

THE WILD CASCADES



THE JOURNAL OF THE
NORTH CASCADES
CONSERVATION COUNCIL

Spring-Summer 2021

THE WILD CASCADES ■ Spring-Summer 2021

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COVER: *Suiattle valley and Glacier Peak from ridge above the Green Mountain Trail.*

—GARY PAULL PHOTO

The Wild Cascades

Journal of the North Cascades Conservation Council

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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

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THE NORTH CASCADES

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

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

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

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The Wild Cascades is printed on recycled paper.

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Founded in 1957
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THE PRESIDENT'S REPORT SPRING-SUMMER 2021

Things can change quickly. Sometimes we watch issues for many months, even years, without a lot of demonstrable progress, just trying to “hold the line.” Then suddenly a chain of events cuts loose, and we’re faced with making quick decisions. That’s been the case lately, ramping-up just as we go to press with this issue.

You’ll read how after years of hearing our objections to letting the public use the mine remediation track to Monte Cristo, the Forest Service has finally ended their gate key loan program. We’re glad to hear this officially sanctioned misuse of a roadless area appears to be over. Next, we need to see to it that this threat to the integrity of the Roadless Rule in the North Cascades ends permanently. Kudos go out to our board members who pursued this one with such persistence. They will continue to do so to assure that track is decommissioned.

The Park Service seems to have begun to at least announce its mechanized projects in North Cascades National Park’s Wilderness. This, after years of wondering what they were doing that we didn’t know about, and would only discover if we happened to be there at the time they were flying their helicopters. NPS tells us they will be running choppers for four separate backcountry projects soon, presumably all within Wilderness. These helicopter-supported projects are happening too soon for us to intervene, unfortunately. If we can’t intervene to halt these incursions, we will at least make sure the public is made aware of them, continue to insist NPS provide more advance notice, and that they not bypass NEPA with Categorical Exclusions for these, so a full EA is released with public comment taken—the only mechanism available to make it possible for the public to stop these infernal noisemakers where they don’t belong.

On a recent visit to Stehekin one of our board members heard helicopters day after day and asked around to try to find out what they were doing. Some said they were building a cell phone tower, which we would rather not see happen for many reasons. But no permits are on file with the County. We’re making further inquiries and hope to have more to report in the next issue.

In the ever-popular “Long-Term Department”, our interest in the Seattle City Light Skagit Hydro project relicensing continues, as the deadline for a Study Plan was extended for more tribal input. You’ll read more about that in this issue as well, with the Plan determination likely to be released just as we go to press. Other items in the long-term category continue to simmer and could erupt any minute, so we’re staying vigilant. Concern continues that the Federal land agencies may get a large influx of funds from the Great American Outdoor Act and go on a spending spree, so we need to be ready to head-off harmful road and logging projects. The huge landscape-scale logging projects proposed by the Forest Service on both sides of the Cascades are on hold for now, due in part to the huge volume of comments to the Forest Service that were opposed to these projects—THANK YOU! We’ll be ready when the announcements are made and will let you know what you can do through our Action Alert emails.

So, enjoy the summer, get out there and immerse yourself in the wild Cascades. I certainly intend to! And recruit some new N3C members while you’re at it. Just send me their email addresses and I’ll get them signed up!

Phil Fenner

pbilf@northcascades.org



N3C Actions

FEBRUARY to JUNE 2021

Advocacy carried out by dedicated N3C volunteers in the last five months to protect and preserve 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.

- Continued public participation in the Seattle City Light (SCL) Skagit Hydroelectric Power Relicensing process, now in next phase with the Federal Energy Resource Committee (FERC). N3C board members participate in the Steering Committee and Resource Workgroups meetings. Under pressure from Tribes and Fish & Wildlife agencies, SCL has initiated studies not necessarily required by FERC for relicensing. See page 14.
- Continued consulting with the Skagit River Alliance to prevent any resumption of mining at the former quarry site near Marblemount. See page 7.



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.

- After submitting scoping comments to NOCA for the relocation of the Stehekin Road out of the flood plain at mile post 5.5, N3C is waiting for the Environmental Assessment (EA) of the route and construction details and monitoring this action for potential “mission creep” once heavy roadbuilding equipment is on the ground.
- Formed Wilderness committee to explore ways to advocate for improvements to Wilderness stewardship and expand Wilderness protection in the North Cascades. Contacted The Wilderness Society, National Parks Conservation Association and Wilderness Watch to renew collaborative efforts with their leadership and seek opportunities for joint action. See page 15.

WATCH LIST: Potential issues requiring action

Index-Galena Road: In October 2020 the court ruled against the SnoKing Watershed Council's (SKWC) appeal of the Snohomish County Permit to “rebuild” in the north fork of the Skykomish River. Snohomish County has suspended construction for 2021. We are awaiting the judge's written decision and any redesign required by the Washington State 2021 Drainage Manual to determine if there is any basis for further action.

“Restoration” Proposal for Twisp River valley on the Wenatchee National Forest: N3C is considering potential legal

action should the OWNF supervisor issue a Record of Decision of Finding of No Significant Impact for logging 77,000 acres of forest including old growth and road building in Inventoried Roadless Areas. N3C plans a ground truthing field trip to familiarize ourselves with the area at risk.

