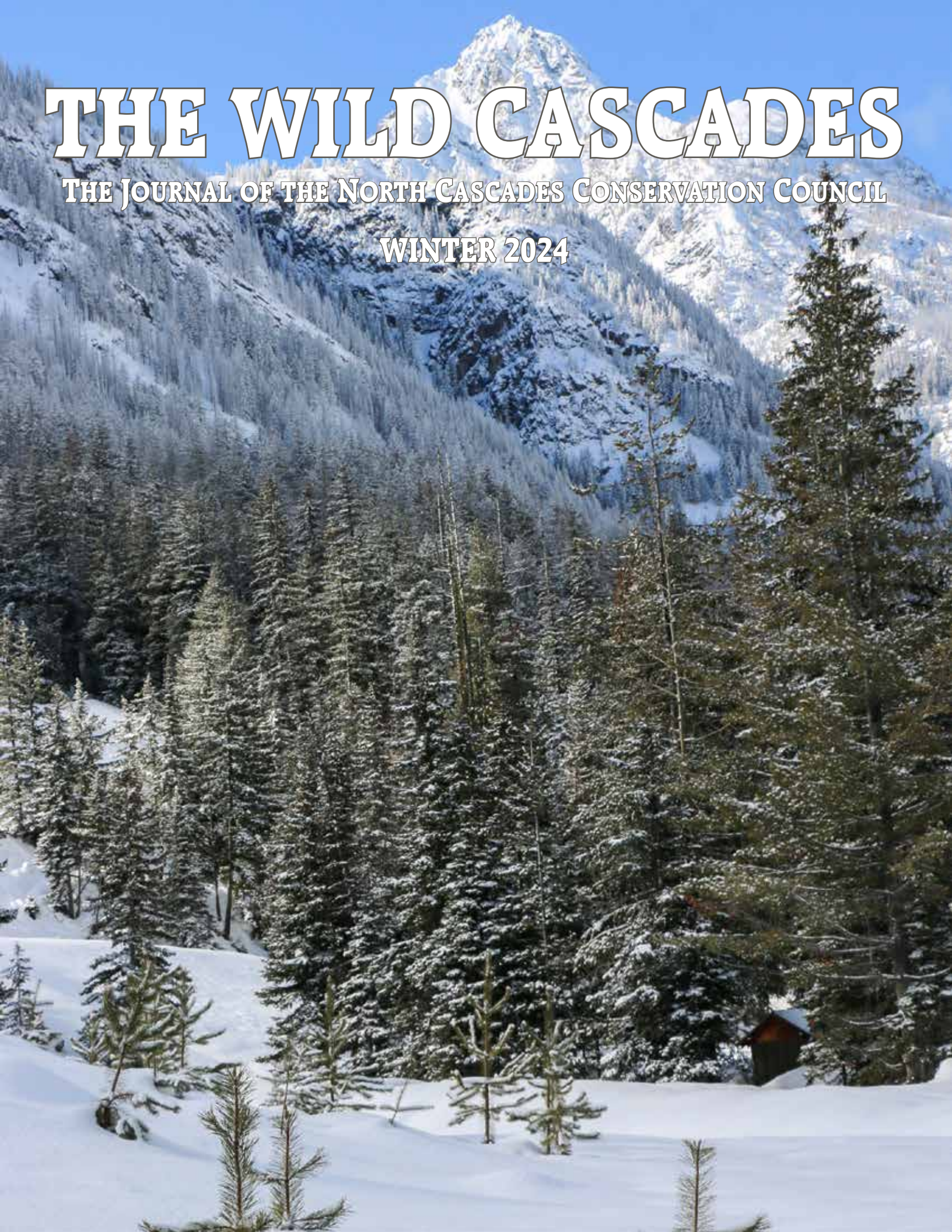


THE WILD CASCADES

THE JOURNAL OF THE NORTH CASCADES CONSERVATION COUNCIL

WINTER 2024



THE WILD CASCADES ■ Winter 2024

- [3 President's report — Phil Fenner](#)
- [4 N3C Actions: October 2023 to February 2024](#)
- [6 Relicensing the Skagit River Hydroelectric Project: What's Ahead? — Dave Fluharty](#)
- [7 Skagit River hydropower timeline](#)
[Fixed anchor bolts in Wilderness —Ed Henderson](#)
- [8 Book review: *Salmon, Cedar, Rock & Rain* by Tim McNulty —reviewed by Ed Henderson](#)
- [9 Book review: *Wildeor: The Wild Life and Living Legacy of Dave Foreman* —reviewed by Dave Fluharty](#)
- [10 Book review: *Atlas of Wild America* by Jon Waterman —reviewed by Phil Fenner](#)
- [11 Cars win, trees lose at Mount Baker ski area parking lot](#)
- [12 No ranger staff in Stehekin this summer?](#)
- [13 *Big, Tall Trees*, poem by Evan Meier, 1st grade](#)
- [14 Beckler River "Section 6" nominated for Trust Land Transfer —Rick McGuire](#)
- [17 USFS and carbon dioxide sequestration —Dave Fluharty](#)
- [18 Book review: *The Making of the Northwest Forest Plan: The Wild Science of Saving Old Growth Ecosystems* by Johnson, Franklin and Reeves —reviewed by Dave Fluharty](#)
- [19 Morning Star NRCA may finally be fully protected!](#)
- [20 Bipartisan push for more logging drives Northwest Forest Plan Amendment —Jim Scarborough](#)
- [21 How the Forest Service is "restoring" the Libby Creek watershed](#)
- [23 Forest management: Give citizens a voice](#)
[Decommissioning obsolete roads](#)
- [23 N3C membership application](#)

COVER: Dumbell Mountain looms over the resloped tailings of the former Holden Mine, remediated by the Rio Tinto Company 2012-2015. Trees in the foreground, planted in 2017 by the USFS on the tailings, now under 18 to 36 inches of new soil excavated from a 14-acre avalanche debris chute, are getting taller.—BERIT KIRKEGAARD PHOTO

The Wild Cascades

Journal of the North Cascades Conservation Council

EDITOR: Anne Basye

EDITORIAL BOARD: Ric Bailey, Philip Fenner, Ed Henderson, and Jim Scarborough

Pat Hutson, Designer | Printing by Abracadabra Printing

The Wild Cascades is published three times a year (Winter, Spring-Summer, Fall).

Letters, comments, and articles are invited, subject to editorial review.

The Wild Cascades Editor

To update your address or request electronic delivery of *The Wild Cascades*, email info@northcascades.org

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

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

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

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The Wild Cascades is printed on recycled paper.

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Founded in 1957
SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

THE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

WINTER 2024

This year will mark my fifth to be addressing you as your President, and all I can say is—whew! It's been quite a ride! I've been able to devote more time to N3C since retiring 3 years ago and I'm quite proud of what we've been able to accomplish together.

Establishing communication with allied organizations and agency officials has netted some interesting results, including “back channels” into some significant decision-making processes which would be almost opaque otherwise. Membership is now growing, but our organization is only as strong as our membership, and we need many more members to build our power to protect the North Cascades, so please urge everyone you know to join. We've had some members come forward to join the board, the vital heartbeat of N3C. And our social media presence has helped us to gather over 700 signatures in just 13 days on a petition about Park Service staffing in Stehekin. This is exactly what social media is best at doing, along with reaching a steady stream of new faces to introduce the Council and to hear their voices.

SO much remains to be done. If I may serve for the next 5 years at your best, my hope is to accomplish my short list of goals, which are challenging but I believe are also, as Lewis and Clark would say, “*practicable!*”

- Oppose damaging logging projects disguised as “restoration”
- Keep a very close eye on how our Wilderness Areas and National Parks are managed
- Find skilled assistance with legal and outreach efforts
- Engage our members and inspire their activism
- Grow our membership to sustain N3C's future

As we move into an election year with very high stakes, I anticipate the attention of much of the public will be diverted into politics or will lapse into apathy. All I can say on behalf of N3C is that we are “in it for the long term,” and come what may, politically or otherwise, we will continue to pursue our mission with vigor as we have since 1957. I'm sure I can count on each and every one of you to support your N3C because you care and you love our North Cascades. And because N3C remains uniquely independent among environmental organizations, entirely member-supported and thus forever undeterred! I take great pride in our work when I get feedback like this from a new member:

We are so very thankful for N3C! If it wasn't for your organization, our harmonious backyard, the wildlands that touch the wilderness, would already be getting cut down. I'm fortunate to be a member now and will continue my best effort to help out!

Phil Fenner

philf@northcascades.org



N3C Actions

OCTOBER 2023 to
FEBRUARY 2024

*Advocacy carried out by
dedicated N3C volunteers
in the last four months to
protect and preserve the
North Cascades lands,
waters, plants and wildlife.*



DEFENDING WILD AREAS AGAINST DAMAGING INDUSTRIAL USES

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

- Filed comments supporting decommissioning of old dam retaining Bagley Lake near Heather Meadows north of Mt. Baker, to attain a more natural hydrology in the degraded upper basin of Bagley Creek. Requested collecting and disposing of introduced eastern brook trout population, to prevent reproduction with native fish populations in the North Fork Nooksack River; and implementing safeguards to protect the Mt. Baker North Inventoried Roadless Area (IRA) from possible degradation during the removal.
- Participated in the ongoing relicensing process of the Seattle City Light hydro project, attending monthly Comprehensive Settlement Table, Recreation Working Group, Terrestrial and Wildlife Working Group, Fish Passage Working Group meetings, as well as the all-day Recreation Visioning session. See page 6.
- Signed on to letter by one of our members opposing Yakima Plan. While there are no specific requests in the State Capital Budget for additional funding for water projects like Yakima, it is an opportunity to raise concerns from our comments submitted last year.



