
THE WILD CASCADES

THE JOURNAL OF THE NORTH CASCADES CONSERVATION COUNCIL WINTER 2008-2009



THE WILD CASCADES ■ Winter 2008-2009

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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 legislative, legal, and public participation channels to protect the lands, waters, plants and wildlife.

Over the past half century the 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.

The 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; Other, \$_____.

Cover: *Tower Mountain and Silver Star Mountain from the slopes of Golden Horn (1976).* —JOHN ROPER

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Founded in 1957
SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

The President's Report

Winter 2008-2009

The American Alps Legacy Project, our lead article in this issue (page 8), points out the North Cascades Conservation Council's strategy for completing the historical vision of the North Cascades National Park. As we have developed our "American Alps Legacy Project", some people have asked why we are so interested in changing the great park we already own. Why? After 40 years of enjoying a park second to none, the park faces many challenges and threats. The park needs many improvements and adjacent surrounding areas need the protection of having park status. Let me be more specific:

- Threats to land bordering the park that are either existing or imminent include mining, off-road vehicles, snowmobiles, and small-scale hydro developments.
- There are financial problems maintaining existing infrastructure and non-motorized recreational access in the area. Administrative consolidation in some locations would be desirable.
- Other important reasons to make adjustments to the park boundaries are the same as they were 40 years ago. The more important would be to maintain scenic quality, protect wildlife habitats and travel corridors, provide economic benefits to local communities, maintain traditional recreational access, protect Puget Sound headwaters, and finally, secure carbon sequestration in mature second-growth and old-growth forests.

In developing our plan, it was deemed important to include most of the major stakeholders such as hikers, hunters, fishermen, skiers, car campers, and the one-time vacationer from out-of-state. Consequently, we are proposing to expand certain wilderness areas adjacent to the park as part of the project as well as include much of Highway 20 and Cascade River road into the national park. Virtually the entire package of boundary adjustments are on public land that is designated roadless area or other national forest land that is not protected by Congress.

We urge you to join us in this effort to complete the historical vision for the North Cascades National Park.



The Long-Term Future of NCCC *The Role of Bequests in Conservation*

Jim Davis

Executive Director, North Cascades Conservation Council

With more than 50 years of accomplishments and a raft of new conservation initiatives, NCCC is now taking a hard look at its long-term future. We remain the leading conservation organization focused specifically on protection of the North Cascades. All other groups have either a much broader geographic focus, with the North Cascades as only an occasional priority, or a much narrower geographic focus on only a portion of the North Cascades. Without a single focus conservation group like NCCC, the future of the North Cascades could be very bleak.

Current economic conditions are having a major impact on the not-for-profit

sector, including conservation groups that are confronted with significant fund raising challenges. Some groups may close their doors. We can not let that happen to NCCC. In addition to focusing on project support, we must also turn our attention to fund-raising strategies that will support NCCC for decades to come. Dedicated members are the key to long-term survival of NCCC.

We strongly encourage you to leave a bequest to NCCC in your Will. Your bequest will assure that NCCC is around to counteract the expanding threats of wildlife extinction, water shortages, hydropower development, mining, motorized recre-

ation, and human population growth.

Take action on your own to include NCCC in your Will or contact us for assistance in setting up your bequest, ncccinfo@northcascades.org. We will soon be distributing a special mailing with guidance on how to make this very important contribution to NCCC.

Please help us preserve the North Cascades for future generations.

www.northcascades.org

Announcing the closing of the North Cascades Foundation

The North Cascades Foundation (NCF) was set up around 1970 by members of the North Cascades Conservation Council to receive gifts, deductible to the donor, which would provide support for non-political actions advanced by NCCC and other groups or individuals. The stated purpose of the foundation would be "... to protect and preserve the North Cascades' scenic, scientific, educational, wildlife and wilderness values."

During the first twelve years NCF wholly funded actions to block High Ross Dam. If the \$100,000 had not been raised though the foundation, it is doubtful the High Ross Dam could have been stopped. During the next 12 years NCF supported defense of the Stehekin Valley and other valleys from inappropriate development. In the succeeding 12 years contributions to the foundation paid for publishing *The Wild Cascades and Wilderness Alps* by Harvey Manning. And finally last year the foundation gave NCCC the boost it needed for an executive director's first year, for a total expenditure of about \$300,000.

The North Cascades foundation is no longer necessary because of the change in the NCCC tax status. The trustees of the foundation voted to cease operations and turn over most of its remaining funds to the North Cascades Institute. (As a reminder, the institute is based in Sedro Woolley and - thanks to the High Ross Dam Settlement - has a splendid mountain school on Diablo Lake.) This leadership gift will be known as the NCCC Founders Endowed Scholarship Fund. The annual earnings of the fund will aid graduate students at the Institute. Individuals who want to enhance the legacy of our founders can contribute to the fund at the North Cascades Institute. The NCF founders were:

David Brower
Joseph Collins
Ray Courtney
Una Davies
Polly Dyer
Leo Gallagher

Patrick Goldsworthy

Paul Gerhardt

Ned Graves

Emily Haig

Charles Hessey

Phil Hyde

Neva Karrick

Rick Mack

Grant McConnell

Rod O'Conner

Chester Powell

Dave Simons

Jack Stevens

John Warth

Jack Wilson

Art Winder

Phillip Zalesky

Reiter Forest Update

Karl Forsgaard

The North Cascades Conservation Council along with other conservation groups such as the Alpine Lakes Protection Society and The Mountaineers, has been continuing its efforts to combat run-away abuse by ORVs of the “Reiter Foothills” area of state lands north of the Skykomish river between Gold Bar and Index. Previous issues of *The Wild Cascades* have reported on the horrific situation there, where 4x4s, “monster trucks,” motorcycles and ATVs are continually carving new routes and causing tremendous erosion and almost unbelievable damage of every kind to this much-abused place.

For years the Washington State Department of Natural Resources, which manages these lands, has done almost nothing about this ever worsening state of affairs. After years of delay, a planning effort was started last year, which gave some hope that something might finally be done to stem the damage. However, as this process continues, there seems little hope that DNR will willingly take the steps needed to control the damage. DNR formed a Reiter advisory committee that was at first heavily stacked toward ORV interests, offering only one token seat to environmental interests. More conservationists were finally added to the committee after widespread outcry, but DNR has persisted in ignoring environmental input.

The Northwest Region of the DNR has always been among the most backward outposts of that agency. It has been clear from the start of this process that DNR's intent has been to make a sacrifice area of Reiter and officially open most or all of its 10,000 acres to ORVs, and to do little to mitigate the ever growing devastation caused by these machines. This would be entirely unacceptable to conservationists, who at the January 28th meeting of the Reiter committee put forward a draft proposal to open only a limited area to ORVs provided that adequate measures are

taken to contain them in that specific area, and to control the inevitable damage they cause and to clean up the dirt filled runoff from any such area before it reaches important salmon spawning areas closely downstream.



Trees being killed by 4x4s traveling cross-country through Reiter Forest on State trust lands that are supposed to be managed by Washington State Department of Natural Resources, adjacent to Wild Sky Wilderness and Wallace Falls State Park. — KARL FORSGAARD PHOTO

At that same January 28 meeting, the motorized recreation reps were asked how they plan to control the reckless individuals whose machines continue to cause so much damage and sedimentation into salmon streams, and the motorized reps said, “we don't know.”

Recently, DNR staff took Reiter advisory committee members on a field tour of DNR's Walker Valley ORV area in Skagit county. A conservation rep had asked DNR to include specific damaged sites on this field trip, but DNR refused to do so, and instead took the field trip participants on a Potemkin-style tour to “hardened” sites displaying less damage.

NCCC and other conservation groups also want to see a new Natural Resource Conservation Area established between May Creek and the Wallace River, along with other protection measures and construction of new non-motorized trails. The Reiter foothills area is directly adjacent to and surrounded by Wallace Falls State Park, the Wild Sky Wilderness, and the Forks of the Sky State Park, which includes

the Index Town Wall. Conservationists' trail proposals fall within the trail study area mandated by the Wild Sky Wilderness Act.

The DNR Northwest Region has failed to understand that they cannot go on with business as usual and ignore the rapidly worsening damage to public lands at Reiter. DNR is failing to carry out its most basic responsibilities to protect state trust lands. DNR is also violating the Clean Water Act by allowing sediment to flow uncontrolled from Reiter into the Skykomish river just below, threatening important spawning areas for endangered salmon populations. The “braided channel” reach of the Skykomish just below Reiter is where three quarters or more of all salmon spawning in the entire Snohomish watershed occurs.

In a January 31, 2009 letter to DNR, the conservation reps cited over 20 internet videos of 4x4 users causing damage at Reiter which have been

posted on websites such as YouTube. One could easily spend hundreds of hours watching these videos of vehicles driving through streams, throwing mud, killing many trees and tearing up the land at Reiter. Conservation reps asked that an ecologist from the State Department of Fish and Wildlife or Department of Ecology be added to the Reiter advisory committee to represent ecological concerns at the state government level.

Because the DNR Northwest Region has shown itself incapable of coming up with an acceptable plan for Reiter, hope now rests with newly elected Public Lands Commissioner Peter Goldmark. Major changes are urgently needed in DNR's Northwest Region. Goldmark has repeatedly said that he wants to change the way the DNR does business. What better way for him to begin than by cleaning house at the NW Region, and coming up with a reasonable plan to solve the problems at Reiter? Look for further updates in future issues of *The Wild Cascades*.

HEYBROOK RIDGE

Protected as a Snohomish County Park

Conway Leovy

A successful collaboration between a local grassroots group, a major conservation organization, local government, and a landowner could serve as a model for future conservation efforts in our region.

One-hundred-thirty acres of mostly mature forest on Heybrook Ridge will be protected and managed as a new Snohomish County Park. Purchase of the property from the previous owner, WB Foresters of Stanwood was completed in October, 2008.