Cell Phone Tower? on Buehler's Bluff, Stehekin! One of 10 scenic vistas NPS identified in its 1995 Lake Chelan National Recreational Area (LCNRA) General Management Plan—but this part of the bluff is on private land (Note that the 1987 and 1995 Land Protection Plans do not map



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.

- ✓ Signed joint letter to Congress supporting funding for legacy roads and trails.

or discuss this nearly 30-acre private property). According to Chelan County Planning no permit has been applied for siting a cell phone tower. N3C is investigating whether the Federal Communications Commission has permitted the operation of a cell phone tower at that site. An important question: how would the tower obtain the energy required?

Proposed NOCA trail maintenance projects in the Stephen Mather Wilderness: Helicopter will transport materials in a designated Wilderness. Detailed project plans are not available yet. See page 19.



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.

- ✓ Our Attorney submitted a request for Summary Judgment to the court to rule in favor of our lawsuit challenging the inadequacy of the Forest Service's environmental studies for logging 6,300 acres of mature forest and building nearly 60 miles of roads in the Stillaguamish Vegetation Management project. *Update: Request denied. See TWC Winter 2021, page 12.*
- ✓ Sent letters of appreciation to Washington State U.S. Congressional Representatives who co-sponsored bill HR 279, which will codify the Roadless Rule into law. Now an administrative action, vulnerable to administrative revision by the Administration. HR-279 will give the Inventoried Roadless Areas protection in law similar to the Congressionally designated Wilderness Areas.
- ✓ Signed joint letter supporting President Biden's Climate-Forestry Plan, an initiative by the Forest Carbon Coalition to provide a road map to the USDA & USDI for compliance with the Forest-Climite goals in Executive Order 140008.
- ✓ Submitted extensive comments on the Nooksack Vegetation Management Plan EA. N3C strongly and in detail objects to the industrial logging, 3,000 acres of clear-cuts and 20 miles of "temporary" roads, of the Nooksack drainage under the guise of "Forest Restoration." See page 6.



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.

- ✓ Continued investigation of the proposed McGregor Meadows land exchange in the Stehekin Valley. N3C objected based on adverse environmental impacts on public lands in the Stehekin River Valley of Lake Chelan National Recreation Area (LACH), lack of transparency in developing and proposing this exchange, and NPS' failure to provide sufficient detailed information to allow for knowledgeable public comment. N3C has requested an update on the status of the exchange from the Pacific Western Regional Lands Office of the NPS. *Update: On June 14 N3C learned the NPS completed the proposed land exchange. N3C is assessing its options to take further action to ensure that the public interest is protected in this decision. See Fall 2020 TWC.*
- ✓ Confirmed that the Monte Cristo CERCLA track in Inventoried Roadless Area (IRA) will remain open through 2021 to allow access for monitoring. Submitted another request for the Darrington Ranger District's (DRD) planned guidance for this summer season and permanent track closure to all motor vehicles when monitoring is complete. The DRD has released guidance stating that the track will be closed to all motor vehicles this year. See page 16.

Forest Service one step closer to industrializing the Nooksack Valley

By Jim Scarborough



Tomyhoi, American border, and Larrabee peaks from Barometer Mountain.
—JIM SCARBOROUGH PHOTO

The National Forest System across the western United States is currently besieged by countless proposed logging projects hatched during the Trump administration, which never saw a natural resource it didn't want to mine. Around the Northwest, we've looked aghast as the U.S. Forest Service attempts to resuscitate its logging heyday with abominable proposals to extract the public's irreplaceable forests—from the Lostine and McKenzie rivers in Oregon, to the Stillaguamish and Twisp rivers of the North Cascades. These zombie efforts have persisted well into the Biden administration, which so far has done little or nothing to change course, despite every broad ecological indicator (climate change among them) demonstrating that such deforestation is not merely objectionable, but practically suicidal. Death by a thousand cuts.

The euphemistically termed "North Fork Nooksack Vegetation Management Project," located within the foreground of Mount Baker's apprehensive gaze, is yet another of these pending tragedies. This logging gambit saw its shoddy and repeatedly contradictory draft environmental

assessment (EA) published in early March. The Forest Service included two alternatives of varied logging prescriptions and road construction across just shy of 3,000 acres. The draft EA is mostly unresponsive to more than a thousand comments received during the project's initial scoping period last year, which were disproportionately opposed to the overall proposal. One of the two alternatives does substitute "variable retention harvest" (clearcutting) in a portion of the targeted area with heavy commercial thinning, while also omitting an ill-advised Northwest Forest Plan amendment to remove somewhat larger trees (26" rather than 20" limit) in adjacent acreage zoned as Late Successional Reserve.