ESTABLISHING, EXPANDING AND PROTECTING WILDERNESS AREAS

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

- Signed letter by an N3C member to the Skykomish District Ranger requesting permanent closure of National Forest inholdings in the protected Morningstar Natural Resource Conservation Area (NRCA) to helicopters to prevent pollution of Snohomish County's watershed by crashes like the recent one at Copper Lake.
- Signed on to Washington Wild letter asking Skykomish Dist. Ranger to expand his 2-year closure of FS land near Copper Lake to a larger area.
- Signed onto Washington Wild letter opposing military overflights over Washington Wilderness areas, specifically the Methow Valley and the Pasayten and Lake Chelan/Sawtooth Wilderness Areas
- Signed on to Wilderness Watch letter opposing fixed anchors in Wilderness. See page 7.



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.

- Signed on to Wild Earth Guardians letter to Sens. Murray & Cantwell asking them not to fund Legacy Roads & Trails (LRT) until it is reformed to re-focus on road decommissioning. (Contrary to other orgs asking for \$100M in the FY2025 Interior-Environmental Appropriations Bill.) LRT funding has been used to keep roads open, the opposite of its original intent.
- Signed on to letter opposing CO2 injection in Natl Forests. *See page 17.*
- Signed onto Legacy Forest Defense Coalition opposing "Stilly Revisited" timber sale downstream of the 2014 Oso landslide, which would fragment and destroy large parts of one of few remaining stands of lowland old-growth forest and is located on slopes even steeper than those that failed in 2014. Signing this letter gives us the opportunity to be co-litigants in LFDC's suit against WA DNR.
- Signed on to John Muir Project letter requesting an Executive Moratorium on logging and full protections for federal mature and old-growth forests.
- Attended NW Forest Plan Revisions Federal Advisory Committee 3-day



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.

- Advocated to restore NPS Rangers to Stehekin by sending a 650-signature petition to NPS Director Chuck Sams and Interior Sec. Deb Halland two days after learning personnel would not be replaced. Published letter to the editor in the *Seattle Times* late February. *See page 13.*
- Joined Chelan County Panel reviewing proposals for a contractor to develop a Stehekin Economic Development plan, intended to make Stehekin more sustainable. See <https://kpg.com/grant-application-for-stehekins-sustainability/>
- Attended oral arguments in the Twisp "Restoration" (logging) Project (TRP) lawsuit, which is now heading to the Ninth Circuit for appeal.
- Sent letter to WA Department of Natural Resources supporting Trust Land Transfer (TLT) for Beckler River area. *See page 14.*

public meeting (virtually) to monitor situation. We were not appointed to this committee but have contacts within it.



PROTECTING WILDLIFE AND WILDLIFE HABITAT

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

- Signed on to letter by Defenders of Wildlife supporting the creation of a National Biodiversity Strategy as proposed in [S. Res. 494](#) by Senator Jeff Merkley [D-OR]. With nearly one million species at risk of extinction, an NBS provides a critical blueprint for the U.S. to address and stem the crisis facing nature.
- Filed comments on grizzly reintroduction plans, including our stated positions on the overall process, the best source of population of bears to take from, reducing human conflicts, opposing helo use in Wilderness, and opposing the ESA 10(j) "experimental population" rule which would permit killing any grizzly that conflicts with humans, and calling for more action on connectivity of populations.

- Signed on to WA Wild letter for State Funding for Protection of State Forests through TLT, urging the Washington State Legislature to fully fund supplemental budget request for \$8 million.
- Signed on to letter urging Gov. Insee to designate \$10 million in Natural Climate Solutions Account (e.g., carbon auction funds) to the TLT program. Carbon auction proceeds are higher than expected and a portion of those funds would help TLT to catch up on past unfunded projects.

Relicensing the Skagit River Hydroelectric Project: *What's Ahead?*

By David Fluharty

Faithful readers of *The Wild Cascades* have seen regular updates about the relicensing of the Skagit River Hydroelectric Project since 2019 when the process started with a year-long preliminary unofficial discussion. We have progressed through a year to determine the studies needed for decision support, several years of study implementation and assessment, a Draft License Application and a Final License Application. What's left?

There is still a lot of work to do. Please bear with this reporter as I outline my best guess of what is to come.

It is logical to think that the Final License Application would be the end of the project process but in the strange world of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), Seattle City Light (SCL) was obliged to submit its proposed final license application (FLA) some months ago to meet a FERC imposed deadline. As it turns out the deadline in 2023 was before the tribal, federal and state, and other licensing participants could come to agreement about the adequacy of the SCL submission. There are many issues the license participants feel are yet unresolved about how to mitigate project impacts and guide project implementation and operations over the next 40-50 years proposed term of the license. The missing element is a Settlement Agreement.

The Settlement Agreement is still under intense discussion. Before FERC can perform its regulatory analysis of the FLA it must determine that the Final License Application (FLA) is complete. The FLA submitted by SCL still has major gaps as SCL acknowledges and promises to fill in based on Settlement discussion. But the clock is ticking. Can a Settlement Agreement be obtained in time to allow FERC to complete its assessment and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) document? I am guessing that it will take longer than 2024 to accomplish and I would be amazed if FERC can complete its analyses in time to issue

a new license in April 2025. In that case the parties must agree to request an extension of time and also agree on measures to be undertaken in the interim.

To understand the current status, I invite you to think of the complications of getting agreement among three Native American tribes and a group of Canadian First Nations, the National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs, U.S. Forest Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Washington Department of Ecology, Skagit and Whatcom county governments, non-governmental organizations including N3C and last, but not least, SCL. If I remember correctly, approximately 135 individuals represent these interested parties on the email list for the Comprehensive Table (Settlement) discussions. Of course, sitting around this enormous roundtable are parties that are more equal than others when it comes to swaying the terms of any agreement, e.g., the Tribes and First Nations with their Treaty rights and consultation authorities, federal and state entities with "conditioning authority" to require SCL and FERC to defer to and comply with their legislative mandates. Only recently has the government of Canada been brought into the discussion because actions in the Skagit River south of the border impact on Canadian lands, waters, and resources north of the border.

The point of describing all this is to expose some of the complexity of the Settlement Process. I am not at liberty to describe the really interesting details of Settlement negotiations, i.e., the negotiation positions and the interplay among different interests. In order to participate in the SCL process, everyone had to sign on to a Protocol that requires complete confidentiality among participants about the positions taken and the process of negotiations. The ostensible purpose

for these limitations is to allow parties to assert positions and then change them as part of the give-and-take of negotiations. Rest assured that when the relicensing is over there will be disclosure. In the meantime the best I can do is to summarize the issues identified in public documents and those remaining to be resolved.

Numerous subgroups are meeting weekly or biweekly to hash out consensus positions. For example, in mid-February about 20 participants met in a four-hour visioning process to share perspectives on long-term expectations for the nature of recreation 20-50 years hence. In late February came initial meetings of the Terrestrial subgroup regarding management of lands purchased for wildlife mitigation as a benefit from the last 30-year license (1995-2025). A special session on Valentine's Day reviewed access options necessary for certain aspects of fish passage. Decisions about fish passage itself are scheduled to be taken in a series of phases to determine scientific feasibility. There are on-going discussions about how river flow will be managed to balance power production, fisheries management, flood control, large woody debris, sediment, etc. In addition, there are important issues like the operation and management of the Environmental Learning Center that require agreements outside of FERC jurisdiction in order to inform the Settlement discussions underway inside FERC's jurisdiction. Finally, and this is where things get both interesting and arcane, many issues have come up in the course of the studies and negotiations where SCL and the participants have agreed to implement actions that are not formal aspects of the license. Which issues they are and how they can be addressed "off license" still must be agreed.

N3C is not a license participant that has conditioning authority or Treaty Rights. We earned our place at the table through tenacious action to

block the High Ross dam in the 1960s and our advocacy for creative and cooperative mitigation measures like the funding of wildlife land acquisition, construction and operation of an Environmental Learning Center and support for a native plant propagation facility in the last relicensing process in 1995. Circumstances have changed significantly since then. The Tribes are taking a much stronger leadership role and federal and state agencies are charged with implementing new rules, etc. N3C maintains a vigilant position in this round of relicensing by advocating for an adaptive approach to management given uncertain impacts of climate change and the length of the license, a holistic ecosystem approach to watershed management for the entire Skagit River basin from Canada to Puget Sound, recreation planning that leaves the environment unimpaired, and sustainable wildlife land management. A major N3C focus for this new license process is to seek more attention, recognition, and protective management for the Skagit Wild and Scenic River designated by Congress in 1978.

