received strong, diverse support for the permanent protection of its old-growth and mature forests, preservation of world-class recreational opportunities, and river and watershed restoration.

While developing renewable energy sources like geothermal energy is important, NCCC and the other groups want to ensure that exploratory drilling does not threaten hard-fought protections for wild rivers, fish and wildlife habitat and clean and safe drinking water. The letter to the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie Forest acknowledges that several stipula-

tions identified in the action alternative were initially raised by the 13 conservation groups in August 2012 in response to the scoping comments, including recognition of the importance of—

- the Wild Sky Wilderness
- recreational opportunities
- riparian areas, including potential Wild & Scenic Rivers
- habitat and migration corridors.

The letter also outlines several issues the EA failed to address. While the EA recommends a No Surface Occupancy stipulation (NSO) for Late Successional Reserves (LSR) greater than 80 years old and totaling 5,036 acres, the letter recommends that all LSRs should receive a NSO stipulation, regardless of their age. The letter also points out that it was not clear whether the EA had taken into account the value of viewsheds in the area, and did not seem to have recommended restrictions on use in these areas.

Next, the letter points out that the EA assumes equal geothermal potential for all land in the study which, based on the results of experimental drilling by the

Snohomish Public Utilities District, might not be the case. Additionally, while the Wild Sky Wilderness is not included in the geothermal leasing proposal, the letter recommends that directional drilling underneath the Wild Sky Wilderness also be expressly prohibited. Finally, the letter asks the agency to stipulate that all access for drilling shall take place using existing open roads, with drill pads either on existing road or immediately adjacent to it to minimize impacts.

The Environmental Assessment is the second opportunity for public comment on the possibility of allowing the BLM to lease these lands for geothermal exploration in this area. Last August, these organizations submitted scoping comments on the project advised the Forest Service on which issues to study in the EA. This July 26 letter responded to the recently released EA. NCCC and the other organizations will continue to monitor this project as it moves forward.

State purchase *Continued from page 16*

ness operations of the Yakima valley, get their new dam at Bumping, they are still unlikely to ever actually see their water allocations increased by much. The watershed above Bumping Lake is neither large enough nor rainy enough to justify a bigger dam. That’s why the dam there now is the size that it is. An expanded reservoir would not reliably fill. Even the Bureau of Reclamation, never known for underestimating the “benefits” of projects, has twice rejected the idea.

The one thing that would actually make a difference—meaningful and effective water conservation and marketing—is not to be found in the Yakima Plan, which pays only the barest lip service to the idea. The Plan seems designed to lock in the

current outdated and wasteful practices. Much of the water delivered in the Kittitas and Yakima valleys goes to low-value crops. Any sensible plan would allow and encourage growers of high value-added crops to bid on and pay a fair price for water, putting it to far better use than it is now.

But instead of taking steps that might actually increase food security and prepare for changing climates, the Yakima Plan simply encourages yet more of the colossal waste that is longstanding practice in the Yakima valley. Water will continue to be delivered for next to nothing to operations that value it accordingly, spraying it around wastefully to evaporate or simply blow away. The taxpayers will be expected

to continue picking up the bills for all of this. Irreplaceable ancient forests will be sacrificed. Crazy pumped storage schemes, defying every law of physics, economics and common sense, may be built. All this, just to allow business as usual to carry on in the Yakima valley for a few more years. If things stay on their present course, they don’t look to end well.

Yakima Plan coverage continues on page 21 with an editorial from the *Everett Herald*.

North Cascade Glacier Climate Project 2013: 30th annual field program

By Tom Hammond



This is the 30th year of the North Cascade Glacier Climate Project—an incredible run of field seasons measuring the glaciers of the North Cascades. This is my 10th year, and I was able to join only for the Columbia Glacier. I stood down from going to the Easton Glacier this year due to forecasted thunderstorms and scheduling issues. The project field season involves more than 100 miles of hiking, and more than 30,000 feet of elevation change—a formidable endeavor by any measure.

I am thankful for the curiosity and ability to go on even a small portion of the NCGCP field season. I am doubly thankful to Mauri and the entire Pelto family for

their friendship and willingness to share this great journey of discovery.

We had a pretty good winter in terms of snowpack—above average snow depth, especially at lower elevations. But the health of glaciers has more to do with summer melting, and this summer has been warm and dry. Such a lovely summer for us will lead to negative mass balances of a magnitude that will be more refined with time, but appear to be on the order of minus one meter.