The comment period for the draft EA has recently expired, and disappointingly yielded only one-third as many public comments as did the earlier scoping period. Perhaps more dismaying were generally supportive letters in response to the Forest Service's intensive thinning alternative from certain organizations that should know better, including Seattle-based Conservation Northwest

and Bellingham-based RE Sources. This, despite the two alternatives having little practical difference in terms of the damage that would be inflicted on the landscape and its waters. Both alternatives anticipate up to 15 years of industrialization in the upper North Fork Nooksack basin, with 20 miles of new or reconstructed logging roads, direct impairment of the forest's carbon sequestration potential, and an unacceptable likelihood of massive, logging-triggered landslides down the markedly unstable Canyon Creek tributary.

N3C is nonetheless grateful for the Sierra Club's detailed and critical comments to the draft EA, demonstrating that not everyone took the Forest Service's worm bait. If there's a central truism to commercial thinning in National Forests, it's that one must look far and wide, possibly for a lifetime, before finding an example that hasn't fully trashed the place. The near-universal aftermath is a forest homogenized, sliced up linearly by roads and yarding corridors, streams choked with silt and soils compacted, overrun by carpets of hemlock seedlings and noxious weeds, and later colonized by the sort of people who think that rolling coal and shooting the leaders off tree tops are the high points of recreation in the woods. Another entity well aware of the unacceptable risks here is the Nooksack Tribe, whose letter in response to the draft EA ought to be mandatory reading for anyone who cares about the public's forests and seeks the clearest elucidation of how the Forest Service has become a rogue agency.

Now we wait for the final decision, due early this fall. As does Sierra Pacific Industries, the timber corporation previously known for its attempts to log old growth redwoods, and the expected beneficiary of the Nooksack's sawlogs if this project comes to pass. One can't help but notice, driving around Whatcom and Skagit counties, that Sierra Pacific hardly has any sticks left to cut on its private holdings. The Forest Service, meanwhile, is in a virtual bunker and barely able to communicate with the citizens that its personnel are supposed to be working for. They trust that the public is too inattentive and apathetic to make much of a fuss, and

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

Rebecca “Bec” Detrich is new NCI director

Rebecca “Bec” Detrich will replace Saul Weisberg as Executive Director when he retires at the end of this month. Her leadership experience and deep knowledge of Residential Environmental Learning Centers, experience working successfully with federal and state partners, and her career-long emphasis on community engagement and inclusion are assets that appealed to NCI’s board and staff.

Detrich comes to NCI from Trips for Kids Marin in San Rafael, California, where as ED she led a culturally diverse 26-person staff spread across multiple sites. She has also worked as Director of Education/School Programs at Westminster Woods in Occidental, CA; Adjunct Graduate Instructor for the Global Field Program at Miami University, and Field Science Education Manager for NatureBridge at the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, CA. Bec received a BA in Environmental Science from Willamette University, a MA in Biology from Miami University and MBA from Sonoma State University.

NCI calls Detrich “an educational visionary, entrepreneurial fundraiser and an organizational leader...who brings a whole-hearted approach to work and strives to create a sense of kinship, belonging, and stewardship that encourages all to



care for and protect this special place. She shares our strong commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, and passion for the North Cascades.”

“I am genuinely excited about Bec Detrich’s selection as the institute’s new executive director,” said Saul Weisberg in an NCI blog. “Her experience, knowledge and enthusiasm for our field, combined with her strong leadership skills and business acumen, make her a fantastic pick by our

board of directors. Bec brings a vision for growth and change at the Institute, based on all we’ve accomplished in the past 35 years, but not limited by that history.”

N3C is hopeful that Detrich will be interested in an educational focus that includes the advocacy history of NOCA and its Wilderness, the natural history of the region, and engaging in some of the numerous opportunities for conservation advocacy.

Reidel, Sierra Club push back against proposed Cascade Big Bear Mine

The Mount Baker Chapter of the Sierra Club and renowned Skagit and North Cascades geologist Jon Riedel have sent letters to the Washington State Department of Natural Resources and Skagit County pointing out problems with the proposed Cascade Big Bear Mine site in Marblemount as well as DNR’s jurisdiction.

According to the Skagit River Alliance, Riedel’s letter to DNR and Skagit County detailed significant safety, health, and environmental impact concerns about the proposed mine (DNR Surface Mine Reclamation Permit 70-013279). “Careful environmental screening is needed so that one small community does not bear the brunt of the impacts from a continental-sized project,” he said. Like the Sierra Club, he too underscored the need for Skagit County to assume lead agency

status and require a full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

Addressing State Geologist Casey Hanell, Riedel’s May 31 letter cited three safety issues:

- 1) The need for a careful geotechnical slope stability study of the site, a seismically active, glacially over-steepened valley wall, with local overhangs and overall cliff slope of 70°, as well as a detailed operation plan that takes into account the potential for a large slope failure after removal of talus or by vibrations from blasting and rock crushing. Riedel maintains that it would be dangerous to approve a site operation plan without a geotechnical study due to the potential for toppling of large blocks during blasting, road building

and rock crushing.