Skagit River hydropower timeline

The greatest permanent impact to the Skagit watershed has been hydropower development in the upper reaches located in the North Cascades by the city of Seattle that began over 100 years ago. Trying to halt further hydro development and mitigate some of its impacts has been among the missions of N3C almost since it was formed. We compiled an illustrated timeline of Skagit River hydropower development from 1917-2023, from the first dam to proposals for fish passage, which we hope you find useful. It's an epic story of how an industrial juggernaut was stopped and some of its damage reduced and mitigated (compensated for) in the Skagit River valley and surrounding region:

<https://northcascades.org/skagit-hydro-project-relicensing/>

Fixed anchor bolts in Wilderness

By Ed Henderson

The use of fixed anchors in Wilderness for rock climbing safety protection is a contentious issue of long standing. At issue here is the use of drilled-in expansion bolt anchors of a type originally developed for construction. They are a near permanent fixture after placement. The issue of "fixed" climbing anchors in Wilderness is afflicted (dominated, one may say), as are most issues these days, by uncompromising extremists on either side.

After festering for decades this contentious issue has been brought to a head by two recent actions. Federal agencies responsible for the management of the lands where rock climbing takes place are taking steps to develop a national policy.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service (FS) and the Department of the Interior's National Park Service (NPS) are seeking public input on proposed guidance that would guide agency personnel in managing climbing opportunities on national forests, grasslands and parks.

Climbing activities (including rock climbing, snow and ice climbing, mountaineering, canyoneering, and caving) are popular in national forests, national parks and across public lands. Fixed climbing equipment, also referred to as fixed anchors, includes bolts or other equipment that is left permanently in place after the climb. Some fixed anchors may be necessary

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22



Valley of upper Skagit River in 1931, before Ross dam was built.

BOOK REVIEW

Salmon, Cedar, Rock & Rain

By Tim McNulty

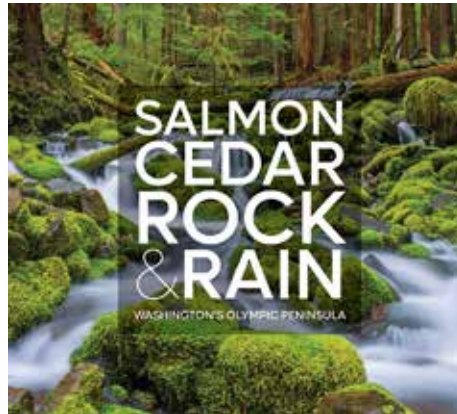
Reviewed by Ed Henderson

As I look west across Puget Sound, the hem of the sky is supported by the peaks of the Olympic Mountains. Just a couple of hours, a ferry ride and a short drive away from the bustling modern metropolis of Seattle is the remote and almost inaccessible center of the Olympic Peninsula.

The Olympic Peninsula is experiencing a renewal and rebirth. Tim McNulty has captured this spirit of optimism in *Salmon, Cedar, Rock & Rain*. He has assembled writers who praise these changes. Tim, a long time conservationist and environmental activist, has gathered the threads of change and hope and presented them on the pages of this beautiful book.

For Euro-Americans the Olympic Peninsula was one of the most remote, inaccessible, last-explored regions in the lower forty eight states. The thick tangled rain forest and steep rocky mountains defied easy access. But the peninsula has been home for indigenous people for millennia. Their cultures developed in concert with the rich natural bounty of the peninsula. Their voices are heard on the pages of *Salmon, Cedar, Rock & Rain*, singing tales of creation, of tribal history and the celebration of renewal. Seven essays by five of the indigenous tribes around the peninsula tell stories of greeting the returning salmon to the Elwha River and of the crashing surf of the Pacific coast beaches.

Tim McNulty describes the most apparent and dynamic change on the peninsula, the freeing of the Elwha River by the removal of two hydro-electric dams. For a hundred years these dams blocked fish passage upstream and trapped sediments washed from the mountains into the reservoirs. Now the salmon are returning, colonizing the headwaters of the stream high in the heart of Olympic



National Park. The free-flowing river is flushing out twenty thousand cubic yards of sediment to rebuild the Elwha delta beach on the Strait of Juan de Fuca. A community of life, reminiscent of the pre-dam estuary, is reestablishing itself as described in *Salmon, Cedar, Rock & Rain*.

The book reports on the successful reintroduction of sea otters to the Pacific coast and fishers to the mountain forest. There is an ongoing effort to remove a human-introduced invasive species, the mountain goats. With no natural predators the goats have proliferated and their dust wallows are wreaking havoc on many unique and endangered plants in the high meadows. The goats are being captured and transported to a new home in the North Cascades. Plans are being developed for reintroduction of wolves. Wolves were and would be again the apex predator and their presence will control and balance the deer and Roosevelt Elk.

One cannot write about the Olympics without talking about trees. The book celebrates in prose and picture

the magnificent Douglas fir and cedars in the ancient deep rain forest of the river valleys and the mountain hemlock on wind-swept ridges.

This book is a visual delight. More than thirty photographers have contributed stunning and illustrative pictures supporting the text. I found the closeup detailed pictures of wildflowers, birds and the sea life in the tidal pools particularly captivating.

Salmon, Cedar, Rock & Rain is published by Braided River imprint of Mountaineer Books. Production was supported in part by N3C's sister conservation organization Olympic Park Advocates.

Join our N3C Facebook page!

We're up to 692 followers and growing. Help us build our clout by friending us and then recommending our page to your friends concerned about preserving the North Cascades.

*608 people
like this*



BOOK REVIEW

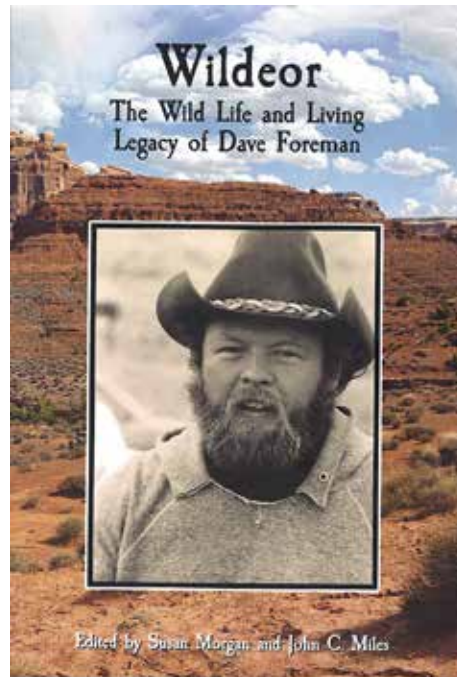
Wildeor: The Wild Life and Living Legacy of Dave Foreman*

Reviewed by Dave Fluharty

There are two kinds of readers for this book: those who knew Dave Foreman and those who didn't.

Those who knew Dave Foreman, co-founder of Earth First!, The Wild Earth Project and The Rewilding Institute will find this volume to be a personal celebration of recollections by his wide circle of friends and people who were inspired in their conservation work by his leadership. To many, he was legend. However, the 50 or so contributors of tributary testimonies of their association with the individual who was Dave Foreman show that he meant many things to many people, but no one knew all of his facets. Contributors to this volume reads like a Who's Who in the conservation movement—writer Terry Tempest Williams, ocean advocate Capt. Paul Watson, Greenpeace and Sea Shepard Conservation Society, ecosystem scientists like Reed Noss and George Wuerthner, and historian John C. Miles, formerly Dean of Western Washington University's College of Environment and well known to many N3C members. Even our own former board member David Brower is quoted as having said that Dave Foreman was the only speaker he did not want to follow. Formidable talent!

Those of us who didn't know Dave Foreman gain a powerful insight into his life and accomplishments through the eyes of those whose lives he ignited with his intellect, passion, rhetoric and bravery. We readers are taken through the gauntlet of the conservation movement from the 1970s to today. Foreman's career started by picking up where luminaries like George Marshall, Howard Zahniser, Mardy and Olaus Murie and others had carried the movement. Foreman first gained recognition as a grassroots organizer of wilderness protec-



tion New Mexico and the Southwest and his career ended still embroiled in the current controversies of landscape level "so-called" collaborative restoration. His last major achievement was as a keynote speaker for the 50th Anniversary National Wilderness Conference in 2014.

Foreman's early skill and enthusiasm drew the attention of The Wilderness Society in the 1970s. He was hired as an organizer and later became an effective lobbyist on the national stage. However, Foreman became disenchanted as The Wilderness Society went corporate, like many leading organizations in the U.S. environmental movement, and became tame, devoted to the concerns of donors and less willing to confront and challenge government agencies and Congress. Foreman wanted to provoke and galvanize action to halt the degradation of the environment on public lands. He and friends founded Earth First!

as that catalyst for action. Many of Earth First's early actions were antics inspired by Edward Abbey's monkeywrenching and bordered on illegal. However, some, like the unscrolling of a 300 foot-long strip of black plastic depicting a huge crack in the face of Glen Canyon Dam (1981) were effective at raising concerns over water use in the Southwest. In the beginning, the Earth First! agenda called for 44 Wilderness areas of one million acres each as biological preserves. It was later credited with influencing E.O. Wilson's 2016 "Half Earth" proposal to set aside 50% of the earth in strictly protected areas. (page 62 Susan Zakin tribute)

Earth First! grew into a nation-wide organization with quirky but effective conservation actions. Its actions in the Pacific Northwest on behalf of old-growth forests involved pounding nails into trees to protect from chainsaws and blocking roads to slow or stop timber sales. As Earth First! matured it became more radical in a political sense, as opposed to taking action through grassroots organizing or clever monkeywrenching. That was not a direction Foreman appreciated and led to him leaving the organization to co-found The Wildlands Project and eventually the Rewilding Institute, both searching for continental scale conservation connectivity. Amazingly, Foreman attracted meaningful support from conservation philanthropist/activists like Doug Tomkins (Esprit Clothing), Yvon Chouinard (Patagonia), and Michael Soulé (Society for Conservation Biology) in setting forth ambitious conservation goals based on solid science. Oh, and by the way of all of these accomplishments, Foreman and his wife Nancy were key founders

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

BOOK REVIEW

Dave Foreman

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

of the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance.