When WB Foresters announced their intention to log the 100-year-old forest on the north slope of the ridge directly across the north fork of the Skykomish river from Index a grass roots group of mostly Index residents organized the "Friends of Heybrook Ridge" (FOHR). FOHR president Louise Lindgren negotiated a one-year-delay through June of 2008 for the commencement of logging operations to allow time to raise the original purchase price of \$1.3 million. The local group went to work, generated extensive publicity, organized hoedowns and other activities, and raised over \$600,000 with substantial help from an anonymous donor. This was enough to persuade Snohomish County to complete the final lower purchase price of \$1.21 million plus closing costs using \$700,000 from the Snohomish County Futures Fund.

The Cascade Land Conservancy played a critical role in the process, shepherd-



ing the negotiations between Snohomish County and WB Foresters and encouraging all participants to persevere. The cooperation of WB Foresters was essential. Even as timber prices were plummeting, the landowner extended the deadline through August to allow time for completion of negotiations. The collaborating groups and residents of the town of Index and adjacent areas celebrated with a gala barbecue and hoedown at the Outdoor Adventure Center in Index on October 4.

The next step is to complete the original vision of FOHR for preserving the forest for recreation and education as well as conservation purposes. The group will continue to provide advice and assistance to Snohomish County for the development of a trail system that will provide easy access from the town of Index to mature forest, ridgetop views of the north and south fork of the Skykomish river, and, ultimately, to the Heybrook Lookout on Forest Service land to the east. According to FOHR President Lindgren "Our vision

of a forest park that offers education as well as recreation will soon be a reality."

Above: The preserved land on Heybrook Ridge is the low forested slope between the north fork of the Skykomish river below the viewer and the Index-Persis ridge in the background. The town of Index is just behind the steep forested ridge to the right.

Photo by Bill Pope taken from near Bitter Creek in the Wild Sky Wilderness.

Azurite Mine Cleanup

The Azurite Mine site, 19 miles from Mazama, above Canyon Creek near Golden Horn is among the worst of many toxic mine sites in the North Cascades. It lies within the area covered by the "American Alps Legacy Project" which is aimed at completing the national park, and adding wilderness.

The Azurite Mine which operated from 1918 to 1939 yielded gold and left 41,000 tons of tailings that contain toxic metals including cadmium, copper, lead, and arsenic, the last at levels near 200 times the level considered the safe threshold. Seepage from tailings reaches Mill Creek where elevated levels are a toxic hazard for aquatic life, including bull trout. The contaminated water enters the Skagit River and reaches Puget Sound.

Given the great potential of the area for protection as part of the American Alps Legacy, NCCC has communicated to the Forest Service concern that the welcome remediation proposal should assure maximum protection during its completion. NCCC concurs with the Forest Service that remedial action alternative 2B is preferred but recommends that more stringent measures be imposed during the process, as summarized here.

It is proposed to treat the tailings with a method that is designed to remove toxics from percolating water, and to cap them with soil. This will require the reconstruction of road 5400-700 in an area with potential wilderness status. It is therefore critical that the cleanup program provides for the decommissioning of this road in a timely manner, and for mitigation during its use to ensure minimal long-term impact. The road should be decommissioned when cleanup is completed in an estimated two years. Monitoring studies proposed for the ensuing three decades should not require the use of vehicles. Access to the site should be severely limited for the duration of road 5400-700 to ensure exclusion of unauthorized ATVs and ORVs. The road should be converted to a foot trail when decommissioned, the cost to be included in the budget for the entire cleanup project.

Mineral rights for the Azurite and Gold Hill prospects should be fully withdrawn



Current and first superintendents of North Cascades National Park Service Complex: Chip Jenkins, left, and Roger Contor.

NCCC Hosts North Cascades' 40-Year Celebration

On October 3rd, more than one hundred friends gathered at the Woodland Park Zoo's Rainforest Pavilion to celebrate the 40th birthday of North Cascades National Park. President Lyndon Johnson signed the park bill into law on October 2, 1968.

Warmed by an excellent salmon dinner, we were inspired by the words of chairman of the board Patrick Goldsworthy, past president Dave Fluharty, and several others, before park superintendent Chip Jenkins introduced our first keynote speaker. Roger Contor, the first superintendent of North Cascades National Park, entertained us with some great stories, humor and reflections on his time at the park in the late 1960s.

Peter Jackson, son of the late Senator Henry M. Jackson, who led the effort in Congress to establish the park, followed Contor. Introduced by North Cascades Institute executive director Saul Weisberg, Jackson also spoke to the common theme for the evening, "Honoring the past, inspiring the future." It was especially gratifying to have Jackson, Contor and Jenkins sharing the stage with Goldsworthy and fellow NCCC co-founders Polly Dyer and Phil Zalesky, as well as a who's-who of North Cascades conservation notables.

All sang a round of "Happy Birthday", if in several keys at once, before the cake was promptly devoured. A silent auction topped off the evening, with dozens of great items going to many happy bidders, with more than \$4,000 raised (after expenses). Many thanks go to the dozens of donors who supported the event. Also, thanks to NCCC board member Ted Willhite for officiating, Athena Pangan, Kris and Ken Wilcox for organizing the event, and to the facilities and catering staff at the zoo for a fine job all around.

to ensure the integrity of this significant area.

The Azurite Mine has special significance in the context of North Cascades conservation; the Forest Service is to be encouraged in moving to clean up the

worst of the 250 sites that may have hazardous waste, among the 2,200 abandoned or inactive mine sites on Forest Service land in Washington state.

— Tom Hammond
and John Edwards

*The time has come to finish what began in 1968 and complete
the North Cascades National Park*

NCCC
ANNOUNCES

“AMERICAN ALPS LEGACY PROJECT”

Rick McGuire

Forty years after the landmark establishment of the North Cascades National Park, its principal public advocacy group, the North Cascades Conservation Council (NCCC), has announced a new campaign to build upon the legacy of what was accomplished in 1968. The goal of NCCC's "American Alps Legacy Project" is to complete the park by including significant lowland forests and pristine rivers, as well as bringing in well-known, scenic areas along the North Cascades highway between Newhalem and Washington Pass. Designation of new wilderness within and adjacent to the North Cascades National Park will also be considered.

The American Alps Legacy Project is not only a conservation initiative, it is a proposal to protect and enhance recreation access and visitor facilities across the North Cascades, including such initiatives as development of a new park visitor center on the eastside, and construction of new trails in and around the park where appropriate. Its aim, completion of the park, is expected to generate significant economic benefits to gateway communities in the Methow and Skagit river valleys. NCCC believes that conservation is best served in the long run through the active support of those who recreate and/or live in the North Cascades.

Unfinished Work

The North Cascades National Park is the greatest piece of unfinished conservation work in Washington state. Several hundred thousand acres of pristine wildlands currently adjoin the national park, and though they are enjoyed and loved by millions as if they were part of the park, they remain unprotected. The 1968 legislation designating the park and its associated national recreation areas was a great victory in the context of those times. Now the time has come to secure the best of what remains unprotected in the wild North Cascades, and to complete what was left unfinished in 1968.

The time has come to include missing links of lower-elevation lands important to wildlife, to include scenic mountain landscapes along the North Cascades highway, and to fix strange, logic-defying boundaries that cut across forests and rivers in ways that make little sense, cutting up ecosystems for no reason. This will, no doubt, be an ambitious project. It took over ten years of citizen effort before the park was established in 1968. Quick results are rare in conservation campaigns, but NCCC has always taken the long-term view.

Nowhere else in the continental United States can one find such impressively alpine mountains and sprawling meadowlands as in the North Cascades, with over 700 glaciers and so much dramatic mountain relief, nor, with the possible exception of the Olympics, such impressive forests. Political realities of the 1960s, when logging was king, made it difficult to include many forested valleys within the park. But much has changed over the intervening decades. Awareness of the ecological importance of lowlands has grown along with the realization that there is much more to mountains and wildlands than just scenery. Salmon-spawning areas are all at lower elevations, as are critical winter habitats for many species of wildlife. Protecting watersheds in the North Cascades is the single most cost-effective way of protecting Puget Sound.

As things now stand, very few people ever actually enter the North Cascades National Park. Because of the strange boundaries drawn in 1968, motorists driving across the North Cascades on the North Cascades highway never enter the national park, but only the Ross Lake National Recreation Area (RLNRA). Then, just three miles east of Ross Lake, the highway enters something called a "scenic highway corridor" passing through 30 miles of spectacular mountain wilderness, yet none of it is within the national park or the RLNRA. These outstanding lands are certainly of national park quality. Surely, most would agree that these wildlands should be properly safeguarded

for the continued enjoyment of present and future generations.