- 2) The potential for asbestos-laden dust to be released into the neighborhood, a possibility that must be thoroughly investigated. One or two random samples are inadequate for characterizing such an extensive area. Further, the lack of water at the site and occasionally strong canyon winds in winter and summer could spread the dust and should be considered. There are homes and a day care facility within a ¼ mile of the site. And there is a moratorium on new water wells in Skagit County. Where will the water come from and how will wastewater be disposed of?
- 3) Noise. The blasting, drilling, sorting, rock handling and loading, and truck engines and jake-brakes will be heard

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

Forest Service will reroute Deadhorse Road above Nooksack River

By Jim Scarborough



The Deadhorse road reroute will cross Boyd Creek in this vicinity.
—JIM SCARBOROUGH PHOTO

Readers of *The Wild Cascades* were introduced last year to the U.S. Forest Service's proposal to relocate two-thirds of a mile of Deadhorse road 37 upslope and away from the brawling North Fork Nooksack River. The project area is located roughly three miles east of the town of Glacier, on the driving route to the ever-popular Skyline Divide trailhead. This spring, the Forest Service quietly decided to go ahead with the reroute, which would also put a slightly shorter segment of the obsolete road prism and its series of rock groins to bed, construct engineered logjams in the river's channel migration zone for enhanced fish habitat, remove a fish-blocking culvert at the confluence of Cascade and Boyd creeks, and decommission the Boyd Creek nature trail.

Taken in its entirety, this project will arguably offer more positives than negatives when said and done. N3C typically and even enthusiastically supports projects which restore aquatic and riparian habitats. But in order to do so, just like any interested citizen or organization, we need to have a clear idea of the project's

specifics and anticipated impacts, upfront and without obfuscation or arbitrary delay. In this respect, the Forest Service's Mount Baker Ranger District regrettably failed, an unfortunate trend noted increasingly across multiple federal agencies whose missions involve public lands management. Documentation required under the National Environmental Policy Act for Deadhorse was remarkably sparse, disorganized, unresponsive to public questions and comments, and decidedly uninformative.

A walking tour of the project area last year did little to ease our anxiety, as it quickly became apparent that the proposed reroute would require blasting through an obviously unstable slope in order to gain its initial elevation, then slice through mature red cedar forest and multiple stream crossings before rejoining the original road corridor. Throughout, the Forest Service either could not or would not provide clarification in response to concerns raised by both N3C and the Sierra Club's Mount Baker Group. Ultimately, the details we sought were

not revealed until the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service published its biological opinion for the project—a month after the Forest Service published its draft decision notice and finding of no significant impact.

In reading the lengthy biological opinion, N3C belatedly learned that the Deadhorse reroute will result in about 3.5 acres of clearing in 160-year-old forest, with a corridor width of 20 feet. The Forest Service saw fit to share this information with its sister federal agency, but couldn't be bothered to share it with the interested public. Yet again, one wonders if the Forest Service has forgotten who it works for, given the profound discomfort it seems to experience when forced to interact with common riffraff like local conservationists.

Maybe this strange avoidant behavior has to do with the agency's reticence to acknowledge that the 3.5 acres of forest clearing will happen in a Late Successional Reserve, where new road construction is "generally not recommended," per the Northwest Forest Plan. Yet the minimized clearing width is itself a positive development; something the Forest Service could have bragged about. One might also speculate that the agency's attempts to ramp up logging across the National Forest System, so antagonistic to the majority public's wants and needs, have prompted the Forest Service to keep the lowest of profiles, not unlike a sex offender moving into a new neighborhood. Or, most likely, it's a reflection of a severely demoralized and understaffed agency. (Aside from the timber beasts, er, "vegetation managers," who still seem to be enjoying all the perks of a federal job that entails chopping up and giving away the public's forests.)

Even projects with a net benefit aren't always pretty to look at on a granular level. Some bad things will occur with the Deadhorse reroute that will allow other good things to happen. N3C merely asks—nay, demands—that the public be fully informed of crucial details at the earliest opportunity, though as taxpaying Americans we shouldn't have to raise a ruckus for it.

N3C plays key role in organizing new coalition to support Trust Land Transfer

By Jim Freeburg



Trust land transfer, an obscure conservation tool funded by the state legislature, is responsible for preserving some of Washington's best-known outdoor recreation destinations, like Mt. Si, Tiger Mountain, and Blanchard Mountain. Unfortunately, due to a number of factors, funding for the program has dwindled significantly in recent years. Luckily, the North Cascades Conservation Council stepped forward to fill a void in trust land transfer (TLT) advocacy and the future for TLT is again looking positive.

First—what is trust land transfer? Before we can answer that, we have to define “trust land”—the land that TLT preserves. At statehood, the federal government gave Washington millions of acres for it to manage for non-tax revenue. Much of the trust land is forest, so logging became an easy revenue source for the state, though the state also earns revenue from grazing rights, utility leases, agriculture, and other land uses.

However, some of Washington's trust lands are either too valuable to be logged

Gothic Basin in the Morning Star NRCA.
—JIM SCARBOROUGH PHOTO

or just can't be logged. So the legislature created the trust land transfer program to buy out the timber value of desired land. The legislature also provides funding for the state to purchase replacement land elsewhere that will continue to produce revenue in the future, just as a re-grown forest would do.

N3C gathered support from 50+ organizations and will sit on the new DNR work group for trust land transfer.