The main crew consisted of Stewart Willis from Western Washington University, Jill Pelto from the University of Maine, Ben Pelto from the University of Massachusetts, and Mauri. The schedule included the

Blanca Lake below Columbia Glacier and the Monte Cristo Peaks. —TOM HAMMOND PHOTO

same eight glaciers that have been evaluated for the past 30 years (see end for list and provisional mass balance numbers). Evaluation includes high fidelity mass-balance measurements via a heavy 12 foot long steel probe that we use to measure snow-depth across the glacier in a gridded pattern described as transects. We also conduct crevasse stratigraphy and flow measurements of super-glacial and outlet streams.

I could easily name this field season “The Year of the Thunderstorm”, as it

seemed the entire two and a half weeks had a mention of thunderstorms somewhere in the forecast. Mauri doesn't remember a field season that had nearly this much lightning.

We hiked in on the last day of July under cloudy and muggy skies. The bugs (mainly mosquitoes, some black flies) weren't too bad, and the huckleberries were just starting to come in. Camp was established closely above the outlet of Blanca Lake under a cluster of huge ancient trees. The lake was totally melted out this year—the first time in three or four years it wasn't totally or partially covered with ice. We had just finished dinner when thunder rumbled in the distance. Soon enough, it became apparent the convective cell was headed right for us. The team bailed in to their respective tents except me—I wanted to watch the show. It was a fabulous display of planetary science, made enjoyable by the fact we were relatively safe at our camp. While camping atop a rock knoll next to a huge, flat lake under big trees sounds unsafe, keep in mind that all around us rock towers rose straight up in the air another vertical kilometer...effectively acting as lightning rods and providing us a measure of safety.

Fortunately, the main brunt of the lighting stayed just east of us as it moved from south to north, finally moving west directly over the top of Kyes Peak and stalling right over the Monte Cristo peaks (and right in front of us).

A large cloud-to-ground bolt struck the summits of Kyes, then another hit the true summit of Monte Cristo Peak! Then two large cloud-to-ground bolts struck beyond Monte Cristo Pass, likely hitting The Cadets. These discharges featured many tendrils of cloud-to-cloud lighting, spidery legs of intense power arcing across the sky. It was at this point I realized the winds kicked up by the cell were blowing rain and mist on to my fleece pants (which also serve as my pillow!). Oops—I took one step closer to the adjacent 500-year-old tree and was immediately in a dry rain shadow. Yes, the irony occurred to me as I leaned against this living contemporary of Columbus: standing under trees with lighting is frowned upon, but then again, I imagine that tree has seen more than a few storms, and of course I already noted the tremendous



relief of the high peaks of the Monte Cristo range serving as so many lightning towers.

Mauri later mentioned how uncommon big thunderstorms are in this area, even in the mountains. I used to agree with that, but now as I look back over years of notes, both from this project, and beyond to many other explorations, thunder and lightning are actually quite common in the

North Cascades, and seems to be getting more frequent. After all, that's why I stood down from the project instead of walking on the (exposed) Easton Glacier. I should note we had quite a thunderstorm in Seattle that night—something that is unusual. As it turned out, and as a nice (and instructional) link to the ongoing conversation about “access” and roads, the same thunderstorms that kept me low that weekend ended up causing no fewer than eight debris slides that closed

Highway 20 (yes, the paved artery across Washington Pass) for more than a week, and also washed out Cascade River road at Midas/Boston Creeks. I'm used to this huge culvert blowing out in the storms of autumn and the avalanches of deep winter, but such events in high summer are ridiculously out of character. Or at least they used to be. At the end of the project, as we discussed how things had gone, Mauri and

Total area of this new lake is about the size of a football field. 10 years ago the team would be on a blue ice tongue up to 50 feet thick. Note ice shelf left. —TOM HAMMOND PHOTO

I both noted how muggy and warm it has been in Seattle. Instead of our usual push of cool marine air, moisture this summer has manifested itself in a much more monsoon-like fashion, with heavy downpours, thunderstorms and warm temperatures. As if to corroborate this, we've now had a second round of intense precipitation, resulting in Highway 20 again being closed for a week due to slides, this time in early September.

Yet as we watch our glaciers disappear, we dither with throwing money at long gravel roads, many with spurs to nowhere. Where are our priorities in such a highly (electrically) charged debate?