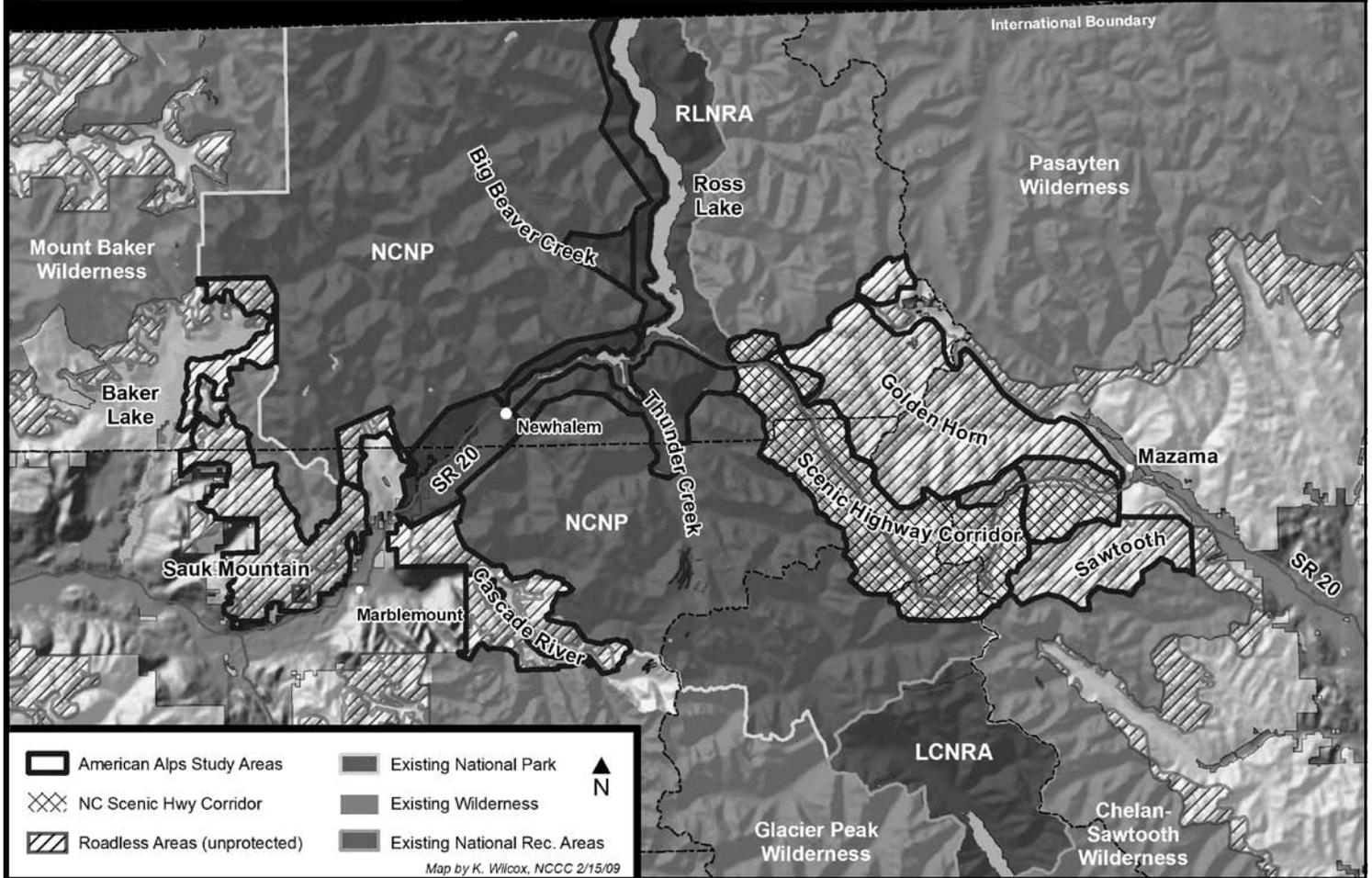
So, why are the boundaries of the North Cascades National Park so particularly strange? Mainly it is because they were drawn to exclude forests. Some important valleys did get included, most notably the Chilliwack and upper reaches of the Stehekin and Baker rivers. Others, such as Big Beaver and Thunder creeks were included partly in the park and partly in the NRA, which protected them from logging but not from flooding by once planned dam projects. But as one follows the lines around the map, one sees indentation after indentation, put there to make sure that lower-elevation forests were left well outside.

A New Politic

The timber industry was a far bigger force in Washington state in the 1960s than it is today. Old growth was what the industry wanted, and got. "Timber Democrats" in Congress appropriated hundreds of millions of dollars annually to the Forest Service to pay for road-building deep into what was the wildest country in the lower forty-eight states. Valley after valley fell victim to taxpayer-subsidized, money-losing timber sales. The boundaries of the North Cascades National Park were drawn by the Forest Service and the timber industry, not the Park Service. They made sure the vast majority of big-tree forests were outside of those lines. Fortunately, there are still numerous opportunities to fix those mistakes.

Some of the places which were designated national recreation area instead of national park were so designated in order to accommodate hunting, which is not allowed in national parks. Others, including the Skagit River valley and lower Big Beaver and Thunder creeks, were excluded from the park to allow hydroelectric developments which, thanks largely to NCCC, never occurred. While the desire to allow continued hunting was understandable, it, and the deference to hydropower interests, resulted in virtually all of the most accessible areas being kept

AMERICAN ALPS LEGACY PROJECT - STUDY AREAS



out of the park, including the entirety of the North Cascades highway corridor. Many hunters would agree that much of the area designated as NRA is not prime hunting terrain. NCCC believes that some of the NRA acreage and the highway corridor itself can be upgraded to park status with little or no impact on hunters.

Another strange story behind the park boundaries is related by NCCC's Harvey Manning in his classic work *Wilderness Alps: Conservation and Conflict in the North Cascades*. The book relates the fascinating story of how and why NCCC decided that a national park was the best way of protecting the North Cascades, and its subsequent campaign to make it a reality. Noting how many of the boundaries, even at high elevations where timber cutting was never a factor, "look like they were drawn by a lunatic," Manning relates how some years after the establishment of the park, an old Forest Service employee who had been closely involved paid a visit to Manning's Cougar Mountain home. When Manning asked him who drew the crazy lines, the man in green proudly replied, "I did." It

turned out that he was a big fan of hut-to-hut hiking as practiced in parts of the Swiss Alps, had grand visions for the same thing in the North Cascades, and was in a position to make sure that what he considered to be good hut sites were kept just outside of the park. Fortunately, his grand scheme never amounted to more than an odd footnote in the annals of sausage making.

Adjusting Boundaries

Going around the map of the North Cascades National Park and the NRAs, some of the places NCCC is specifically examining for designation as park or wilderness include:

Skagit River: At what should be the western gateway of the park a few miles above Marblemount, one enters not the national park but the Ross Lake NRA. This section of the Skagit River was excluded from the park and placed into NRA status to allow the building of Seattle City Light's "Copper Creek" dam, which would have flooded the Skagit valley from that tributary upstream to Newhalem. Fortunately, NCCC and others stopped the building of the Copper Creek

dam. This part of the Skagit remains an important salmon-spawning area, along with its tributaries Bacon, Goodell and Newhalem creeks. This big, low, verdant westside valley with its extensive bottomland forests of maple and cottonwood would make an ideal western gateway to the national park.

Alma - Copper Creeks: An example of one of the stranger boundaries in a region where strange boundaries abound, Alma Creek starts out in the national park, crosses into national forest, and then into NRA before entering the Skagit. It would make great sense to fix the senseless boundaries here and protect the entire valley in the park. The nearby Copper Creek valley should also be seriously considered for inclusion in the park.

Cascade River: Another area of illogical, truncated boundaries, most of the north fork Cascade River and Marble Creek are within the park, with the rest of the drainage in national forest. The most popular alpine hiking destination in the North

Continued on page 10

American Alps Legacy Project, continued from page 9

Cascades National Park, Cascade Pass, is reached largely from a national forest road that suffers frequent and severe storm damage. The situation here will take some sorting out. NCCC is exploring the option of putting everything north and east of the mainstem of the Cascade River into the park, and roadless areas to the south and west into the Glacier Peak Wilderness.

Baker River to Sauk Mountain: A vast roadless country stretches from Mount Shuksan south almost to the North Cascades highway, but has no formal protection as park or wilderness. Ranging from lush lowland valleys such as Baker River to extensive heather and blueberry covered highlands, virtually all of these lands are completely untouched, one of the biggest “blank spots” on the map of the North Cascades. This extensive area is particularly valuable as an undisturbed refuge for many kinds of wildlife and includes large areas of critical lower-elevation winter habitat. The outstanding conservation values of this pristine area make it a prime candidate for formal protection as wilderness.

Bacon Creek: The Bacon Creek valley, excluded from but largely surrounded by the North Cascades National Park, stands out on the map like a sore thumb, with some of the most blatantly irrational boundaries dating from 1968. Bacon Creek is one of the places coveted by timber interests at that time and thus left out of the park. Bacon Creek is also a productive salmon stream and an important part of the Skagit river system. Although partially logged at lower elevations, much of this valley retains park qualities and is a prime candidate for inclusion in the North Cascades National Park.

Big Beaver Creek: This magnificent valley with its western red cedar forests, among the most amazing in the Northwest, was partially excluded from the national park to allow flooding by Seattle City Light’s once-planned High Ross Dam. The High Ross project would have also flooded a large stretch of the Skagit upstream in British Columbia. A coalition of NCCC and Canadian allies (notably the unforgettable “Run Out Skagit Spoilers,” or “ROSS,”) stopped that project and saved the valley and the cedars. As one of the outstanding old-growth forests of the North Cascades, the Big Beaver cedars should be considered for inclusion in the national park, along with everything else on the west side of Ross Lake. The east side of Ross Lake provides important access to hunters, thus

we are not suggesting any boundary adjustments to that area.

Thunder Creek: Thunder Creek is a big, low-elevation, forested valley surrounded by high glaciated peaks, and is one of the most impressive places in the North Cascades. Its lower reaches were left out of the park because Seattle City Light wanted to build a dam to store additional water on Thunder Creek upstream from Diablo Lake. This area could be added to the park, along with Ruby Mountain, excluded because of a once-planned tramway to its summit, an idea abandoned long ago.

Granite and Bridge Creeks: The long and scenic Granite Creek valley, which the North Cascades highway follows for many miles from Ross Lake up to Rainy Pass, has the kind of outstanding scenery one expects to see in a national park. Many visitors have wondered how it was ever excluded from the North Cascades National Park. Upper Bridge Creek, with its high peaks and pristine meadows, and a major section of the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail, also deserves consideration for inclusion in the park.

Golden Horn and Upper Methow: Every year thousands of visitors marvel at the sights from the viewpoints at and near Washington Pass. Here is the scenic climax of the North Cascades highway, with iconic Liberty Bell Mountain and Early Winter Spires rising in salmon-hued, neck-craning relief. Here too is the high point of the Skagit watershed in the United States, with headwaters in currently unprotected Swamp and Porcupine Creek valleys, along with the headwaters of the Methow River, critical to ranchers, fruit growers, and salmon. Other headwater reaches of the Methow system, perhaps including Cedar Creek, should be considered for wilderness status.

It’s Time to Act

When one considers the political climate faced by NCCC at its inception in 1957, and the huge power then wielded by the timber industry and hydropower interests, it is remarkable to think that in the space of 11 years NCCC and its allies succeeded in protecting the heart of the North Cascades. The results of that work can nowadays be seen to great advantage from above. Airliners returning to Seattle from Europe on a southwesterly course over the North Cascades can offer a good perspective in clear weather. The landscape of much of southern British Columbia, so wild just a few decades ago, can now only be described as a tat-

tered, chewed and chopped up. Roads have been punched into almost every valley, and clearcuts have spread into myriad places once celebrated for wild beauty. British Columbia is still an inviting place, but much of it has taken a hammering from rampant logging.