As a reviewer of the book and someone whose conservation engagement overlaps with the time span of Foreman's career, I have been aware of his effort from an institutional perspective but never realized his seminal roles as an individual. I had never connected the dots that are now connected after reading the multiple tributes to Foreman by his peers.

If I have any complaint about the book, it is that there is repetition in the stories and accolades in the essays by authors who wrote from their experience with Foreman. That is the inevitable result in a festschrift asking many people to share their perspectives and then cobbling together without altering their essays. It is impossible to edit out redundancy without losing the character of authors writing from their hearts. In a positive sense, the end result is that I am now introduced to a whole bunch of people in the conservation movement I had never met. Through the eyes and words of the authors the cumulative outcome is a lively history of the conservation movement. Still, how I wish that the editors had supplied a timeline for Foreman's life and contributions and listed a bibliography of his books, articles and major publications.

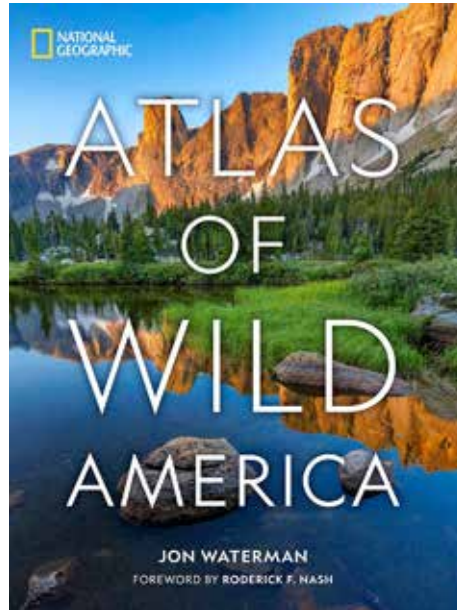
* "Wildeer" is an Old English term for "free-willed beast," which defines wilderness for Foreman, according to co-editor John Miles. It was his way of advocating for a landscape where nature makes the decisions instead of humans. (p. 2).

BOOK REVIEW

Atlas of Wild America

By Jon Waterman

Reviewed by Phil Fenner



This is an astonishing work of visual and descriptive genius. Jon Waterman has hit it out of the ballpark with this new atlas, which is so much more than just a book of maps. Take a deep dive into units of the US National Wilderness Preservation System, as well as many in Canada and several in Mexico. Don't miss Roderick Nash's Introduction, a modern classic unto itself. The stars of the show are three of my all-time favorite places, the Glacier Peak, Pasayten and Eagle Cap Wilderness Areas.

First, flip to page 312 and see the map that got N3C involved in this book project, and raised the public's awareness. This handmade map by N3C founder Patrick Goldsworthy, which I found in his collection after his passing, shows how the protected area of Glacier Peak Wilderness was reduced in size between 1939 and 1940, at the whim of a new Chief Forester. At a glance, that map shows the essence of why N3C was founded—the quest for permanent protec-

tion of the wild Cascades, protection that wouldn't just evaporate overnight when the Forest Service leadership changed, or changed their mind at the behest of the timber industry.

The Forest Service had reduced the protected area by half in 1940 and excluded many low valleys full of amazing ancient forest, which then became a prime target for the timber beast. Who would speak up to defend the forest? That bait-and-switch and other such actions by the Forest Service sparked a decades-long quest for the Wilderness Act which finally passed 60 years ago this Fall. N3C ultimately was a leading part of the effort to save what the Forest Service had excluded in the North Cascades, in a combination of Wilderness Areas in National Forest and National Park. Which is still not nearly enough protected land, and which itself needs vigilance to protect from the very agencies that manage it, of course!

I'm so glad I recognized that map's significance when I saw it in Patrick's basement and put a digital image of it on our website, which in turn made it possible for the National Geographic folks to find it and ask to use it in this book. Ultimately, they used Patrick's map and also let me speak on his behalf to improve some of their text about the Glacier Peak Wilderness, to replace "timber harvest," a euphemism he rightly despised, with "clearcutting," for instance.

You will savor this book's beauty and intricate detail for years, and it will inspire you to defend and expand protection for the wild country we so cherish.

Cars win, trees lose at Mount Baker ski area parking lot

Before-and-after photos capture the recent expansion of the White Salmon parking lot at Mount Baker Ski Area. On top, taken 4/4/23, Pacific silver firs up to 400 years and mountain hemlocks up to 800 years in age greet another subalpine evening above the prior margin of the parking lot. Below, taken 12/17/23 at the same location, the ancient trees have been destroyed and the slope blasted out to make room for more vehicles, leaving a grotesque highwall which shall forevermore be known as the (Mt. Baker District Ranger) Ted Neff Bluff. Seeking to augment its revenue stream, the ski area's owners and U.S. Forest Service quietly pursued this desecration with a bare minimum of public notice or input. N3C was the sole organization to contest it, with entities as varied as RE Sources, Washington Wild, and the Nooksack Tribe declining to utter so much as a squeak of dissent. Although relatively small in acreage, this debacle reflects the modern zeitgeist to a remarkable degree: the casual destruction blessed by the Forest Service for essentially any economic activity proposed on our National Forest lands, the courtier-like posture of most staffed environmental groups, the bottomless appetite for reckless development by Industrial-Strength Recreation, and a deep-seated apathy among Washingtonians for our dwindling natural world.



No ranger staff in Stehekin this summer?

By Carolyn McConnell

Op-Ed, *Seattle Times*

This summer, thousands of visitors will take ferries up 55-mile-long Lake Chelan and land at the tiny community of Stehekin, where they will be surrounded by spectacular glaciated mountains, a deep wooded valley, and a rushing wild river. The magnificent scenery is what led Congress in 1968 to set this place aside as part of the North Cascades National Park complex.

One thing they won't find in this gateway to the Park: The National Park Service.

For the first time since the Park's founding, there will be no rangers in grey and green to greet or give directions. No public servants to point out trailheads, issue permits for camping, explain the type of bears to look out for, name the surrounding mountains, or even direct visitors to the bathrooms. Visitors who make their way to the Golden West Visitor Center uphill from the boat landing won't be able to view the exhibits of local wildlife, or enjoy exhibits curated by talented local artists. The Golden West, a grand building marking the Park's presence in Stehekin, will be locked and dark.

North Cascades National Park staff have told park advocates that no ranger staff will be working in Stehekin this summer. It plans to abdicate the role Congress assigned it in this gem of the National Park system.

In the first decades of the North Cascades National Park, the visitor center in Stehekin was well staffed with interpretive rangers who offered expert advice on hikes, whether for an afternoon or a week. They handed out National Park stamps, coloring books, and junior ranger badges to kids.



Looking down on Lake Chelan from in front of the Golden West Visitor Center, Stehekin. —ALISON CUMMINGS PHOTO

No rangers, and Golden West Visitor Center will be locked and dark

They gave ranger talks on the natural forces that created the Stehekin Valley, its flora and fauna, and local human history. They drove vans full of visitors up the narrow valley to trailheads, while offering explanations of the sights going by. They made sure that visitors knew that dogs aren't allowed on Park trails and that they shouldn't leave food around to tempt bears. Rangers also provided prompt search and rescue services and emergency medical care.

But in recent years, even as visitors increasingly flocked to this park, the Park Service has steadily cut back on services in the North Cascades. In the past decade, visitation jumped 40 percent, while Park staffing fell by more than 50 percent. Years ago, the Park ceased providing van service staffed by rangers in Stehekin. Ranger talks grew rare. But this year marks a sudden

decision by federal authorities simply to give up on Stehekin.

The North Cascades National Park complex encompasses not only the glaciated climax of the Cascades range, but also two massive fjord-like lakes (Ross Lake and Lake Chelan, the third deepest lake in North America). It is one of the wildest of America's national parks, yet it is just a few hours' drive from the booming Seattle metropolitan area. It includes the unique Stehekin Valley—inaccessible by road and, thanks to Congress's set-aside, a rare lowland valley with an unsullied wild river and more trout, bear, and deer than buildings.

The decision by the National Park Service to abandon Stehekin is a betrayal of Congress's intent in assigning Stehekin to the care of the Park Service. America's national parks are, as F.D.R. once said, America's best idea. People from all over America and the world want to come enjoy this gem,

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and they deserve to be greeted and assisted by public servants.