Assessing the glaciers

On to the glacier portion of the mission. The snowpack is woefully thin—this is a really tough year for the glaciers of the North Cascades. The new lake at the terminus of the Columbia Glacier that first emerged in 2007 is bigger than ever. It is amazing to see how quickly the terminus has disintegrated—an area as large as a

Data gathered over the 30 years of the project reveals that North Cascade glaciers have lost 30 percent of their volume

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Glacier Climate Project

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The Rainbow Glacier has lost 30 percent of its volume in 30 years. See the Park Glacier on page 24. —TOM HAMMOND PHOTO

football field that was a steep face of blue ice rising 50 feet high has disappeared, replaced by a turbid lake. It is hard to tell where the glacier ends and the lake begins, as the thinning terminus forms a (dangerous) shelf over a part of the lake. I believe we did walk on bedrock marking the NE boundary of the lake, and expect with such rapid thinning that we'll find the glacier completely pulled off this new lake--dubbed "Troublesome Lake" by the team—within a couple of years, perhaps as soon as 2014. We came up with the name for a couple of reasons: one is that the glacier is the true headwaters of Troublesome Creek. Also, it is very troubling to watch our natural fresh-water storage systems disappear. We were unable to perform the longitude profile, as it was too cloudy to see much of anything, much less use the laser ranging device. We did complete the full grid of mass-balance transects, and as indicated, the data indicates significant negative mass-balance: the snow that nourishes the glacier will melt away completely before the end of the summer. Note that white snow melts at a rate of about 8 inches per day on a typical sunny summer day, while blue ice, with a higher albedo melts even faster. As such, the lack of snow is a double hit on the glacier—not only is there no accumulation to make it to the next winter, but the subsequent exposure of blue glacier ice further accelerates the melting. Throw in super-glacial streams that flow across and through the glacier, carving the terminus with deep furrows, and the recipe for rapid disintegration is complete.

Mauri reports that the story is the same across all of the glaciers in the North Cascades: very little snow cover that will melt long before the end of the summer. Over the 30 years of the project, direct and accurate data gathering reveals that North Cascade glaciers have lost 30 percent of their volume—a Troublesome fact to be sure.



2013 study results and resources

Director: Mauri S. Pelto
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Columbia Glacier (minus 0.6 meter)
Lower Curtis Glacier (minus 0.7 meter)
Rainbow Glacier (minus 1.2 meters)
Sholes Glacier (minus 0.9 meter)
Easton Glacier (minus 1.2 meters)
Daniels Glacier (minus 0.2 meter)
Lynch Glacier (minus 0.2 meter)
Ice Worm (Hyas Creek) Glacier (minus 0.5 meter)

- Read Professor Pelto's full report for the 2013 field season at www.nichols.edu/departments/glacier/
- See the video on the 2013 field season at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=DjxluzC0bpM
- For a comprehensive look at glaciers visit: glacierchange.wordpress.com/2013/09/01/north-cascade-glacier-climate-project-2013-field-report/

NCNP glacier monitoring project subject of new film

"Keepers of the Beat" is a new film on glacier monitoring that features Dr. Jon Riedel, NPS glaciologist at North Cascades National Park showing how and why he takes the pulse of glaciers. The title refers to the fact that glaciers respond to environmental conditions and keep a record of their past history, the "beats" of time.

"Keepers of the Beat" shares Dr. Riedel's findings, ties in related work at Mount Rainier, and explains how the projects are linked together. The 18-minute-long film is a product of The North Coast & Cascades Science Learning Network (SLN), a National Park Service program serving Northwest national parks whose mission is to encourage park research and to disseminate results of that research. Watch the video at www.nwparkscience.org.

New dams aren't the way to address water needs

By Chris Maykut, Brock Evans and Estella Leopold

NCCC helped draft this Everett Herald piece about the Yakima Plan, published September 22, 2013

"In arid regions we attempt to offset the process of wastage by reclamation, but it is only too evident that the prospective longevity of reclamation projects is often short. In our own West, the best of them may not last a century."

— Aldo Leopold, writing on "The Land Ethic" in "A Sand County Almanac"

The *Everett Herald* recently published a guest column by supporters of the Yakima Water Plan ("*Yakima Basin water plan benefits farmers and fish*," September 15, 2013). While the Yakima Water Plan has good elements — improving Yakima River salmon passage and some wilderness protections — the costs are too high.

The Yakima Water Plan proposes two new irrigation dams (Bumping Lake and Wymer) costing taxpayers billions and destroying places precious to people and wildlife. The Bumping Lake dam would drown magnificent ancient forests adjacent to the William O. Douglas Wilderness -- comparable to the Olympic's Hoh River Valley. The Wymer dam would drown sage grouse shrub-steppe habitat.

How did we get to this point? Weren't we just recently celebrating the removal of the Elwha dams?

First, dam proposals are the "undead." They never die. New Yakima Basin irrigation dams have been cussed and discussed for decades — but never built.

Under scrutiny, dam construction and maintenance are money-losers for taxpayers. Indeed, the 2012 Green Scissors report on wasteful and damaging federal projects includes both proposed Yakima dams.