The change one sees below crossing south of the 49th parallel is breathtaking. Entire valleys can be seen, untouched by logging. Even as one continues south and west, away from the national park and wilderness areas, the lands and forests below still present a remarkable sight. Thanks to the slowdown in logging on federal lands, and the fact that trees grow quickly in the North Cascades, places which were heavily logged in decades past and became bywords for ugliness are now looking much better, with some even starting to look downright attractive again. Much has changed over four decades, both politically and physically. Previously damaged parts of the Cascades are on the comeback.

Reflecting on the compromises that were necessary to establish the North Cascades National Park in 1968, NCCC’s Harvey Manning said: “In 2000, they will say of the North Cascades Conservation Council, ‘You were too timid. You compromised too much. You should have been more far-sighted, more daring.’ I hereby place on record my personal apologies to the year 2000. In our defense, we will then only be able to say, ‘We did not ask for protection for all of the land we knew needed and deserved protection. We did, for a fact, compromise in the name of political practicality. We tried to save you as much as we thought possible.’ “

Harvey Manning may have apologized to future generations for NCCC’s inability to secure a bigger park at that time, but he, and everyone else at NCCC, never stopped thinking about filling in the gaps and finishing the job.

NCCC invites you to join with us in finishing what was started in 1957, and partially completed in 1968. The time has come. It’s time to complete the North Cascades National Park, and put the final pieces in place that will protect the wild forests, lands and rivers that make the North Cascades, our “American Alps,” one of the most important and fascinating wild places not just in the Northwest, but on earth.

Re-wilding the Cascades: **Middle Fork Snoqualmie Bridge Out**

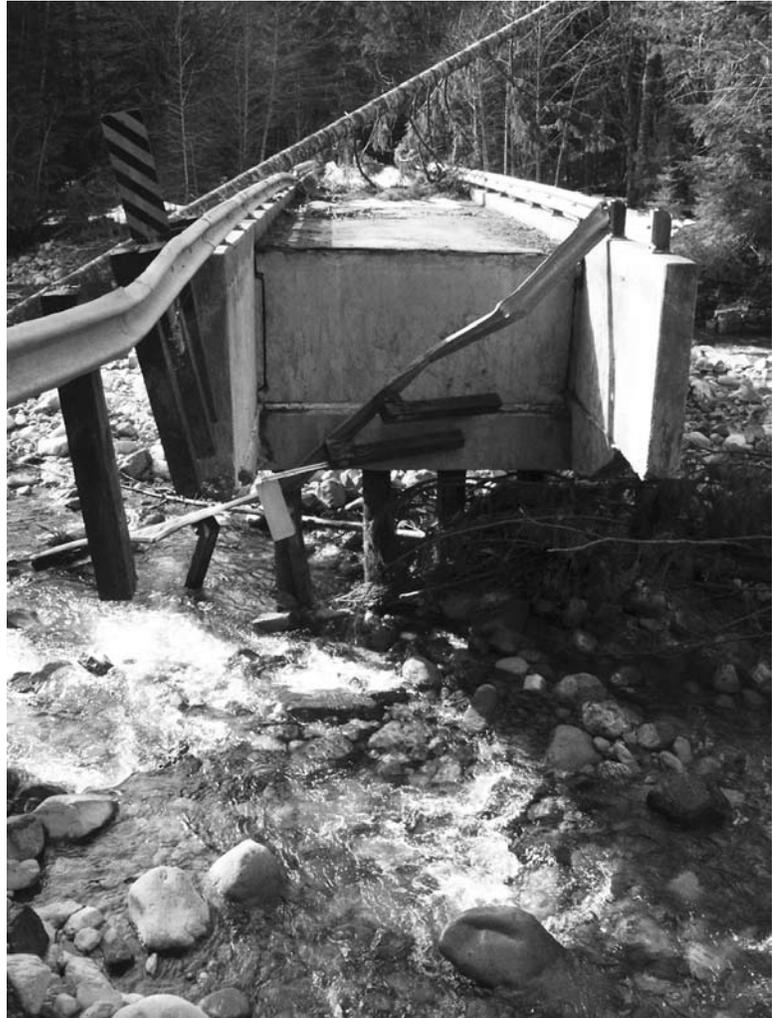
Kevin Geraghty
Rick McGuire

Opening up another chapter in the continuing story of the re-wilding of the Cascades, the Middle Fork Snoqualmie river and especially its tributaries have once again this winter swept away roads, bridges and trails. The effects of this latest round of changes will likely be long lasting, with repairs slow in coming if they happen at all.

Most noteworthy is the destruction of the northern approach to the road bridge over the Taylor river, with possible damage to the bridge structure which may render it unsafe and unusable. A narrow but substantial structure of concrete and steel, the Taylor bridge was put in a couple of decades ago as a “permanent” replacement for a previous structure. It now stands as an Ozymandian comment on the fragility of man’s works in the Cascades. The river it spanned has moved partially out from under it, leaving an odd-looking, orphaned crossing that no longer crosses the river.

The conventional approach to “fixing” it would be to deploy heavy equipment to shove the river back where it is “supposed” to be. It may not be so easy this time. The Clinton-era Northwest Forest Plan, which has managed to survive an eight-year-reign of hostility towards ecosystem-based forest policy, dictates a certain level of respect for natural aquatic processes, especially within designated “key” watersheds like the Middle Fork Snoqualmie. One of those processes is river channel migration. Manhandling the river back under the span does not qualify. In addition, there are questions about bridge integrity. The river has removed much of the material which was around the underground upright supports for the span structure, leaving a strange looking span on stilts. Prestressed concrete beams and supports are very strong for the loads they are designed for, but there could be a problem if the river piles back material where it has now been taken away, sideloading the supports. The span may now be outside its design parameters.

The Middle Fork road itself has also been damaged in numerous places.



The Taylor river bridge from the north bank.

—KEVIN GERAGHTY PHOTO

Quick fixes have been done below the Taylor crossing, and above Taylor many gullies have either buried or washed away the road. The Middle Fork trail on the south side of the river is also heavily damaged in a number of places, and it will be a significant job to fix it.

While some will no doubt lament the loss of quick motorized access, there is a certain something about seeing these works of man erased that is quite appealing to the lover of wild nature. There is no denying that in some respects the Cascades are now wilder

than they were twenty years ago, and the trend seems to be accelerating.

Conservationists long ago proposed ending the Middle Fork road at Taylor river, with foot and bike access beyond. This summer, we will all get a chance to experience that.



Jim Davis



The
SECRET
LIVES
of
NORTH
CASCADES
WILDLIFE



Wolverines are a rare and elusive predator inhabiting the North Cascades.

This remote camera photo was provided by the US Forest Service.



Opposite page, clockwise:

Deer were abundant at almost every remote camera site. It is no surprise that the new Methow Valley wolf pack has survived.

This shot of a cougar was captured near Early Winters after substantial snowfall.

Coyotes move throughout their range checking on anything new.

Bobcats are fairly common in the North Cascades, but photos are rare.

This photo of a marten was unexpected, but reveals that predators come in all sizes. Martens usually rely on old-growth forests for food and shelter.

This page, top to bottom:

This wolf is part of the new pack discovered in the Methow Valley this past spring. My son and I heard them howling in late January.

Bears were more prevalent than expected. This mom and cub visited one of our remote camera sites during the summer.

Coyotes are true scavengers, with this one taking home the prize left by hunters.



Turn the page to read how these photographs were captured.

The Secret Lives of North Cascades Wildlife

Jim Davis

Wildlife viewing is one of the most exciting recreation activities in the North Cascades. Whether we are visiting high mountain meadows or densely vegetated riparian areas, many of us are on the alert for bears, cougars, elk, mountain goats, and other wildlife. Of course, even the best pair of binoculars or the latest high tech spotting scope can not assure that we will find what we are seeking. Some of us even come to doubt that wildlife is very abundant in the North Cascades.

This couldn't be further from the truth. Several remote cameras used in NCCC's wolf monitoring project this past year revealed just how prevalent wildlife really is in the North Cascades. Coyotes and deer were everywhere. Bears were far more abundant than we expected. We even captured photos of a cougar, a bobcat, and a marten. The US Forest Service captured several remote camera photos of elusive wolverines in the North Cascades.

However, our most prized photo was taken of a wolf along a tributary to the Methow River. The photo was captured on a very active game trail about 200 feet from a popular hiking trail. It is likely that this wolf is part of the pack discovered this past spring in the Twisp Valley. We are happy to have helped document that this wolf pack is alive and well.

NCCC photos, along with remote photos taken by other conservation organizations, telemetry tracking, and direct sightings have confirmed that at least two adult wolves and five pups in the pack have survived.

The long-term survival of these and other wolves in Washington State depend on how they are managed by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and other state and federal agencies. WDFW recently distributed a draft of their Washington Wolf Conservation and Management Plan to biologists, wolf specialists, and wildlife program managers to obtain feedback on the scientific integrity of the draft plan.

NCCC's review of the draft plan indicates major scientific weaknesses in setting conservation goals (i.e., the number of wolves that are needed to sustain a genetically viable population in Washington). NCCC will call for a more rigorous scientific analysis of the conservation goals if the current review does not adequately address this critical issue. WDFW is expected to release the draft plan for public review in the coming months. Stay tuned for NCCC action alerts this spring and summer.

Please visit the NCCC website (www.northcascades.org) or view past editions of *The Wild Cascades* to learn more about wolf conservation in Washington and what NCCC and other groups are doing to help recover wolves in the North Cascades. If you would like to be part of our wolf monitoring program, please contact us at jimdavis@northcascades.org.



It is likely that this wolf is part of the pack discovered this past spring in the Twisp Valley. We are happy to have helped document that this wolf pack is alive and well.



*Above left: coyote
Left: marten*

What Ever Happened To WPN-114?