The North Cascades National Park, like all National Parks, comes under the jurisdiction of the Department of the Interior. That is why the North Cascades Conservation Council and other advocates of National Parks are calling on Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland and the Director of the National Park Service to fully staff Stehekin with rangers this summer, keep the Golden West Visitor Center open, and commit to continue providing these services as the Park has done for the last 55 years.



Use the QR code to petition!

Use the QR code to sign the petition, or visit the online copy at change.org (<https://tinyurl.com/NPS-Stehekin>) and demand that the Park Service serve the public and properly care for this treasure.

We, the undersigned, call on Interior Secretary Deb Haaland and the director of the National Park Service to commit to fully staff Stehekin with rangers this summer, keep the Golden West Visitor Center open, and commit to continue providing these services as the Park has done for the last 55 years.

We are appalled that North Cascades National Park Service staff have told Park advocates that they plan to hire no ranger staff to work in Stehekin this summer.

Without visitor-facing Park staff in Stehekin, there will be no one to issue camping permits, advise visitors on hikes or trail closures and hazards, explain that dogs are not allowed on Park trails or that visitors shouldn't leave food around to tempt bears. The rangers won't be there to provide prompt search and rescue services and emergency medical care.

The decision by the National Park Service to abandon Stehekin is a betrayal of Congress's intent in assigning Stehekin to the care of the Park Service. America's national parks are, as F.D.R once said, America's best idea. People from all over America and the world want to come enjoy this gem, and they deserve to be greeted by public servants.

That is why we call on Secretary Haaland and the NPS director to publicly repudiate and reverse decisions to curtail ranger staffing in Stehekin this year.

Big, Tall Trees

By Evan Meier, 1st grade

Good for treehouses, good for cabins.
Good for birds, but not when cut down.
There are so many kinds —
dogwoods, maples, evergreen and more.
Who knows how long they've been alive,
maybe before the dinosaurs!?
Everyone needs them for lots of things,
to build, to breathe,
and to whittle birds with wings.

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About the poet

Evan is a 7-year-old student at Bellingham Family Partnership Program. After each unit of study this year he wrote a poem to reflect his learning with the goal of binding them all into a book. Evan loves word play and is an avid reader and writer with abundant imagination. He is waiting for the day his Hogwarts letter arrives to tell him he is a wizard.

"Big, Tall Trees" was only his third poem ever written. He was eager to write poems about anything and everything once he discovered their freedom of form and playfulness. This poem was written after learning about deforestation and how trees affect our lives in ways both big and small.

Beckler River “Section 6” nominated for Trust Land Transfer

By Rick McGuire, Alpine Lakes Protection Society



The Washington Department of Natural Resources’ (DNR’s) Trust Land Transfer (TLT) program has been called the best-kept conservation secret in Washington state. Established in the 1980s, the TLT program has conserved over 126,000 acres since its inception.

The program works via a process whereby the state legislature appropriates funds to buy “replacement” lands to allow DNR to keep generating revenue, in exchange for preserving lands of high conservation value. The

process can sometimes be complicated, but it works. Notably, the great majority of TLT protected lands are biologically rich lowlands, unlike the bulk of protected Federally managed lands such as Wilderness areas, which tend to be in high and mountainous areas.

TLT has seen ups and downs over the years, often reflecting the interest or lack thereof from the current Commissioner of Public Lands, who oversees and sets policy for DNR. Under highly motivated Commission-

ers such as Jennifer Belcher and Peter Goldmark, the program saw many successes.

Lands Commissioner is usually considered the most “downballot” statewide elected office. As such, it has too often attracted the attention of ambitious politicians seeing it merely as a steppingstone to bigger and better

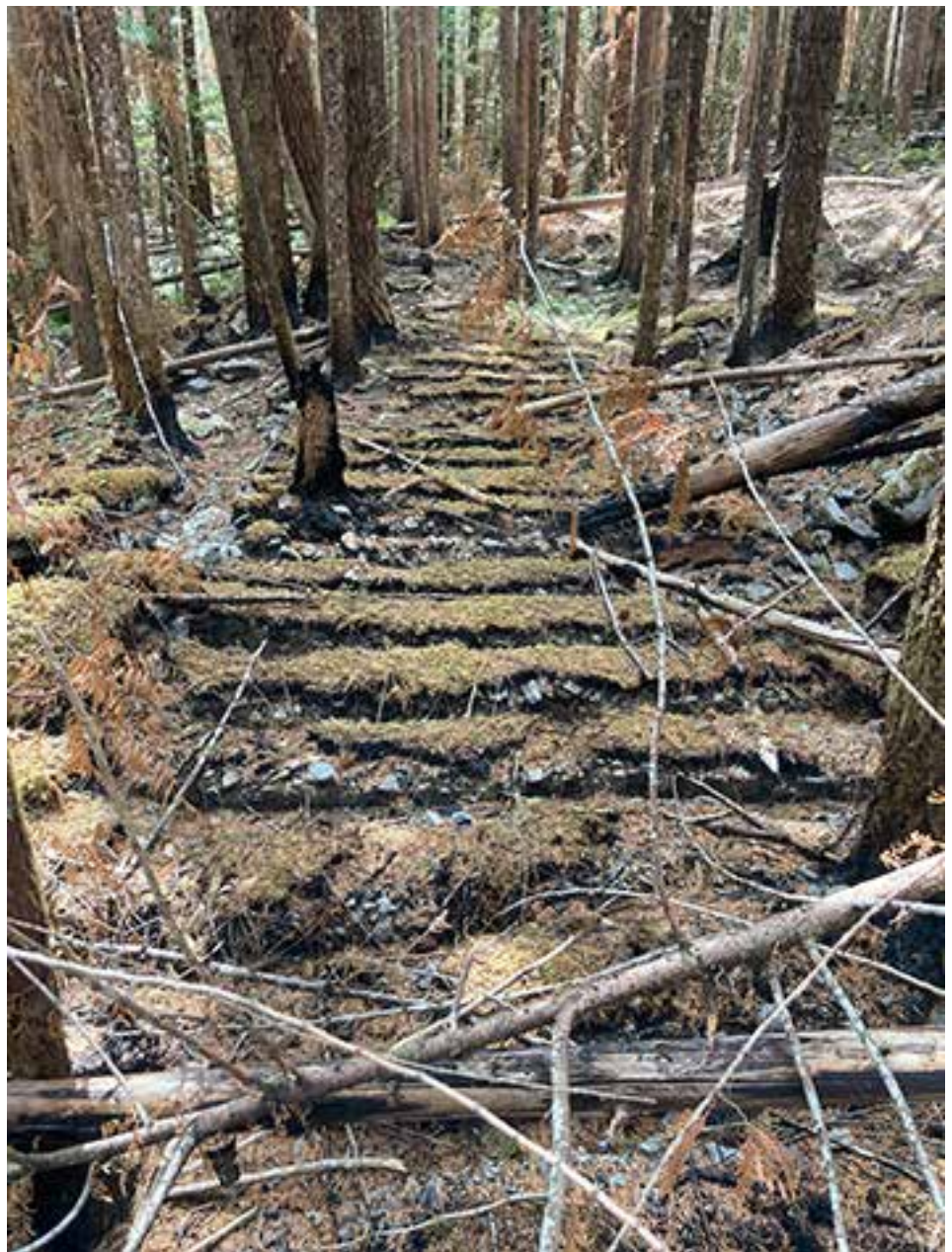
Area of ground fire in Beckler 6. The ground level was “cleaned up,” but bigger trees almost all survived with little problem. —RICK MCGUIRE PHOTO

things. The current Commissioner, Hilary Franz, fits that category, and abandoned the TLT program along with much else. Franz's tenure will be remembered for her years of casting greedy eyes toward the Governor's mansion, and little else. Although to be fair, it should be noted that in her waning days in office she is pouring her energies into adding Smokey Bear to the state's menu of specialty license plates. At last, a cause sure to fire the passions of the most jaded cynic.

Conservationists sorely missed the TLT program after its long string of successes. After Franz left it for dead, N3C member (and former board member) Jim Freeburg offered his services and experience working in Olympia to do something about changing that. At first, it was just a bare handful of people, three to be exact, but gradually the effort grew and attracted supporters from around the state. Then a major push was made to convince state legislators that Trust Land Transfer was too good to be sent to a premature grave. In 2023, success came with a new law authorizing TLT, followed soon by funding to start the wheels turning once again.

The revived Trust Land Transfer program included some new provisions. DNR announced that for it to hold on to newly protected areas, they would have to be within an already established DNR Natural Resource Conservation Area (NRCA) or a Natural Area Preserve (NAP.) Any other places deemed worthy of protection, but not within those already established DNR areas, would need to be transferred to another public agency. Cities, counties and other state agencies are eligible. Federally recognized Indian tribes were also included in the list of possible receiving agencies.

After passage of the TLT act, DNR announced that it would accept new TLT proposals within a very short window that ended on September 30, 2023. DNR set up a process where they will judge whether proposals fit their conservation objectives as well as the financial "best interest of the trust." In previous years, DNR has been the most motivated to employ TLT in areas with high conservation



Inconspicuous before the ground fire, the route of a logging RR in Beckler 6. After 90 years, the creosote in the wooden ties burned, leaving voids and making the line noticeable again, at least for a while. —RICK MCGUIRE PHOTO

values but which were geographically isolated, and/or difficult to log or otherwise make money from. The new TLT process is still largely that way, albeit with a few new features.