Why should anyone care about trust land transfer? As you are likely well aware, most of the high-elevation North Cascades is federal land and N3C has fought hard for national park and Wilderness protections. However, unique low- and mid-elevation forests in the North Cascades are largely unprotected, and some of the most ecologically valuable are state trust lands. We must protect these lands if we truly care about the entire North Cascades ecosystem, not just the high alpine glory zones.

Trust land transfer has used \$880

million in 30 years of legislative appropriations to preserve 126,000 acres of state trust land. TLT used to have the backing of a powerful lobbyist in Olympia, but changing priorities meant that in recent years, no one was lobbying for a strong trust land transfer program. During the 2019 funding cycle, the legislature only preserved 800 acres, just a tenth of the historical average.

Recognizing this void, we stepped up and organized a new coalition in Olympia to fight for trust land transfer. We met with dozens of legislators, including the powerful leaders of the capital budgets in both the House and Senate. We gathered support from over 50 organizations around the state and rallied a constituency for trust land transfer that we are pretty sure never existed before.

Unfortunately, the legislature chose not to fund the priority projects we had recommended. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR), the administrator of TLT, had failed to ask for TLT funding and neglected to make some needed changes to the program. These hurdles really hurt our chances for funding. On the bright side, the legislature did acknowledge our efforts, telling DNR to revitalize TLT and come back in the future to ask for funding. The legislature's \$75,000 capital budget appropriation creates a work group at DNR to lead this effort and we will be on that work group. Our primary goal is a robust TLT program.

While there are other efforts around the state to rollback DNR logging on a large scale (many of which show great potential), TLT is a proven conservation tool. We'll need your help to make it happen though, as we still need additional help to educate the legislature about TLT and its potential to preserve forests in the North Cascades and around the state.

Our advocacy this past year for trust land transfer has been a great example of a small group of individuals coming together with an idea (and lots of Zoom meetings). We are optimistic that we can bring trust land transfer out of the shadows and into the incredible conservation program that it once was.

LOOKING TO HIRE a TREE?

By Scott Andrews

I was looking for a new position in natural resources policy or management, scrolling through a conservation jobs website, when I saw an announcement for:

A Tree. Western Forests.

What? I had to click on this one.

Candidate will be stationed in a recently burned area, located between 8000-9000 ft. elevation on a south-facing slope in Western Colorado for 100-300 years. Potential for contract extension, contingent upon future disturbances. This position is classified as full-time permanent, with open air lodging provided.

Western Forests is a treeequal opportunity employer. We do not discriminate based on age, religion, species, orientation, nor candidate's past or present slope, aspect, elevation, seed dispersal strategies, previous disturbance history, or angio vs. gymnosperm status.

It went on with qualifications including...

- *Able to stand still for extremely long periods of time*

- *established root structure*
- *willingness to work and live in adverse weather conditions, including steep and uneven terrain*
- *proven skill in conduction of photosynthesis*
- *experience with provision of relevant ecosystem services, including carbon sequestration, oxygen production etc.*
- *experience developing mycorrhizal networks with multiple species*
- *in depth understanding of challenges to forests posed by climate change.*

I laughed out loud. Tired of tweaking my resume and crafting cover letters to send to job applications, I decided this one would be fun to respond to. Why not play along?

To apply it said to send a cover letter, resume and an original poem, song or drawing about "your life as a tree" to an email address.

Sitting down to craft yet another cover letter, and again "tweak" my resume, I sent the following under the name Douglas Fir:



Pseudotsuga menziesii
One Conifer Lane
Dripping Canopy, WA 98273

Dear Western Forests:

I have a long and storied history in the forests of western America, that I feel will stand me in good stead for the position you wish to plant.

I love the work I have been doing here on the western slopes of the continent, working in close proximity to true firs, spruce, and cedar, but I am pining for the wide open spaces of the Rockies and would love the opportunity to transplant to Colorado. As you can see from my resume, I have a great deal of experience in rain as well as drought conditions. My abilities to create solid wood from thin air and sunlight, with a bit uptake from my roots of course, would bore you over. Indeed it has bored many in the telling. Perhaps even more critical at this time is my expertise in carbon sequestration. I also have done considerable work in a various related fields, such as erosion control, wildlife habitat, scenic and recreational backdrops.

In addition to my B.S. in forestry, I did some post graduate work with a Japanese maple, hence my inspiration of a haiku for the submitted poem below. Thank you for the opportunity to apply for this outstanding on-the-mountain position.

Evergreenly Yours,
Doug Fir

Inbale man's mistake
To spread tall against the sky,
Air I shall remake.

I also included Doug's resume:

Education

B.S. Forestry and Watershed Management. The Evergreen State College, Olympia, WA.

Work History

Mature to old growth on western slopes of the Cascades. 1700s to the present.