Life and Death among the Bristlecones

Ahead, the dark form of eastern Nevada's Snake Range and its highpoint, Wheeler Peak, loomed massively against the night sky, 7,000 feet above the desert floor. A few scattered lights glimmered in the blackness of the valley between us. Somewhere up in that darkness, with no trail to it and nothing marking its location was the tree — the one tree — I had come to find. I went on, across the treeless valley, into the two-year-old Great Basin National Park, up the forested lower slopes to the Wheeler Peak campground and trailhead, deserted now in October. I stopped for the night in the campground, winding up a day that had begun sixteen hours before with a sunrise walk down the south rim of Canyon de Chelly in Arizona for a cold bath in Chinle Wash beneath the White House ruin, before the tourists got there, followed by over 500 miles on the road, up through Monument Valley and Mexican Hat, past the Goosenecks of the San Juan River, across the Colorado, through Capitol Reef and across the wastes of western Utah.

Wheeler Peak had not been on the original plan for this trip in October, 1988. Instead, my old friend Michael Fox and I had planned a week-long kayak trip down a hundred miles of Labyrinth and Stillwater canyons of the Green River in Utah to its confluence with the Colorado, deep in a roadless canyon at the head of the wild water of Cataract Canyon. We had arranged for a jet boat pickup there and a ride back up the Colorado to Moab. After a couple of days on the river Mike developed painful back spasms and we took

out at Mineral Bottom, the only road-end along the river. Fortuitously, we ran into a couple of river guides floating the upper part of our route who were taking out there too. They had a vehicle waiting and kindly hauled us and our gear some 40 miles out to Moab with them. In Durango I put Mike on a plane home and went on to explore mysterious Chaco Canyon in New Mexico and on to spectacular Canyon de Chelly in Arizona.

I had long wanted to hike up 13,063-foot Wheeler Peak, the highest peak in the eastern Great Basin, a high isolated desert peak with a remnant glacier or ice mass in its great northeast cirque and its grove of ancient bristlecone pines, modestly named by Lt. George M. Wheeler, head of the 1872 Wheeler Survey, for himself. And ever since I'd read about what happened to one of those trees, known to a few locals as "Prometheus" and to a few others as "WPN-114", I had wanted to find it and see it for myself. Wheeler Peak was more or less in the direction I needed to go to get back to Seattle. So this looked like a good time to do it.

Finding the bristlecone pine called WPN-114 somewhere up on the flank of Wheeler Peak without a trail going to it or anything marking its location wasn't necessarily going to be easy. Reportedly, it was located beyond the end of the short Bristlecone Loop trail on a rocky lateral moraine just beyond the

mouth of the big cirque on the northeast side of Wheeler Peak, at an elevation of about 10,750 feet. I had only one day to



Bristlecone pine in the White Mountains. —LARRY HANSON PHOTO

Charles Ehlert

Continued on page 16

spend there and with the short days of October I doubted that I'd have enough daylight to find WPN-114 and also get to the summit of Wheeler Peak. So I sat in the car, studying a topog map by flashlight. I decided to go and look for WPN-114, turned out the light and fell asleep in the car.



Bristlecone pines are notable for their great longevity and for the extreme conditions they can tolerate – low rainfall, thin soil, cold, wind, high altitude, short growing season. They are found in high open spaces, often in limestone and dolomite sites in Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, Nevada, California and southern Oregon, isolated islands above the surrounding valleys and basins. They are found nowhere else. Bristlecone pines get their name from fine sharp needles at the tip of each cone scale. They all have five needles grouped together at the branch. Since 1970 subtle differences have led to recognition of three separate species — (1) Great Basin Bristlecone Pine (*Pinus longaeva*), (2) Rocky Mountain bristlecone pine (*Pinus aristata*), and (3) Sierra Nevada foxtail pine (*Pinus balfouriana*). To confuse things further, the group of these three closely related species is also called foxtail pines. Although they may be found growing with other five-needle pines (e.g., limber pine and whitebark pine), different species of the foxtail group are never found growing together. Each species tends to have its own range. All three of the Foxtail pines can grow to advanced ages. The oldest known Rocky Mountain bristlecone has been dated at 2,435 years of age; the oldest known Sierra Nevada, at 2,110 years. Great Basin bristlecones can live to twice those ages.

Of the three closely related species, Great Basin bristlecones are found where conditions are most extreme. They also produce the oldest individual trees — many exceeding three and four thousand years. They are found in the Inyo, Panamint and White Mountains of east central California, and scattered throughout Nevada and Utah at altitudes of 9,000 to 11,500 feet in dry, open stands with high evaporation and little combustible undergrowth between individual trees where annual precipitation runs as little as 10 inches and little soil exists to retain water and facilitate rot, and where they are exposed to harsh winters with extreme cold and wind. Those growing at lower

elevations in their range tend to grow like other pines – rapidly, with tall fairly straight central trunks, symmetrical conical forms, living for several hundred years. The oldest Great Basin bristlecones are found at higher elevations with the most extreme conditions and can be more than half dead, with gnarled and smooth, wind-polished twisted trunks, snags, branches and spears reaching up and thin strips of bark covering narrow layers of cambium which produce the next year's growth, which may be as little as one inch per hundred years. Even dead Great Basin bristlecones, sometimes called “fossil trees”, or dead parts of still living trees, can last a thousand years before they rot away.



On the western rim of the Great Basin in the rain shadow of the Sierra Nevada mountains, 200 miles northwest of Las Vegas, a high arid range of mountains lies a few miles on the California side of the Nevada border rising to a high point of 14,252 feet at White Mountain Peak. On a sunny day its reflective white dolomite surface gleams like new snow. It is called the White Mountains. Running roughly north/south for about 60 miles east of the Owens Valley in Inyo National Forest, its high open slopes are home to some of the oldest Great Basin bristlecone pines and some of the oldest of all trees.

In the summer of 1953, Edmund Schulman, a tree-ring researcher associated with the University of Arizona's Laboratory of Tree-Ring Research, finishing up a summer looking for old trees near Sun Valley, Idaho, drove up into the White Mountains to check out rumors of old bristlecones. The ancient trees he found there changed his life and may have shortened it. Over the next four summers in the White Mountains Schulman discovered many bristlecones of great age, including 17 older than 4,000 years and one in which he initially counted about 4,400 annual growth rings, which he named “Methuselah”, later determined to be 4,498 years old in 2007. Most ring cores were taken using an instrument called a Swedish increment borer, a long thin hollow metal tube 15 – 40 inches long, with a sharp end capable of cutting through wood and a metal rod fastened to it at right angles which is twisted to bore into a tree and extract a long pencil-shaped core of wood. The tree's annual growth rings can be seen in the core and counted. The hole soon fills up with sap and the boring procedure doesn't harm

the tree. In at least one case, though, Schulman and his assistant “hardened our hearts”, as he writes in his 1958 National Geographic article, and used a two-man crosscut saw to cut down a living bristlecone that turned out to be about 3,957 years old.

Edmund Schulman was an assistant to and protégé of Andrew Ellicott Douglass at the University of Arizona. Originally an astronomer, Douglass became interested in tree-rings as evidence of rainfall variations, in order to establish a connection between sun spot cycles and climate cycles, leading him to found the modern discipline of tree-ring science – “dendrochronology”, as it is called. Relying on the tendency of trees to produce wider annual growth rings in wetter years and narrower rings in drier years, tree-ring researchers collect samples from both living and dead trees and match identical overlapping ring sequences to produce tree-ring records which go back thousands of years — over 8,700 years for places in the Southwest — and which display rainfall conditions when the rings were laid down. Since each ring corresponds to a particular year, the exact year an unknown piece of wood grew or was cut down can be determined by matching its rings to an identical sequence in a master “grounded” or verified tree-ring calendar for a particular area.

Tree-ring records for specific areas have enabled researchers to establish dates for a wide variety of events of interest to ecologists, climatologists, geologists, anthropologists, historians and others. For example –

The dates when timbers used in the construction of Pueblo Bonita in Chaco Canyon and dozens of other Southwest pueblos grew and were felled;

The dates of a severe drought at Roanoke Island in tidewater North Carolina at the time the “Lost Colony” there disappeared;

The dates of major eruptions of Santorini in the Aegean Sea and of other volcanoes;

The growth dates of spruce wood used in making a famous violin called the “Messiah”, attributed to Stradavari, a factor in determining its provenance.

Tree-rings have also been used to correct errors and calibrate dates determined by Carbon 14 dating procedures.

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Schulman believed that the Methuselah tree was the oldest known living tree. He also believed that the harshest living conditions produced the oldest trees and that the oldest trees would be found on the western rim of the Great Basin in the rain shadow of the Sierra Nevada mountain range. He suffered from heart disease during his years of strenuous high altitude field work and died of a heart attack at the University of Arizona at age 49, three months before an article he wrote about his findings, well illustrated with photographs, was published in a 1958 issue of the National Geographic magazine. After Schulman's death Tom Harlan, another researcher at the Tree-Ring Lab, examined several cores Schulman had collected in the White Mountains but had not yet finished dating. The age of one has been determined to be 4,806 years as of 2007. That tree remains unnamed. Its location is not disclosed.

Two hundred and forty miles to the ENE, across the wrinkled landscape of central Nevada, in the Snake Range near the Utah border, a 300-acre stand of Great Basin bristlecone pines has sunk gnarled roots into the rocky ground at timberline on the east slopes of Wheeler Peak just outside the mouth of its great northeast glacial cirque. One tree, apparently older than the others and still living, stood at an elevation of about 10,750 feet on the slope of a rocky lateral moraine. Prometheus, as it was called by a few local hikers, was not on a trail. No sign indicated its existence or location. It was a massive tree, its form showing its hard life. It has been estimated that fewer than fifty people saw it

alive. Its dead crown was 17 feet high. A live branch reached up 11 feet. A strip of bark 19 inches wide kept it alive, leaving over 90 per cent of its trunk bark-free and polished by wind-blown ice and sand. Its irregular and twisted trunk was 21 feet in circumference. At some time during its life rock fall and avalanche debris had buried the original ground it was rooted in to a depth of about two feet.



The Sierra Nevada from the slopes of the White Mountains. — LARRY HANSON PHOTO

Into this grove, in the summer of 1964, came Donald R. Currey, a graduate student/PhD candidate from the University of North Carolina studying glaciation in the Snake range during the Little Ice Age, a four-hundred-or-so-year period from the fourteenth to the early nineteenth century when average temperatures in the Northern Hemisphere dropped 2-3° F. Currey was finishing up the second summer of a two-summer research grant from the National Science Foundation and needed an old tree suitably located on a moraine to establish a reliable tree-ring record for the area. Although time was running out for him, he didn't yet have that data, and without it, he didn't have what he needed to complete his research project. After surveying a number of trees, he came upon

the "Prometheus" tree, which he designated "WPN-114". He determined to get a tree-ring record from this tree.