Nationwide, dams and other infrastructure are largely built out — many deteriorating and in disrepair, as reported in October by the National Research Council. We can't afford existing dams, let alone new ones. New Yakima dams would merely "kick the can down the road." Water would go unused except in water-short

years — at first. But irrigation expands to use available water. Then we'll need another dam, and another.

Crops are water — and when we export such crops as hay for Japanese racehorses, we are exporting our most precious natural resource: Washington's water.

The costs of water delivery from new storage projects would be mostly borne by taxpayers, and by salmon and other wildlife that depend on these same waters, not by the irrigation districts that would benefit.

There are better, less costly ways to remedy the imbalance between water demand and limited water supply. Here are some:

- Yakima irrigators have not paid for the costs of the existing five federal dams. Market forces need to play a greater role to curb water waste.
- Rather than taxpayers spending billions, water conservation in the Yakima should be mandatory, not optional.
- Large volumes of federal water-project-grown hay are exported to Japan for racehorses. In a water-scarce basin, appropriate crop selection is essential.
- Canals and ditches need to be lined and piped to stop wasting precious water.

Finally, a word about ethics and public participation. From the start, the Bureau of Reclamation and the Department of Ecology manipulated the process and participants to achieve their desired outcome: new dams. "Anything to achieve an end" may expediently get to pouring concrete -- but it breaches trust and corrodes institutions.

Behind-closed-doors dealings help explain the Yakima Plan's provisions.

The Plan would have Congress forever constrain the Forest Service's ability to manage wildlife habitat and watershed in the Teanaway and Manastash-Taneum basins within the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest by designating 41,000 acres of our National Forest lands for "back-country motorized" National Recreation Areas (NRAs) degrading headwater habitat

with increased motorcycles on trails and snowmobiles cross-country.

The public had 45 days to comment on the agencies' draft Yakima Plan — until Jan. 3, 2012. One day later, on Jan. 4, Plan proponents revealed the motorized NRA provision, and later added it to the Plan. Not even Forest Service staff of the Cle Elum Ranger District was consulted. Now the Plan supporters are backing away from the proposal for NRAs, saying they will "defer" it until after the current Forest Plan process — but the proposal for NRAs is still in the Yakima Water Plan.

Because of all these substantive and procedural flaws, more than thirty conservation organizations have refused to support the Yakima Plan, its dams and its proposed NRAs, including the Sierra Club, Audubon, The Mountaineers, the Washington Environmental Council, Friends of Bumping Lake, Washington Wild, ALPS, the North Cascades Conservation Council, the Endangered Species Coalition and the Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs. Many of them testified in the state Legislature's hearings this year.

We need a new ethic for the lands and waters — for the Yakima, and far beyond. We cannot dam our way out of climate change and water shortages. Bumping Lake and the Wymer site (between Ellensburg and Yakima) are now threatened with destruction by new irrigation dams. You can help. Together we need to wave a big red stop sign at the Yakima Plan: STOP new dams and STOP water waste in the Yakima Basin.

The Yakima Plan does not deserve the support of elected officials, state and federal resource agencies, or any conservation organization. It does deserve more scrutiny by the *Everett Herald*. A lot more.

Chris Maykut is a Seattle restaurateur who leads Friends of Bumping Lake. Brock Evans is President of Endangered Species Coalition, and served for many years as the Sierra Club's Northwest Regional Director. In 1972, he received the Washington Environmental Council's "Environmentalist of the Year" Award, the first time the award was given. Estella Leopold, youngest daughter of Aldo Leopold, is a paleobotanist who has worked to protect forests and waters of the Pacific Northwest.

Corvid's eye

A treetop view of north Mt. Baker Snoqualmie National Forest

The border region of the Cascades, where the great state of Washington meets the greater province of British Columbia, is notable for several happy accidents. Here, certain near-pristine valleys have their headwaters located some distance south of the border among mountains which have proved thus far impenetrable to logging roads. From such rugged beginnings, these valleys' boisterous streams drop precipitously to relatively low elevations, from which they then meander for miles through a roaring wilderness of primary forest prior to finally reaching Canada's waiting chainsaws. Since the mid-20th century, if not earlier, loggers in the States have scratched their heads over how to access these upper valleys without busting the company budget or causing an international incident. Without the constraints of the border, logging outfits would have had no compunction pushing haul roads as far as feasible up these drainages. Yet Canadian loggers (generally more law-abiding than, say, Colombian loggers) cannot cross into the States to reach the big timber, while U.S. logging outfits similarly cannot practicably enter and return through Canada to get there. With an additional assist from the long-running bureaucratic inertia of the U.S. Forest Service, timber beasts can only salivate over what might have been, while corvids both north and south celebrate the natural bounty that remains.