I have a long working relationship in a mixed stand with other conifers to provide a variety of forest ecosystem services including wildlife habitat, water quality and quantity. My fish and wildlife experience includes fisheries restoration work, especially providing shade to salmon streams, and work with endangered avifauna such as Marbled murrelet and Spotted owls. After a close call with clear cutting that befell neighboring stands in the late eighteen hundreds, and surviving somewhat by sheer luck, I began working with the National Park Service near the edge of Rainer National Park, providing scenic and recreational resources in addition to my continuing ecological services. More recently, after years of reliable rainy winters and springs, I have endured more frequent drought conditions which have left me in far better shape than some of my more wet loving brethren. This climatic change brings in to focus my valuable abilities in carbon sequestration both in terms of total stored carbon and continuing carbon uptake on a diurnal basis. I also have experience in communications both through pher-

omone release and via intertwined roots systems in conjunction with mycorrhizae. In addition, I have some acquaintance working with Indigenous peoples having provided hunting and gathering resources for some time prior to arrival of later colonizers.

Young to Mature Stand. 1600s-1700s.

I was focused during these years on growing and assisting others in filling in the canopy in my stand.

Volunteer Experience.

Seedling. 1619 to 1623.

I like to point out my seed was dispersed prior to the Pilgrims landing at Plymouth Rock. While my early years were a struggle to survive, I had the good fortune to fall into a clearing, which may have been facilitated by indigenous anthropogenic burning in the previous year.

When I received an email response from Forrest Weste to set up an interview, I started to wonder was it just a joke or a real job. A way to find a creative person, perhaps a writer for a forestry or natural history magazine?

In the exchanges I tried to find if they wanted to talk to Doug or with his "interpreter". They continued to stick to the story and wanted Doug, but if he needed assistance in responding...

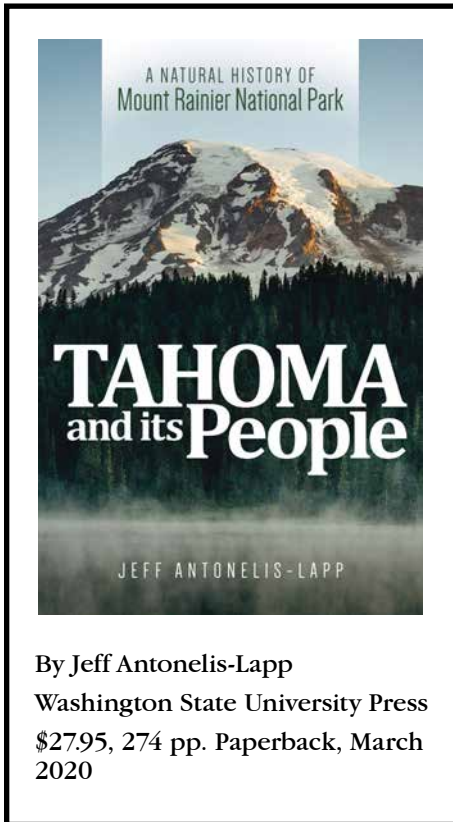
When the zoom interview came, they interviewed Doug Fir via "simultaneous translation" from me. Finally at the end of the interview, I asked, "Ok, so what is the story?" And they fessed up – it had started as a joke, a little humor planted for forestry job seekers in this difficult time and just kept growing.

Instead of applying for more jobs, TWC reader and Skagit Land Trust member Scott Andrews (scottaandrews12@gmail.com) is starting Asarum Consulting, a training and consulting firm with a focus on the intersection of environmental regulation and tribal jurisdiction.

Doug continues his vital work on carbon sequestration, and may be found outstanding in the woods.

Tahoma and its People: A Natural History of Mount Rainier

Reviewed by David Fluharty



By Jeff Antonelis-Lapp
Washington State University Press
\$27.95, 274 pp. Paperback, March 2020

A book review should tell the prospective reader what the book is about, provide some information of the author's qualifications, and generally help the reader decide whether to purchase the book or check it out of the library. Sometimes a reviewer is tempted to criticize the book but I'll focus on what I find praiseworthy.

The title is a good one but it allows for a lot of interpretation. We all have a definition of Tahoma if we have lived in its shadows. Here Tahoma is the mountain and its watersheds. Most books I have read about Tahoma cover the people who colonized the region or those who have been associated with its recent (1860-present) history. *Taboma and its People* focuses on the indigenous peoples and their long history that comes from legends passed on from generation to generation and occupation of the region as being revealed by systematic

archeological investigations. There are many natural histories of Tahoma and its surroundings but the value of this book is its strong emphasis on how its people past and present interact with the climate, vegetation and critters. But that is not all. There are very interesting sections that gave me new insights into geology, glaciers, forest and alpine meadow ecology, influence of Tahoma on its environment from Puget Sound to the Columbia River.

Since I have not had the pleasure to meet the author, Jeff Antonelis-Lapp, I rely on the WSU Press summary of his qualifications. He is a former adult and continuing education instructor for the Muckleshoot Tribe and a teacher for The Evergreen State College, where he taught environmental education, natural history, and writing. His Masters of Education in science education was earned at the University of Washington.