Different versions of what happened next are told. One story is that Currey's Swedish increment core-boring instrument broke. Another is that it wasn't long enough to get a complete core sample of WPN-114. Another was that the irregular

cross-section of WPN-114 made it difficult to get a complete core sample from living bark to original core or that Currey wasn't familiar with the technique for doing so. At any rate, he asked Donald E. Cox, Forest Service district ranger, since the Forest Service administered the land then, for permission to "section" WPN-114 and for help doing so. Cox checked with W. L. "Slim" Hansen, his Forest Service supervisor in Elko, 250 miles away, reportedly telling him that "No one would [walk] more than a hundred

yards to see it." Hansen reportedly told him to "Cut 'er down." So Cox approved the plan to "section" the tree and on August 6 rounded up a crew of Forest Service employees to accompany Currey and him to the tree with a chain saw to do the job. The chain saw crew included a part-time Forest Service employee named Milan "Mike" Drakulich, who was detailed to come along to help. But when the time came, Drakulich put his hand on the trunk of the condemned tree and said "I'm not cutting this tree". The next day, however, August 7, Cox and Forest Service employees without Drakulich's delicate sensibilities took turns cutting WPN-114 down with a chain saw. Slabs were removed and

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carried out by the Forest Service crew. Currey counted 4,844 rings in his slab. Another researcher at the Tree-Ring Research Laboratory in Arizona counted 4,862 rings. In an article published in 1965 in *Ecology*, Currey estimated that the tree may have been over 4,900 years old. One writer, Michael P. Cohen, the author of *A Garden of Bristlecones*, (source of the Cox, Hansen and Drakulich quotes) states that it was "almost certainly over 5,100 years old. Whichever, WPN-114 was apparently the oldest known living tree and possibly the oldest individual non-cloned living thing in the world.

One slab of WPN-114 went with Currey back to the University of North Carolina. Another found its way to the lobby of Hotel Nevada and Casino in Ely, a few miles away, between slot machines, adding to its collection of stuffed moose and elk heads and western and cowboy curiosities. Another became an exhibit in an Ely Convention Center, sponsored by the Forest Service and Kennecott Copper Company, then the largest employer in the area.

A year later, in September, 1965, a crew of Forest Service employees was sent back to cut another slab from the trunk of WPN-114. One of the crew, Fred Solace, a young man of thirty-two years, suffered a heart attack and died.

In time, the news about what happened to WPN-114 circulated widely enough to become the center of controversy, a scandal, which contributed to and hastened the establishment in 1986 of Great Basin National Park, a long-time goal of a local group of people. The boundaries of the park include Wheeler Peak and its bristlecones. The Park Service, which now administers the land, doesn't offer any directions to the remains of WPN-114, to protect it from vandalism and souvenir hunters.

Over in the White Mountains in California the Forest Service has designated a 28,000-acre Ancient Bristlecone Pine Forest, containing thousands of bristlecones over 3,000 years old and more than one hundred over 4,000 years old. Within it, encompassing the larger stands of old bristlecones, are areas designated as the Edmund Schulman Memorial Grove and the Patriarch Grove, the latter named after a particularly large bristlecone there, 37 feet in circumference, called The Patriarch. The Forest Service does not disclose the location of the Methuselah Tree or the

unnamed 4,806-year-old tree (as of 2007) dated after Schulman's death, which may now be the oldest known living tree. More than one person has wondered whether there may be an even older tree out in the White Mountain slopes somewhere, unmarked, unmentioned, perhaps even undiscovered.

In May, 2008, when I asked the Forest Service in Ely for a copy of the original written permit authorizing Donald Currey to cut down WPN-114, I was told that it couldn't be found, and that maybe there never had been one (other than the verbal OK to "Cut 'er down").



About 6:00 a.m. I woke, got my boots on, put a few things in a daypack and regretfully turning my back on the easy trail that led about 4 1/2 miles and 3,000 feet up to Wheeler's summit, started out the trail that led south a mile or two through subalpine forest to timberline and the largest stand of old bristlecones on Wheeler Peak. It was cold. The trail was frozen. A clear sky above promised a good day, I hoped. Beyond the end of the bristlecone trail, I picked my way through the talus to the top of a lateral moraine and began searching for the stump of WPN-114, with an altimeter, crisscrossing back and forth, bracketing the 10,750-foot-elevation contour line. After several hours, repeating the same search pattern, with no luck, and on the point of giving up, I sat down on a rock, ate some lunch and thought what else I might do. Donald Currey would say that it took him only five minutes after getting to the crest of the moraine to find WPN-114. Maybe my altimeter was a little off. I decided to make one more effort, a little higher on the moraine. In only a few minutes I realized I was looking at the stump and remains of WPN-114. The search was over. Here were the remains of what may have been the oldest living thing in the world. Here was once a thread of life, toughened by adversity, which had outlived the rise and fall of empires and civilizations. In minutes an artifact of technology of the last few years of its life had accomplished what nearly 5,000 years of intense cold, hurricane winds, storms, lightning, fire, exposure, insects, rot, rock fall, erosion, disease and drought had not been able to do.

Although it was still early in the afternoon, it was late in the year and darkness would come early. I decided to try to get to

Wheeler Peak's summit, not by going back to the summit trailhead, but by going up to the head of the northeast cirque and up the steep slopes beside the great northeast face that led to the gentler upper north slopes, where I hoped to pick up the trail at 12,500 feet or so and follow it to the top. After several hours of scrambling, including 800 or 1000 feet of very steep and maddening loose scree, where a step would start a sheet of rocks moving downward, I got to the summit. Remnants of a recent snowfall still covered the ground. The 360° views were breathtaking, 7,000 feet down to the valley below. Patches of golden aspen were splashed on slopes thousands of feet below. Beyond, the basin and range country of central Nevada stretched off to the west, crossed by US 50, often called "the loneliest highway in America", fading away into the haze. By then it was 6:30 pm or so. The sun was getting low. I beat it down the trail, stopping a couple of times to look back at the bright moon rising over Wheeler Peak's summit, whistled my way past a couple of manly-looking free-range bulls straddling the trail as it crossed a meadow, and got back to my car by headlamp after dark. I changed clothes and drove back to Seattle, diving into the Snoqualmie Pass rain curtain about 6:00 pm the next day. It had been a full day, though I would be some years thinking about it.



Twenty years have passed now since that memorable day – perhaps a quarter of our allotted span of years. A residue of questions remains with me, formed, like the bristlecones, slowly. What is the fascination with "life" about? Indeed, what is "life"? Is the universe set up so that "life" inevitably occurs? What drew me to timberline on that windswept moraine that October day?

For WPN-114 it's been forty-four years since the US Forest Service severed its silent unbroken witness running back to before Stonehenge's stones were raised on Salisbury Plain and before the first blocks of the Egyptian pyramids were set down at Giza.

Left to live, in that time it might have grown another half an inch.

Book Reviews by John S. Edwards

The Bridge at the Edge of the World: Capitalism, the Environment, and Crossing from Crisis to Sustainability, James Gustave Speth, Yale University Press, 2008

An indispensable text toward saving Planet Earth from environmental disaster.

Speth has written a profoundly important book. If coercion were possible I would make it compulsory reading for every voter, a mandatory text at every college, and put a copy in every hotel bedside table. He addresses the crucial issue of the deteriorating global environment. This is the issue that must haunt all environmental activists: we win a few battles, some of them glorious, but we are losing the war. Environmental organizations as a whole, from local to international have slowed, but failed to halt, the accelerating degradation of Planet Earth. The emergence of forces aimed at environmental protection have been countered by forces supporting the status quo.

A crucial factor, Speth argues, is the dynamic of growth capitalism that is the essence of first world economics. Growth is the metric of economic vitality, but growth must have limits in a finite system. Unless growth capitalism can be transformed, environmental degradation will accelerate toward the abyss of no return — a daunting and discouraging prospect indeed, given the history and momentum of economic growth. But yes, Speth claims, growth capitalism as we know it can be transformed, and he points to signs that it may already be happening. There is reason to hope.

I begin to write this review in the Peruvian Amazon beside the muddy Tambopata River, a tributary of the Madre de Dios and in turn the Amazon. Across the river scrappy expanses of second-growth open up to banana plantations where tropical forest once soared. Smoke from forest fires yellows the sun. Cattle from impoverished pasture come to drink at the river's edge. In nearby Puerto Maldonado immigrants pour in at 200 a day, attracted by the prospect of fortunes in alluvial gold. There also are the stark concrete foundations for a bridge that will connect the trade of Brazil with Peru and the Pacific on the

Transoceanic Highway that cuts its way like a great red scar through the continent. It is a good place to contemplate Speth's message, here in the trammled Amazon where human population growth, and world trade force their onslaught on the land ethic.

The Bridge to the Edge of the World concentrates earth's challenges into 236 pages of compelling text, and 40 more of footnotes.

In Part 1, System Failure, Speth peers into the abyss of present-day destructive environmental trends. He then critiques modern capitalism with its growth imperative as a system out of control. He bolsters his arguments with references and extensive quotations. So far the prospect seems dim.

But in Part 2, The Great Transformation, he offers practicable solutions — transforming the market to adapt to a post-growth society that can promote instead the well-being of people and of the environment. He is most persuasive in advocating living with enough, not always more and more. That will require changing the fundamental dynamics of the corporation, capitalism's core. Historically capitalism solved the challenge of living with enough; the problem now is living with too much.