DNR received about 30 new TLT applications before the deadline. As ever, the number of worthy projects will likely exceed the funding available. There are still a number of unfinished TLT projects from years past that need to be completed, and many believe that these, or most of them at least,

should be dealt with before seeking funding for brand new projects. Just how all this will go cannot be predicted, but will depend on budget constraints and political sentiments in the legislature.

There are two TLT proposals in the Skykomish watershed. One is from DNR to complete the 37,000-acre Morningstar NRCA by the addition of a further 1071 acres in the Olney creek

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Beckler River

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Typical natural second growth forest on lower slopes in Beckler 6. The largest trees average 30 to 36 inches in diameter, and mostly 140 to 160 feet high. —RICK MCGUIRE PHOTO

watershed. Morningstar is far and away the biggest protected area on state lands. It wraps around the Spada reservoir that supplies water to Everett and Snohomish county. Most of Morningstar is steep and rocky but there are some significant areas of forest, including the final 1071 acres which will hopefully finish the job.

Another, newer proposal is for a 640-acre square-mile section of DNR land in the lower Beckler valley, north of Highway 2 a few miles northeast of the town of Skykomish. Called Beckler Section 6, it is a remarkable, heavily forested area of productive lowlands and valley bottom. It borders the Wild Sky Wilderness for a full mile to the north, as well as a smaller stretch to the southeast. The Mount Baker Snoqualmie National Forest borders it on the north, east and south, with private timberlands located to its west. Beckler 6 is more than twenty miles away from any other DNR-managed lands, making it a good TLT candidate.

Beckler Section 6 was railroad logged during the early 1930s, and has since been left alone. It was never

replanted, and being a rich lowland area it has since grown back on its own into an impressive 90-year old forest. Many trees are three feet in diameter, and the tallest one found so far measured 189 feet. It is not true “old growth,” but well on its way to becoming so. The 2022 Bolt Creek fire burned into perhaps 80 acres in the southwest part of the section, but it stayed on the ground, killing very few of the larger trees.

Beckler Section 6 is located where the Beckler river leaves its upper, V-shaped valley and spreads out over an extensive floodplain. The bottomlands are a quarter mile or more wide, and there are multiple braided side channels. These gravel-bottomed side channels are ideal spawning and rearing habitat for multiple species of anadromous fish. Very few such fish nurseries are found so far back into the Cascades.

There just aren't many places left like this part of the Beckler valley. The Alpine Lakes Protection Society (ALPS) long had its eye on Beckler 6, and when the TLT program was

reborn, it seemed like a perfect fit. Not being within an NRCA or near any other DNR land, it is not a place that DNR would want to continue to manage. But the new TLT program allows recognized Indian tribes to be the receiving agency for TLT parcels. When the Tulalip tribes offered to be that agency, all the pieces began to fall into place.

The Tulalip Tribes are composed mostly of Snoqualmie and Skykomish people, along with other peoples whose homes were, and are, on or near Puget Sound in what is today Snohomish county. There is actually no one “Tulalip” tribe, but rather a number of peoples who were sent to live at a reservation on Puget Sound west of Marysville at a place called Tulalip. Thus, they are normally referred to as “Tulalips,” in the plural.

The Tulalips are signatories to the 1855 Point Elliott Treaty. They ceded legal title to most of the lands they lived on, but retained the rights to hunt, fish and gather on “unoccupied” lands. In 1855 it was difficult to imagine the tidal wave of settlement and privatization of land that was to come. But come it did, along with careless and ruthless exploitation of all the resources upon which the Tulalips depend. The area of “open and unoccupied” land shrank radically, and there were many decades of struggle for the Tulalips.

Despite many hardships, Tulalip culture has endured and adapted. The Tulalip Tribes have now become the strongest force for protecting the natural world in their traditional home. They have assembled a large staff of environmental professionals, and are involved in every aspect of conservation of lands, waters, forests and wildlife. They have also become politically active in protecting their treaty rights. Courts have ruled that public lands are the “open and unoccupied” lands of today. The Tulalips are active in protecting their rights to continue to hunt, fish and gather, and promoting the health of public lands.

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The Tulalips have been particularly involved in the Beckler and nearby areas in recent years. They purchased 1000 acres in two parcels, one along the Beckler river about a mile downstream from Section 6, and another on Grotto mountain to the west. They also co-manage, with the US Forest Service, an area called swedaxali on a high ridge less than two miles east of Section 6. This area was clearcut by Weyerhaeuser in the 1970s, then

later acquired by the Forest Service in a land exchange. It is now managed for huckleberry production, and is the site of Tulalip's annual "mountain camp," where elders teach young people about their long tradition of huckleberry gathering.

With Beckler Section 6, Alpine Lakes Protection Society is the TLT applicant, with Tulalip Tribes as the receiving agency. Should we be successful, Tulalip would hold and manage Section 6 as a tribal nature preserve, without logging. Beckler Section 6 would stay as it now is, the forests

would continue to grow and the salmon continue to return and spawn. The Tulalips would again manage a place which they have already taken care of for millennia.

Given the existing backlog in the TLT program, it is unlikely that Beckler Section 6 will be jumping any line ahead of other worthy projects such as Morningstar completion. But the process to protect it has begun. The Skykomish watershed is very fortunate that its native peoples are taking the lead in protecting the place they have lived in "since time immemorial."

USFS and carbon dioxide sequestration

By David Fluharty

TWC Winter-Spring 2023, N3C has urged the USFS to make the Mount Baker Snoqualmie National Forest a carbon reserve by protecting existing forests—especially old growth forests. The forests of the Pacific Northwest are documented to efficiently sequester carbon above ground in the trunks and canopy and on and below ground in dead trees, roots and soil. The Biden administration has encouraged this policy of forest sequestration in an Executive Order because it is one of the most effective ways to offset the continued release of greenhouse gasses from human activities in the environment. In November, however, the Biden administration sought to bolster so-called permanent sequestration of CO₂ on national forest land and grassland by proposing to amend the USFS special land-use regulations in order to allow the agency to consider permitting the injection of CO₂ from industrial processes directly into the pore space of geologic formations for ostensibly permanent storage. Present USFS special land-use regulations prohibit the agency from authorizing exclusive and perpetual use and occupancy of USFS lands according to the Federal Register notice of rulemaking (Vol. 88, No.212 pp 75530-32, 11/3/23). The practice is already approved by

the Bureau of Land Management for its lands.

The proposed opening of national forest land to permanent and exclusive use for CO₂ storage is controversial. Not only is it expensive, it is very difficult to do right in order to achieve permanent storage. If not done right, the high-pressure pipelines carrying the CO₂ to the injection site can rupture, endangering people, wildlife, and nearby infrastructure, and the injected CO₂ returns to the atmosphere, according to Boston University researcher June Sekera. In the interest of using every tool in the tool box the federal government has targeted carbon capture and storage with federal income tax credit including new measures under the Inflation Reduction Act. The problem is, the amount of CO₂ estimated to be sequestered is on the order of millions of tons, whereas emissions are on the order of billions of tons emitted annually.

Why are national forests being opened up for carbon sequestration? The answer is that it is much cheaper and has less complicated transactions than dealing with myriad private, tribal, communities and local governments that are opposing CO₂ sequestration on their lands.

It is not clear that there are industrial sources of sufficient CO₂ to justify carbon capture and storage on national forest lands in the North Cascades or that the geologic formations underlying the national forests would be suitable for consideration. The deep layers of basalt flows in the Columbia Plateau would likely be the type of geologic formations selected for such use before any USFS land in the North Cascades. However, it is small comfort to realize that the current rule-making does not open the national forests to CO₂ waste dumping but only permits the agency to consider special-use applications for the practice. Other laws like the National Environmental Policy Act and the Environmental Protection Agency rules for hazardous wastes also apply. Still, weakening the national forest policy on prohibition of exclusive and perpetual use there could make it more difficult to maintain the precedent and make it harder for the USFS to deny other requests in the future. In the meantime, leaving intact mature forests to keep on efficiently and cheaply storing carbon dioxide is a much smarter choice to reduce CO₂ in the atmosphere at a lower environmental and economic cost than injecting it in rock formations.

BOOK REVIEW

The Making of the Northwest Forest Plan: The Wild Science of Saving Old Growth Ecosystems

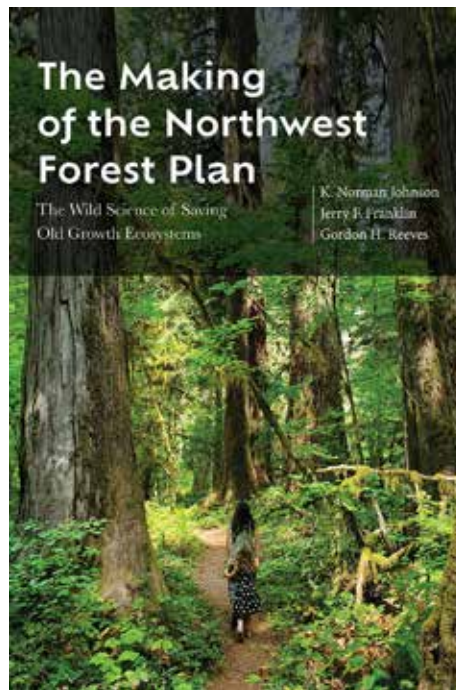
By K. Norman Johnson, Jerry F. Franklin, and Gordon H. Reeves

Reviewed by Dave Fluharty

This long overdue exposé on the process and substance of the making of the Northwest Forest Plan (NWFP) in 1994 comes just in time to remind all of us about the tremendous struggle to reduce or stop the logging of the remaining old-growth forests of the Pacific Northwest in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Much of the NWFP depends on the Endangered Species Act and the spotted owl in West Coast habitat. The NWFP covers the federal forests from the border with Canada south to the latitude of San Francisco in California. It is the world's largest terrestrial ecosystem management plan encompassing 19.4 million acres of federal lands managed by the USFS. The NWFP insists that the USFS abide by existing federal laws—notably the Endangered Species Act, the National Forest Management Act and the National Environmental Policy Act.