More importantly all of this experience is revealed in the way *Taboma and its People* is written. The reader is drawn into a walk with the author where he sees and explains what he is seeing. As an example, who among us has not had an interaction with Devil's club? Here is the author's version: "Knock-kneed and crooked, this abundant member of the forest's luxuriant understory shows off fragrant new leaf buds atop stems ranging from three to ten feet tall. Its scientific name, *Oplopanax horridum*, hits the mark. *Oplo* is Greek for armor, referring to the protection afforded by its thorns. It combines with *panax* or 'cure-all' to reflect its wide-ranging medicinal properties. *Horridum* becomes obvious the moment that one encounters the fearsome spines that grow up to a half-inch long." OK so much for the introduction to our familiar plant. The author continues with explanation of its medicinal properties. Did you know that its pulverized bark is a deodorant and it can serve as equivalent of talc for babies or that the stems can be fashioned into fishing lures? Read this book!

As someone who has visited Tahoma for more than yearly for 70 years, spent three summers working in Mt. Rainier National Park, and who has read many books and heard many stories about Tahoma, I do not hesitate to recommend *Taboma and its People*. It is a valuable contribution to the literature on a subject we may think we know all about—but don't. *Taboma* provides a lot of additional information and insights in a very accessible way.

Cascade Big Bear Mine

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

from one side of the valley to the other, and for some distance off site up and down the valley. For those people adjacent to the site, on Rockport Cascade Road, and Highway 530 this noise will be extremely disruptive.

N3C continues to monitor developments in the mine permitting process and supports Skagit River Alliance in its quest to prevent the mine from operating.

Nooksack Valley

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

that Joe Biden's people in D.C. have bigger political fish to fry. And although wrong about nearly everything of late, in this the Forest Service may be quite right. Thankfully, there are a few, N3C among them, who will remind the agency once again that some are watching intently.

First wild fishers born in North Cascades in 50 years



Fisher F105 Luna with kit. —NATIONAL PARK SERVICE PHOTO

State and federal biologists have found the first wild fishers to be born in the North Cascades in perhaps half a century. According to a NOCA press release, a female fisher, F105 was detected on a trail camera moving four kits on April 18 at her den in western Chelan County, “Seeing her and her kits is a wonderful first indication that the North Cascades Ecosystem can support a reproductive population of fishers, and it’s a great sign for fisher recovery in Washington,” said Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Biologist Dr. Jeff Lewis. “We have high hopes that we will find additional females in the North Cascades having kits this spring.”

Fishers, a house-cat sized member of the weasel family, were eliminated from Washington by the mid-1900s through over-trapping and habitat loss. They were listed as a state-endangered species in 1998.

Fishers are related to minks, otters, and wolverines, and are native to the forests of Washington, including the Cascade mountain range. This elusive carnivore preys on various small mam-

mals – mountain beavers, squirrels, and snowshoe hares—and is one of the few predators of porcupines.

The National Park Service (NPS), Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Conservation Northwest, and Calgary Zoo released 89 fishers into the North Cascades National Park Service Complex and Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest from 2018 to 2020, as part of a collaborative effort to restore the species to Washington. Fisher F105 was released on December 13, 2018, west of Darrington, WA.

“Seeing these fishers find their place and thrive brings so much hope to this ecosystem,” said NPS Wildlife Biologist Dr. Jason Ransom. “It is a product of the kind of collaborative conservation we need to steward a healthy ecosystem, across boundaries.”

Since reintroduction, fishers have been detected within and around the North Cascades National Park Service Complex, throughout the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest, in parts of the Okanogan-Wenatchee National

Forest, and on private lands as far east as Winthrop, WA.

Sixty private landowners have established Candidate Conservation Agreements with Assurances on 3.3 million acres in Washington, to help protect fishers wherever they find a place to thrive.

More than 250 fishers have been reintroduced to Washington since releases first began in and around Olympic National Park in 2008.

Re-establishing viable populations of fishers in the Olympic and Cascade Mountains are important steps to down-listing the species in Washington State. The state recovery plan and implementation plan for fisher reintroduction in the Cascades can be found at: <https://wdfw.wa.gov/species-habitats/species/pekania-pennanti>.

Sources of funding for the reintroductions include the National Park Service, Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife, Conservation Northwest, Calgary Zoo, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington’s National Park Fund, Northwest Trek, state wildlife grants, Washington State personalized license plates, and funds from other partners.

N3C and Seattle City Light Skagit Project Relicensing

By David Fluharty



N3C continues public participation in the Seattle City Light (SCL) Skagit Hydroelectric Power Relicensing. This is roughly a five-year long process so expect to hear more as the work continues. How to keep *TWC* readers apprised of a grindingly boring extended regulatory process is a challenge, so please bear with us. We'll try to provide the high and low points at each step along the way.

At present we are in the second part of the process to determine what studies need to be done to inform decisions about the next license for the Skagit Project. Since the last *TWC*, N3C submitted comments on the Revised Study Plan (RSP) and is waiting to see how FERC responds. Despite efforts to resolve conflicts between the license participants (tribes, federal and state agencies and non-governmental organizations) and Seattle City Light, significant gaps remain. While FERC is deliberating on its response to the RSP and comments (due in late June), the parties continue to meet with a newly formed Skagit Relicensing Technical Steering

Committee to plan Technical Workshops on unresolved issues pertaining to water quality monitoring, instream flow modeling, fish passage, reservoir fish genetics, reservoir tributary habitats, sediment deposition in reservoirs, river morphology, dam operations, etc.