On to Part 3, Speth's perception of the seeds of transformation and a new consciousness. He quotes from a wide spectrum of thinkers, from Aldo Leopold on, who call for a new consciousness, a value system epitomized in the Preamble to the Earth Charter (http://earthcharterinaction.org/ec_splash/)

He calls for a new politics: "Democracy in America today is in deep trouble. Weak, shallow, dangerous and corrupted it is the best democracy that money can buy. The ascendancy of market fundamentalism and antiregulation, antigovernment ideology makes the current moment particularly frightening. . . ." His words written a year before the recent economic crisis are prescient. He argues convincingly that a government hooked on GDP growth, with powerful interests defending the status quo cannot avoid accelerating environmental impact. He ends with his perception of the signs of hope. We can continue to take the path into the abyss, or we can take a different path, the "bridge to the edge of the world."

It is not possible in the space of a review to cover all of Speth's arguments for a new consciousness. You just have to read it and if you do I can assure you that you will see your efforts on behalf of the North Cascades, and of the earth in a new context.

Two Planks and a Passion — The Dramatic History of Skiing, Roland Huntford, Continuum Books. 436 pp.

Skis and skiing go back at least 20,000 years . . . The earliest extant ski fragment is 5,200 years old . . . Skis came before wheels . . . Skill on skis decided the race for the South Pole . . . The rout of Russian invaders by Finnish ski troops in 1939 arguably changed the outcome of the Second World War.

These are random nuggets from Roland Huntford's encyclopedic but thoroughly readable history of skis and skiing. The definitive biographer of Nansen and Shackleton and the author of *The Last Place on Earth*, which devastatingly contrasts the amateur ineptitude of Scott with the professional acumen of Amundsen in the quest for the South Pole, Huntford worked for many years as a journalist in Scandinavia, and is an experienced skier with a love for his subject and a penchant for finding obscure material and building it into a vivid story. From the earliest historical evidence of ski travel in the far North, through the birth of competitive skiing in Norway, to the origins of resort skiing in Switzerland, to the inventions that enabled modern downhill skiing, Huntford builds a detailed yet lively narrative.

He brings numerous facets together: ski travel as a way of life among early northern peoples, the evolution of crosscountry and, later, downhill skis and bindings, the origin of competitive crosscountry and ski-jumping, the role of ski troops in wartime, the story of the Winter Olympics and the emergence of skiing as a recreational industry. Long in gestation and massively referenced, *Two Planks and a Passion* will stand as the definitive history of skis and skiing, even perhaps the last word as we see our beloved ski snow steadily vanishing under the march of climate change.

North Cascades Glacier Climate Report for 2008

Tom Hammond

The Glacier Research Project team, Mauri Pelto, leader, Ben Pelto, Brad Markle, and Tom Hammond, continued the research studies of North Cascades glaciers again this last summer.

Columbia Glacier *August 1-3*

The team hiked in the Wild Sky Wilderness for the first time this year, on the ascent to Virgin Lake. It was littered with blowdown — including a couple of HUGE old-growth Douglas fir. All night Thursday it rained. Real rain. So I elected to stay home in bed until the last minute, and ended up catching the team at the crossing of the outlet of Blanca Lake (Friday at about 11 a.m.). We were surprised by the weather: it was clear and nice at Blanca Lake, when it was supposed to be raining. Well, it wasn't, and in fact, it was spectacular like I've never seen Blanca. The lake was totally covered by snow, save the outlet. Only once have I seen this much snow, and that was in June many years ago (Mauri reports that 1999, 2002 had more snow). Things cleared off to reveal tremendous waterfalls near and far, high fangs of rock near and nearer, and the Columbia Glacier — headwaters of the north fork Skykomish River .

Where in past years there was blue ice everywhere but the avalanche chutes, this year the entire glacier is covered with a blanket of snow three meters (10 feet) thick. Camp, which is normally made next to an ever-shifting river and sandbars on the lakeshore (4,000 feet elevation) is under two to eight feet of snow.

By far it appears the Sauk-Stillaguamish peaks, and by extension the Monte Cristo peaks, have seen the most snow of any place in the North Cascades. There is hardly any evidence of the terminus lakes that appeared so suddenly over the past two years — we walked right over top of them.

But alas, just as we were halfway through the longitudinal profile, the weather set in, and that was the end of that. Egress was done in a challenging fog, and an icy, barefoot ford of Blanca Lake outlet. I wish I had shot an image of the descent of a steep forested chute directly above the lake. It was every bit as attention-getting as any summit in the Cascades: a steep, hard, icy snow with a

deadly runoff of deep aquamarine lake shelved by half-submerged snow. August in the North Cascades . . .

I should note that throughout the field season, there were very few bugs. Saw one jumping spider on the Columbia Glacier that was very active, and not soon after a very active bird eating bugs. Overall, bees, flies, wood bugs, all the usual were in evidence, but in far fewer numbers than past years.

Columbia Glacier summary: 16 years negative mass balance, 4 years neutral, 5 years positive mass-balance, with 2008 in the top 4 in the past 25 years. Note that the loss years are measured in meters, whereas the positive years are measures at about a meter, or less. 2008: +1 meter (provisional).



I did not rejoin the team for any of the Mount Baker-Shuksan glaciers due to weather. As it turns out, the Easton, Sholes and Lower Curtis glaciers will see about a half-meter positive mass-balance, while the Rainbow will see closer to a meter of positive mass balance.

Lyman Glacier *August 10-12*

I rejoined the team at Spider Meadows (Chiwawa-Entiat-Suiattle crests) on the evening of August 10. It was simply glorious — I arrived about noon, and spent the day reveling in the flowery, lush sub-alpine meadows. There is no doubt that this portion of east side of the North Cascades displays some of the great characteristics of world-class alps: huge fangs of granite; hot, almost continental climate, but close enough to the crest to sport some cedar, and plenty of flowers. There were more than 30 people coming and going, most camping for at least two nights. The largest was a party of seven, a father and son arrangement, hiking the North Cascades for a week. Right on time, the team arrived. This time we'd be accompanied by reporter KC Mehaffey and photographer Don Seabrook of the Wenatchee World. I must say, it was great to have the press along, and not just for a quick photo op: they camped two nights in the meadow, and accompanied us throughout the evaluation of the Lyman Glacier. Plenty of hiking, spectacular scenery on the north side of Chiwawa Mountain (one of the

giants of the area, about 8,500 feet), and informed conversations about the glacier-mass changes we were witnessing right before our eyes: the Columbia (west) the South Cascade (west, but on crest), and the Lyman (east, removed by one range from crest) are losing mass at a startling rate. Since the 1950s, the Lyman has receded some 750 meters to reveal a new, long lake. Since 1986 alone, the glacier has receded 220 meters in length. What that equates to in volume is a key statistic here for the citizens of Washington. That 22 years of mass-balance loss represents 15,000,000 cubic feet of water no longer flowing in the high heat of August and September to Lake Chelan and beyond, to the farms/orchards so critical to a way of life. And no longer flowing through six hydroelectric projects that power our modern lives.

The roar of waterfalls near and far was with us the entire trip, as it has been this entire amazing summer. This glacier is disappearing, and save for the disconnected upper icefall that resides below the summit, the entire lower section will be gone "soon" (90 years). More people should realize the changes that are happening in the mountains, and the waters flowing off the North Cascades. KC asked some honest questions. Mauri preferred to stick with the science and the facts, but had to acknowledge some of the implications. When KC asked me how I "feel" about the whole thing, I responded thusly:

"Sure it's disturbing, and I used to fret and be angry about the loss of the glaciers, as much because they are also a source of pride about the North Cascades. But ultimately I am so thankful to be here. It is exciting to bear witness to the changes. Thankful for the ability and inclination to seek out knowledge and continue to learn about the planet on which we live, and in such a dramatic and dynamic landscape that is the North Cascades. We're all in this together, so we better start acting like it. People need to recognize we are not apart from the world, we are a part of the world."

Even with a great winter, the Lyman Glacier has negative mass-balance of about a half-meter.



Mount Daniel

August 12-14

While the hike out of Lyman-Spider Meadows was pleasant and easy, the hike in to Daniel was less fun. Despite the relatively cool conditions being great for hiking, my foot was complaining about two full-pack trips in one day, the second being about six miles of rocky, at times steep terrain. And bugs. Mosquitoes to be exact. For the first time all summer, bugs were an issue at camp. I've noted what a great summer it has been, and indeed, it has been one of the best of my life (I seem to say that more often, with 2006 also in my top five), and this is in part due to the great snowpack and paucity of bugs. Not so at Daniel. Here they were swarming — we must have hit a recent hatch, and with all of the ponds, lakes, and wandering meadow trickles, it's no surprise. Still, visiting the crest glaciers of Daniels (flows east — headwaters of the Cle Elum River), Ice Worm (same), and Lynch (flows west — headwaters of the Skykomish River, and the most spectacular of the trio) is an amazing experience.

Wednesday, August 13 found us above camp and on the very difficult traverse of Daniel to measure the Daniels and Lynch glaciers. This would be the most difficult day of the project — 10.5 hours of hiking, kicking steps in steep snow, and the obligatory visits to termini and summits, so much up and down, down and up. I was tired, and I had only done about half the work of the rest of the team.

As with the Lyman, the atmosphere was incredibly clear and clean. A quick-moving upper trough swept the air, and left us with a marine deck on the west side, and clear vistas with sharp clarity of surrounding peaks in all directions.

We all felt pretty excited, for as Mauri mentioned, this was one of the clearest skies in the 25 years of the project (and views always help the legs work). The descent of the Lynch to the terminus was done in about three minutes of fantastic glissading. Every member of this team carved turns as though we had skis on — not a single fall or arrest situation — some of the finest backcountry boot-skiing left the middle of the Lynch laced with twisting patterns — awesome.

The terminus of the Lynch is a place of intense beauty: remote, stark, rugged, powerful. It is very steep, and can be very dangerous, as the glacier plummets to Pea Soup Lake. As I noted before, the glacier mostly covered this huge lake (.5 sq km) as recently as the mid-1970s.

The top of the Lynch was a bit too snowy, steep with poor runout, to risk a



Lyman Glacier retreat. The foreground lake measures nearly one kilometer long, and has been exposed since the 1950s. Half the lake was covered by the Lyman Glacier as recently as the mid-1980s. Lower Lyman Lake is barely visible in the distant trees. Peaks that form the Cascade Crest in the background (l-r): Plummer Mountain, Sitting Bull Mountain, Bannock Mountain, Saddle Bow Mountain, Dome Peak-Sentinel Peak (snow), and Cloudy Peak. Note Ben Pelto at bottom right of frame.