On the east slope of the Cascades, the happiest boundary accident of all is no doubt the fabled Pasayten River and its vast wilderness. West of the slope, in Whatcom County, the "biggest and bestest" of this sort must surely be the Chilliwack River, which drains several thousand primitive acres in the northwestern corner of North Cascades National Park. Other examples in the adjacent national forest are smaller in size, like Quartz/Damfino and Tomyhoi creeks. Yet for this corvid, it is the mid-sized Silesia Creek valley that yields the promise and romance of truly untamed and largely forgotten land.

The mysterious Silesia, known as the Slesse north of the border, may well constitute the finest portion of what is now



the Mount Baker Wilderness. Beginning at Copper Ridge, just inside the park, three forks of Silesia Creek converge to form a broad and deep 9-mile valley of self-willed land on the U.S. side. It is a true lowland stream upon finally reaching the border, at just above 2,000 feet elevation, having been lower than 3,000 feet from its middle fork onward. Here is a place of ancient groves broken by lush avalanche tracks, molested only by the occasional miner over the past century. Human endeavors, though, including a trail dropping down to the Silesia bottomlands from near Twin Lakes, are rapidly swallowed up and digested by the forest. Travel up or down the valley is tough going, as it should be. Here is a place for the shy and sensitive creatures, large and small. A home for wolverines and bruins, for goshawks and flying squirrels. There are no arguments over off-road vehicles, or casual dayhikers seeking quick and easy boulevards to lakes or viewpoints, or misguided silviculturists seeking to "improve" the forest. Instead, there are rain and wind, big hemlocks swaying against a slate sky, a current that

fluctuates between summer's trickle and winter's surge, and mushrooms sprouting in terrific quantities come autumn. Sometimes also, the deepest of quiet.

Although the Slesse has been savaged north of the border prior to its confluence with the Chilliwack, the upper two-thirds of this drainage in the U.S. – the Silesia – is fully protected from exploitation. At least in this remote spot, the meek and wild have inherited the Earth and will live out their days according to their natural inclinations. And if the corvid could sing, rather than merely croak and squawk, he would alight atop the highest bow in the Silesia to melodiously pay his respects. As it happens, though, the oft-agitated corvid's attention is drawn back to the Quartz/Damfino drainage, the happy accident farther west, where, in contrast, a political quirk of Wilderness boundary drawing in the 1980s left its lower portion on the U.S. side without permanent protection. A job not yet completed.

Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest planning update

This summer, Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest (OWNF) announced revised timing for its forest planning processes. As previously reported in *TWC* Summer/Fall 2011, the Forest Plan Revision is the first time in decades that the Forest Service will make wilderness recommendations forestwide. The Sierra Club and NCCC submitted a map in 2011 that proposes major wilderness additions, including the Teanaway, Mad River, North Entiat and Chelan-Sawtooth areas, which are highly worthy of wilderness protection.

The next public comment opportunity on the Forest Plan Revision will be the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). In August, the Forest Service announced it is now targeting spring 2014 for release of the DEIS. A series of public meetings/open houses is planned to share information about the alternatives and comment process. Following

a 90-day comment period, comments will be reviewed and a final EIS will be prepared and released in winter 2014. A final decision is expected to be signed and implementation of the new plans to begin spring 2015.

More information, including notes from earlier public meetings, new scientific technical reports, briefing papers, public comment summaries, and process information can be found on the Forest Plan Revision website at: fs.usda.gov/goto/okawen/plan-revision

A separate DEIS for the OOWNF Travel Management Plan will designate which trails are open to off-road vehicles and which are open to hikers, bicycles and horses only. In a June meeting, the Forest Service said the Travel Management DEIS should appear later this fall, with a 50-day comment period and five public meetings

(four on the east side of the Forest and one in its west side). Winter snow travel will not be addressed in this DEIS, as OOWNF is waiting for Forest Service national guidance, which may take a year, on the recent court ruling that requires winter travel (e.g. snowmobile use) be included in Travel Management planning.

NCCC challenges motocross decision

Continued from page 9

setting. Motocross track noise, traffic and dust, visible and possibly audible from Mt. Pilchuck, for instance, would likely mean fewer visits from hikers, campers, hunters, photographers, birdwatchers, kayakers and other current recreational users of the Highway and the public lands along it. For more information about the appeal or to make a donation to MLC for its appeal costs, visit www.milloopconservancy.org.



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