According to DellaSalla et al. 2015, “Twenty years into plan implementation... the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management, under pressure for increased timber harvest, are retreating from conservation measures. We believe that federal agencies should instead build on the NWFP to ensure continuing success in the Pacific Northwest.”

According to Forest Service Employees for Environmental Ethics (FSEEE, Forest News, Winter 2024 p. 15) the NWFP provides for: 6.5 million acres of late-successional reserves (LSR); 2.1 million acres of riparian reserves; 1.5 million acres of adaptive management; and 3.28 million acres for logging. Some 7.25 million acres of USFS land is in designated Wilderness—but not all of that is forested. FSEEE cites re-



search that documents improvements in forest ecosystems managed under the NWFP. Will those improvements continue or will they be rolled back as a result of the review? Much depends on who is chosen in the 2024 Presidential and Congressional elections. The current administration has issued Executive Orders to take action to reduce atmospheric emissions of greenhouse gases like CO₂ and methane. It has also directed federal agencies to strongly support maintenance of the carbon sequestering functions performed by mature and old-growth forests

Given the passage of time since adoption of the NWFP, it is reasonable to revisit the implementation of the NWFP to know if it is achieving the

original intent. At present, the Biden Administration's Department of Agriculture, Forest Service has appointed a committee to advise how the NWFP should be amended to achieve the goal of modernizing landscape-level forest management. At best, the new Advisory Committee will review the achievements of the NWFP over the last 25 years and make recommendations for strengthening its protections of wildlife and maturing and old-growth forests in light of the results of monitoring, new scientific research, and better understanding of climate change effects on forest ecosystems including the capacity of these ecosystems to sequester carbon. At worst, the Advisory Committee will be ignored and USFS will use this opportunity to weaken protections of wildlife and old growth forests in order to restore landscape level of logging under the guise of forest “health” or fire management. It is fair to observe that the USFS fought the development of the original NWFP and it has sought ways to circumvent its provisions. In 2012 it succeeded in weakening the monitoring prescriptions and redefined standards and guidelines which allow the agency to operate to achieve “desired conditions” as it prefers to define them and not as defined in the NWFP.

The Making of the Northwest Forest Plan summarizes the scientific arguments and the basic principles of forest ecology and reports the significance of maturing and old-growth forests for wildlife, watershed protection, and myriad other factors, making

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the point that mature and old-growth forests are unique strongholds for conservation. The book is organized to introduce the Northwest forest ecosystem and the background for the controversy over how to manage it. The environmental laws passed by Congress in the early 1970s form the basis for much-needed reforms in environmental and forest management but the USFS was slow to implement changes to its management. This set the stage for major challenge by the burgeoning environmental and forest activists disgusted with the cavalier way the USFS ignored ecosystem approaches to management.

The pathway to implement change is complex and convoluted and involves politics at the highest levels of government. The NWFP constitutes a major achievement in finding a way forward. The book does not stop with the adoption of the NWFP in 1995. It continues with the challenges of implementing the NWFP from industry, the agencies and Congress. It concludes with

advice on ways to maintain progress in forest management that is scientifically sound, ecologically credible, and legally responsible. The final chapters set the stage for how the authors view the potential revision to the NWFP and offer a path forward.

Because the authors are senior scientists who contributed mightily to the NWFP and have been leaders in developing forest ecosystem science for a generation, their perspectives on the issues to be resolved are invaluable. They are our “elders” and they provide wisdom from their experience. They cite conservation of “older natural forests” as being at the core of the issue. However, they also identify many complicating factors, i.e., 1) the importance of a focus on different forest types dominant in wet and dry areas; 2) the significant changes in the nature of survival of spotted owls and their competitors; 3) the role of forests in restoring salmon; 4) the pervasive impacts of climate change especially with respect to fire; 5) recognition of tribal rights; and 6) reminding us not to forget the sourcing of future timber harvests.

The authors end with the short section “Ways to Make Needed Changes,” which cogently invites readers to consider a wide range of outcomes as feasible outcomes. It is clear that the authors support continued protection of Late Successional Reserves (old growth). Their approach might disappoint those like N3C that would prefer a stronger endorsement of protection for maturing forests in reserves as a means to increase carbon sequestration to combat global warming. Sometimes it seems the authors endorse human interventions in management [e.g., logging] instead of relying on natural processes of forest succession to restore the ecosystems from a century of logging and to adapt to a changing climate. Regardless of such quibbles, I highly recommend *The Making of the Northwest Forest Plan* to anyone who is willing to engage with the processes of the USDA Advisory Committee considering amendment of the NWFP. Stay current by checking shorturl.at/noBIL.

Morning Star NRCA may finally be fully protected!

N3C has long advocated for Wilderness-like protections on state land. Our slow, yet steady efforts are once again bearing fruit. Back in 2020, we started an effort to revitalize the Trust Land Transfer (TLT) program at the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR). This came because our desire to protect Morning Star (a unique mid/high elevation forest above Sultan) had stalled without sufficient funding.

TLT is an important, yet relatively unknown, conservation tool funded by the state legislature. It protects ecologically valuable state trust land that isn't a good fit for DNR's mission of generating non-tax revenue by logging

to fund public services. Essentially, TLT puts land into conservation status that would otherwise get logged.

Our TLT revitalization effort grew into a massive state-wide campaign once people realized how useful the TLT tool could be. We instigated a multi-year TLT modernization project at DNR and led the campaign that resulted in the passage of new policy (HB 1460) and \$20 million in funding last year to protect 4,400 acres of state land.

During the 2024 legislative session, legislators are likely to invest another \$8 million in TLT at the urging of N3C and other conservation groups. However, the funding is contingent on the

initiative that voters will consider this fall to repeal the Climate Commitment Act (CCA). Proceeds from the CCA's carbon auctions are funding TLT and if the funding source goes away, legislators have said they won't be able to fund TLT any longer (though they funded TLT through another source for 30 years!!).

If the \$8 million holds, over 1,000 acres of pristine forests in the Morning Star Natural Resource Conservation Area (NRCA) would be protected. A major win for the environment, led by N3C.

See this Op-Ed in *Seattle Times* by N3C member Jim Freeburg: <http://tinyurl.com/yc7tyc47>

Bipartisan push for more logging drives Northwest Forest Plan Amendment

By Jim Scarborough

Since last century's Clinton administration, across all of the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest and much of the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest, the Northwest Forest Plan has been the law of the land. Met with some ambivalence by forest conservationists when originally unveiled and generally viewed with contempt by both the U.S. Forest Service and timber industry over its entire 30-year history, the Northwest Forest Plan has at least prevented most of the continued destruction of old growth and mature forests on the MBSNF and OWNF that would otherwise have occurred. The success of the Plan has been largely two-pronged, via prohibiting logging in forest stands at least 80 years of age across acreage zoned as Late Successional Reserves, and restricting increased logging road density in designated Key Watersheds.

Worryingly, the Forest Service, an agency long known for having never met a tree that it didn't wish to make horizontal, has abruptly kicked off a process to amend the Northwest Forest Plan. With ample foreboding, the agency has announced that "the need for forest products" will be given equal weight to "the need for forest habitat." A Federal Advisory Committee has been convened to provide recommendations to the agency for this amendment. At first glance, the committee's members appear to represent a diversity of interests (and biases), though most if not all participants have expressed a desire for more sawlogs getting trucked out of our National Forests, while having consumed copious amounts of the requisite kool-aid to believe that only more chainsaws and bulldozers will "restore" forests in the long run.