— TOM HAMMOND PHOTO

direct ascent, so we completed the round-trip evaluation via the upper Daniels.

We completed the survey, and (I) limped back to camp. The team did a quick survey of the Ice Worm Glacier (aka Hyas Creek) while I rested my sore foot and then we headed down, briefly visiting the Prater high camp (amazing they got there and then stayed).

Daniels, Lynch glaciers: about half-meter positive mass-balance.

Ice Worm Glacier: about a third-meter positive mass-balance.



I'm happy to say my suspicion of a huge snowpack in the Stillaguamish-upper Sauk is being proven out by the science, especially since I experienced it from December snowfall ski trips to mid-August research.

Moderate elevation, aspect of valley(s) and the topography of western Washington (see Olympics and convergence zone) all contributed to this effect.

And now recognition of Mauri Pelto and his dedication. Folks, this man has conducted this survey for 25 consecutive

years. Twenty-five years! I am a mountain man by any measure, but even in my healthiest I don't think I'd have the focus and dedication to see it through for every year. So much work. So many rainy, cold, long, hard days. And those are probably easier than the hot days — blistering and blinding, hot, hot days, always with an eye to safety, and always with an eye to accurate data gathering across the years, across the range, and across the ice. We share a connection that is unusual, seeing each other for only a couple of weeks a year. But every time we get together, the similarity in thought process, enjoyment and respect for the area, and simple joy about living in the North Cascades is evident. I am very thankful Mauri has shared the project with me over the years. More importantly for all of us, I'm thankful Mauri took, and is taking on the hard part of understanding a critical element of the North Cascades: after all, Cascades are all about the water.

**Congratulations to
Dr. Mauri Pelto:
25 years and going strong!**

CONSERVATION UPDATES AND ALERTS

UPDATES

NPS Planning

The NPS is continuing with its work to develop a Stehekin River Corridor Management Plan (lower road). The flooding that was rampant on the western slope of North Cascades National Park Complex in January did not reach Stehekin. This gave a respite to residents from previous years of flooding and did not disrupt NPs planning. The condition of the upper Stehekin River road had not been assessed at the time of this writing, however it is not expected to improve given the natural hazards.

High Lakes Fish Stocking.

The NPS issued a very unusual Record of Decision (ROD on January 9, 2009 with respect to the Final Mountain Lakes Fishery Management Plan — Environmental Impact Statement. Instead of endorsing the “environmentally preferred” option D to cease fish stocking and to restore the lakes impacted by this decision, the National Park Service made the choice of Alternative B which allows fish stocking to continue under a slightly less onerous set of restrictions unless Congress intervenes. It is unclear to NCCC why the NPS chose to issue the ROD now as the planning documents give Congress until July 1, 2009 to act. The High Lakes Management Plan ROD is built on a public involvement process. However, the way the decision is structured, it may be that NCCC cannot appeal the decision in a normal process. We must wait until after the ROD goes into effect, i.e., July 1. As has been indicated in earlier missives on this issue, NCCC supports a policy of ending fish stocking of naturally barren lakes (and streams). The NCCC position is supported by the scientific research conducted pursuant to our Settlement Decree with the National Park Service and the National Park Service’s own national policies. NCCC is contacting the Washington Congressional delegation to explain the need to support Alternative D and we are asking the Governor and Washington Department of Fish and Game to cooperate with the National Park Service and questioning the wisdom of spending exceptionally scarce tax dollars to stock non-indigenous fish in North Cascades National Park.

— Dave Fluharty

Hydroelectric Threats Grow

NCCC has recently joined a number of groups led by the Hydropower Reform Coalition in opposing efforts to have new hydroelectric developments defined as “renewable energy” by Washington state. A veritable gold rush of new hydroelectric proposals may soon threaten hundreds of creeks and streams in the Cascades. Wherever water flows downhill, as it does in countless places in the North Cascades, someone may be thinking of diverting it into a pipe. Look for an in-depth examination of this newly revived threat, and what needs to be done about it, in the next edition of *The Wild Cascades*.

Pot farm causes heavy damage in national park

By Tahlia Ganser, *Skagit Valley Herald*

MOUNT VERNON — In mid-August, more than 50 law enforcement officers raided the first marijuana grow site ever discovered on national park land in the state of Washington.

Officers uprooted more than 16,000 marijuana plants in the course of a day — then shipped them off in dump trucks to be destroyed.

Left behind were the scars of cultivation and tampering with nature, along with months of trash and chemicals used to grow the drug. Cleaning it all up will take a lot of time and money.

The growers escaped and ran free, but without the fruits of their estimated \$48 million drug operation. Investigators believe a high-powered Mexican drug organization — using low-end growers — is responsible for the grow site in the North Cascades National Park Complex, east of Skagit County near Ross Lake, as well as similar sites in other national parks around the country.

In the past decade, illegal marijuana sites have been discovered and destroyed in Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks, Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, Santa Monica National Recreation Area and Point Reyes National Seashore.

Information from: *Skagit Valley Herald*, <http://www.skagitvalleyherald.com>

Guns Will Be Allowed in National Parks

By Peter Fimrite

The San Francisco Chronicle

December 6, 2008

Campers may now pack heat along with their sleeping bags when they travel to national parks.

The Bush administration has struck down federal regulations banning loaded guns in most national forests, a move that was widely seen as a parting shot on behalf of the National Rifle Association.

The ruling overturned a 25-year-old federal regulation severely restricting concealed firearms in national parks and wildlife refuges. The new rule, which would take effect in January, would apparently allow anyone who already has a concealed weapons permit in his or her state to also tote a gun in federal parks within state boundaries.

Conservation groups, park officials and many politicians blasted the decision as a politically motivated slap against public opinion in favor of the gun lobby.

The idea behind the ruling, according to Lyle Laverty, the assistant interior secretary, was to foster the long-held tradition of having states and the federal government work together on natural resource issues. He said similar rules were recently adopted by the federal Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forest Service.

Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., joined numerous organizations, including the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence, in denouncing the move.

“This unprecedented rule change wipes out common-sense regulations originally enacted by the Reagan administration,” Feinstein said in a statement. “There is simply no good reason why this administration would change a rule that has helped make our national parks among the most popular and safest places in the country.”

The regulation was timed so it would be in the books by the time President-elect Barack Obama takes office on Jan. 20. Changing it would require a long bureaucratic rule-changing process possibly lasting years. Several groups, including the conservation association, are considering a lawsuit.

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Glacier Peak from Mt. Pugh by Karl Forsgaard

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- Be part of a vibrant grassroots network of advocates for protection of the unique lands, waters, plants, wildlife, and wilderness of the North Cascades.
- The North Cascades Conservation Council depends on your support.

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- 20% Discount on *Wilderness Alps*, a North Cascades history by Harvey Manning and NCCC.



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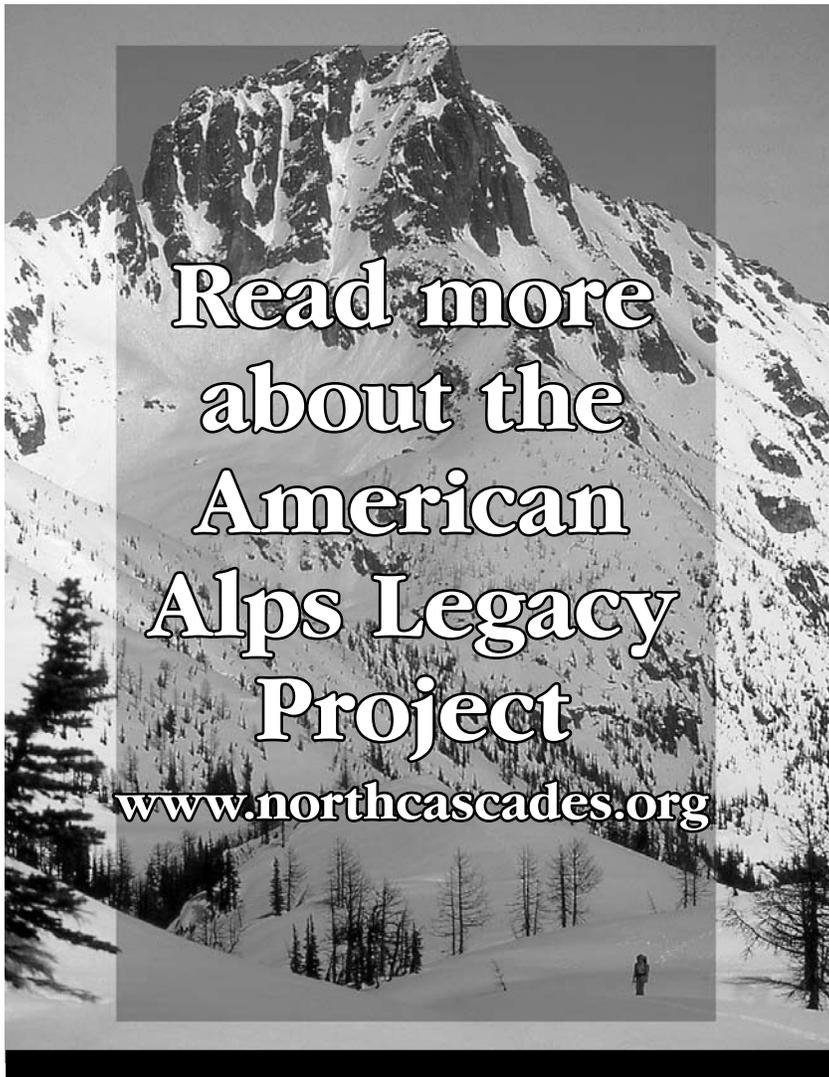
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- Encourage your friends, neighbors, and colleagues to support American Alps.
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- Encourage your organizations to support American Alps.
- Write an American Alps article for your organizations newsletter or your local newspaper.
- Help educate people in your community about American Alps.
- Meet with leaders in your community to encourage support for American Alps.

Contact Information

If you want to be part of American Alps, contact Tom Hammond at tphammond@gmail.com.

Tower Mountain from above Methow Pass (1987) — JOHN ROPER PHOTO

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