A new era of intensive industrialization of our National Forests regrettably seems to be upon us, and the push to do so is remarkably biparti-

san. Gone, apparently, are the days of viewing self-willed, wild nature as having intrinsic worth, although this dying sentiment was rather tenuous even in its prime. It is being replaced by a utilitarianism reminiscent of the go-go decades of 1950 to 1990, whereby short-term human wants and economic greed are paramount, yet now obscured by a firehose of euphemisms to suggest that we're merely transitioning to a smarter generation of forest management. In other words, we're told that we can have our cake and eat it, too. During an initial round of public input to the Federal Advisory Committee, N3C provided the following points to help cut through this wall of groupthink:

The North Cascades Conservation Council (NCCC) has worked to protect and preserve the North Cascades' scenic, scientific, recreational, educational, and wilderness values since 1957. Through our longtime advocacy on the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie and Okanogan-Wenatchee national forests, we are intimately familiar with implementation of the 1994 Northwest Forest Plan and have high interest in ensuring that its proposed amendment meaningfully strengthens protections for terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems in the North Cascades. The collective decades of firsthand observations by NCCC's members of the effects of climate change upon our natural areas further inform our perspective. With this extensive background in mind, we wish to communicate our central priorities for this amendment during the scoping process:

1. Active silvicultural management, timber extraction, and road construction or reconstruction should be prohibited in all types of structurally

complex, mature forest stands on the MBSNF and OWNF. These forests may be operationally defined as having a stand origin date prior to World War II; or alternately, 1940 and earlier. These stands feature biological, structural, functional, and genetic legacies, while otherwise rapidly evolving into the next generation of old growth forests. They offer both high-quality habitat and viable migration corridors for Endangered Species Act-listed and sensitive species. Typically also, these legacy forests were not replanted, instead regenerating naturally

subsequent to wind events, fire events, or non-modern logging. The Washington State Department of Natural Resources is already well along toward removing such legacy forests from its timber base on state lands, and NCCC strongly advises the U.S. Forest Service to

"The need for forest products" will be given equal weight to "the need for forest habitat"

do the same on federal lands via this amendment.

2. Particularly relevant to the east slope forests of the North Cascades, though not necessarily exclusively, the popular concept of "fireproofing" via active management (e.g., thinning) continues to lack scientific consensus and in fact remains a source of considerable controversy within peer-reviewed literature. There is no shortage of evidence that some aspects of active management actually increase the risk of wildfire to adjacent human communities, by way of greater exposure to wind, earlier desiccation of the forest floor each summer, and increased access leading to human-caused fire due to an excessively high volume of open and unmonitored forest roads. Moreover, the notion of active management

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to reduce wildfire impacts in old growth and mature forests is specious for these same reasons. Such activities fragment and degrade what would otherwise be intact forest, while fire resistance/resilience as the ostensible aim is merely a transparent cover for extraction of greater timber volume. Strangely also, the USFS refuses to acknowledge the established natural history of very large, high-intensity, stand-replacement fires on both sides of the Cascades during the early 20th century and prior. For these reasons, as well as sensitivity toward the federal budget deficit, NCCC advises that all activities designed for fire resistance/resilience be limited exclusively to the immediate wildland-urban interface.

3. The practice of postfire “salvage” logging must be discontinued in perpetuity on the MBSNF and OOWNF across all Northwest Forest Plan zonings, wherever new road construction or reconstruction would be required

to access burned stands for timber extraction. This prohibition would be based on a well-established body of empirical research which has repeatedly demonstrated the severe damage to fragile soils and water quality which result from salvage logging operations, along with the ever-increasing habitat value to multiple species from postfire landscapes allowed to recover undisturbed through natural successional processes. Postfire timber extraction should be limited to the immediate vicinity of major trunk road corridors and applied conservatively even there, allowing for residual standing snags and accumulation of coarse woody debris, while working with regional tribes for transport of suitable trees which have fallen across the road prism or are anticipated to do so for aquatic restoration purposes elsewhere.

4. Intact and functioning aquatic and riparian habitats, along with the viability of terrestrial wildlife migration corridors, require much greater

emphasis on significantly reducing the size of open road networks on both the MBSNF and OOWNF than the USFS has been able to muster over the past two decades. An effective and meaningful aquatic conservation strategy will systematically reduce road density across both key watersheds and non-key watersheds, well beyond the modest goals of the original and now largely obsolete watershed analyses which followed adoption of the Northwest Forest Plan. Similarly, temporary roads constructed for management activities must be obliterated and fully restored to natural hillslope/hydrologic conditions immediately after a given management activity is concluded. It of course follows that newly constructed and reconstructed roads in or across riparian reserves are especially problematic and should be verboten aside from the most-strictly limited circumstances. Additionally, NCCC supports regional tribes’ recommendations for expanded riparian buffers across all forms of management activity.

How the Forest Service is “restoring” the Libby Creek watershed



Why do we have trust issues with the USFS? N3C member Isabelle Spohn of Twisp sent us these photos of “progress” recently made by the

Forest Service on the Mission Restoration Project (with the approval of the North Central Washington Forest Health Collaborative, the Okanogan County Commissioners, and related groups) in units in Libby Creek/Elderberry Canyon.

Spohn commented: *Is this the quality of work the Commissioners intend to support throughout the Methow Valley in future “restoration” projects now being planned for the coming decades? (Keep in mind that the Commissioners have fully supported this and future projects and did submit an Amicus brief in favor of this Mission Project when Libby Creek Watershed Association contested these plans in court. Keep also in mind 1)*



that it was agreed that work was to be done while the ground was frozen and 2) that groups supporting these plans also claim they are in defense of Mature and Old Growth Forests.)

Fixed anchor bolts

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

for safe public use of the resource. The proposed guidance is based on National Parks Director John Jarvis' Director's Order #41 (NPS D.O. #41) [originally issued in 2013.]

NPS D.O. #41, states in part “Wilderness Stewardship, section 7.2 Climbing:

- “D.O.#41 recognizes mountaineering and rock climbing as legitimate and appropriate use of wilderness.
- “Climbing management strategies will be included as part of the park’s Wilderness Stewardship Plan, or other activity-level plan.”

Adding to the chaos, the climbing organizations have gained the support of two western congressional representatives who have sponsored federal legislation (HB 1380 Protecting America’s Rock Climbing Act). The impact of this legislation, should it become law, on the Wilderness Act is unclear.

The issue of the use of fixed anchors, either drilled-in expansion anchor bolts or slings and ropes

wrapped around trees or rocks, has defied compromise. Non-climbing Wilderness advocates maintain that the Wilderness Act strictly forbids any mechanical devices in Wilderness, and therefore fixed anchors are not allowed. The climbing community is attempting to stretch the envelope by maintaining that individual climbing parties should have carte blanche to install expansion anchors at their sole discretion without prior approval. All local compromises have failed as both sides have stated their intent to take legal action should the result not meet their criteria. The relevant agencies have not been willing to engage and defend any policy chosen.

Both sides maintain that if their view doesn’t prevail, it will be the end of Wilderness as we know it. In the past N3C has advocated a compromise position with minimum bolting controlled as part of a local climbing guidance as a section of a local area Wilderness management plan. In this latest round N3C has joined the Wilderness advocates in supporting the prohibition of any anchor bolts in Wilderness. We will keep a close watch on this matter as it develops and will act to support protection of the Wilderness.

Attention N3C members

Moved? Please tell us! It’s much easier to update our records and make sure you get your TWC than to wait for the P.O. to return it to us. Thanks!

Want an electronic TWC instead? Just let us know and we’ll send it as soon as it’s ready, usually a couple of weeks before the paper copies arrive. Not sending paper will save some trees and some postage.

Email us at N3Cinfo@northcascades.org and we’ll take care of it.

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If you have questions, contact us at GiftMember@northcascades.org. If you lack internet access, simply cut out the membership card on page 23, complete your information, write “GIFT” across the top and attach a note with the name and mailing address of the gift recipient.



A pool along the Beckler River, Evergreen Mountain in the distance. —RICK MCGUIRE PHOTO

Forest management: Give citizens a voice

Letter to the editor, *Seattle Times*,
February 9, 2024

Re: "Managing fire is vital to the health of our forests" [Jan. 2, Opinion]:

John Marshall submits that citizens' attempted enforcement of environmental laws is "unfortunate."

He also unscientifically ignores the most likely reason for the continued decline of ancient forest-dependent species: Fifty years of voracious logging of our public lands that depleted habitat to the point of no return before it could be curtailed.

Enforcing environmental laws does not "undermine" federal projects, it ensures scientific validation of agency decisions and allows citizens the right to challenge the policies of our federal

government. The U.S. Forest Service decision that has been challenged by North Cascades Conservation Council presents only one option to protect communities from fire. It fails to consider plans submitted in good faith by citizens, allows logging contractors to select trees to be cut, and fails to consider the impacts to fish and wildlife of adjacent logging projects.

"Doing nothing" is not the purpose of the National Environmental Policy Act, as Marshall submits. It is to look at a wide variety of options to solve a problem and allow citizens to have a voice. To disallow exercise of those rights would result in the dictatorial management of our cherished federal lands by the industrial foresters that ruined most of our public forests.

Ric Bailey, Winthrop

Decommissioning obsolete roads

The Forest Service has nearly 400,000 miles of roads on the National Forest. The vast majority are little used or abandoned, the trees having been cut and the logs hauled away. These unmaintained dirt roads are a blight on the landscape, cause erosion, are an entry point for invasive species and encourage human access leading to increased danger of fire. N3C has long advocated for the vast majority of these obsolete roads to be decommissioned. Now the March 2024 issue of the *Smithsonian magazine* presents the case for decommissioning and restoring wilderness. Find it on page 56 or at <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/case-destroying-old-forest-roads-180983693/>



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Looking northwest from the Beckler River in section 6. A careful look at the forest on the mountain in top center shows the “bathtub ring” (so dubbed, aptly, by Harvey Manning), the line where the finer textured, post RR logging second growth meets the old growth forest above. (See article on page 14.) —RICK MCGUIRE PHOTO