One of the principal issues to be resolved is whether studies wanted by license participants are actually required by FERC to be performed. License participants, including N3C, have argued that SCL has taken a too conservative view of what studies are needed—even if FERC does not require them. At the end of April SCL made a commitment to perform a set of agreed studies whether or not they are required by FERC. This concession has made possible the continuing work on study scope and design rather than everyone “lawyering” up. Already many of the agreed upon studies are underway. For example, if you plan to visit the Skagit Project Area, you might very well be asked to take a survey or have your recreation activities observed and recorded. All the

The entire flow of the Skagit River re-emerges here after running through a two mile underground tunnel at Seattle City Light's Gorge Powerhouse just above Newhalem. The Gorge hydropower project “de-waters” the Skagit here, permanently blocking migratory salmon. —PHIL FENNER PHOTO

studies are to be completed within two years.

Two very important and recent additions to the group of license participants are: 1) full representation of the 11 First Nation bands of the Nlaka'pamux in Canada and, 2) the Skagit Environmental Endowment Commission (SEEC). These new participants significantly strengthen the ability of N3C to advance arguments about the Skagit being a transboundary river and that studies of the Skagit ecosystem should not stop at the border. Important to the Nlaka'pamux First Nations is assessment of the impact Skagit River dams have on fish in the Canadian portion of the watershed.

SEEC's interests are described in its letter to SCL. "SEEC was established in 1984 by the High Ross Treaty (Treaty) between Canada and the U.S, based upon the associated Agreement between the City of Seattle and the Province of British Columbia (BC) to resolve a significant controversy over the High Ross Dam expansion proposed at the time by SCL (skagiteec.org). The High Ross Treaty created an endowment fund for SEEC to administer which has as its stated purposes: (1) to conserve and protect wilderness and wildlife habitat; (2) to enhance recreational opportunities; (3) to acquire mineral or timber rights in the area of the Upper Skagit above Ross Dam; and (4) to conduct studies in the Upper Skagit Watershed to support its overall conservation and education mission."

The interests and objectives of the Nkala'panux and SEEC are entirely consistent with those of N3C and we welcome them to this process.

Skagit County commissioners: SCL, increase support for salmon

In May the three Skagit County commissioners asked Seattle to increase funding support for Skagit fisheries. Here are their abridged comments:

Seattle's three Skagit dams have helped make Seattle wealthy by providing Seattle business with some of the nation's cheapest power and they assist with flood control. But Seattle's dams also impact the Skagit's anadromous species and natural systems, completely blocking fish passage as well as preventing silt, sand, wood and other nutrients from moving downstream over time, slowly starving the river of viable habitat.

Over the last quarter century, Seattle has contributed a mere \$12 million to salmon recovery. That is approximately 37 times less per megawatt than the Pacific Northwest average. And it is 59 times less than Puget Sound Energy invested in salmon for its dams on the Baker River system, costs that are passed through to local ratepayers, an investment that has allowed Baker River sockeye to recover.

N3C forms Wilderness committee

Wilderness is at the core of what NCCC does and what we advocate for. It's in our DNA. Of all the national programs for management of federal lands, the National Wilderness Preservation System rings closest to our hearts. It stops all forms of harmful industrial and recreational exploitation, keeping wild places intact for the quiet and non-mechanized enjoyment of future generations and simply for their own sake.

We're fortunate that designated Wilderness areas of the North Cascades aren't under as immediate threat as they are in other parts of the country, and we take some credit for that, having worked so hard over many years to establish, expand and defend them against everything from agency misuse to recreational overuse.

Where else can you go to escape the endless din of motors than into Wilderness, where they are prohibited? It's always deeply disconcerting to hear helicopters, chain saws and rock drills echoing through our wild lands. So, being activists, we took action. Some disturbing recent trends have led us to form a Wilderness Committee made up of board members with a strong interest in preserving the integrity of what we have now and working to expand it. Our predecessors in this organization worked hard to get large swaths of public lands in the North Cascades protected with a Wilderness overlay, so now it's incumbent upon us to finish the task.

We're working multiple fronts in this effort. Directly challenging the National Park Service in the North Cascades NPS Complex (NOCA) to reduce its reliance on helicopters, chain saws and rock drills for trail and campsite work is our first priority. As you may know, NOCA is 94% designated Wilderness. Despite their claims, there's no evidence that the NPS is reducing use of those mechanized tools in NOCA Wilderness, quite the contrary. Our main tactic is tracking any threads of information we can glean as far in advance as possible to be prepared to intervene. We rely on our members for tips, and have been regularly asking NOCA Staff to inform us (and the public) of their plans. We also contacted fellow organizations such as The Wilderness Society and Wilderness Watch, and we're especially grateful for the advice of longtime Wilderness advocates and scholars Doug Scott and Brock Evans.

NOCA completed a Wilderness Character Assessment last year [<https://irma.nps.gov/DataStore/DownloadFile/645138>] as a baseline from which to identify changes in the integrity of wilderness attributes. NCCC sees this Survey as a good beginning toward what is really needed, a modern Wilderness Stewardship Plan for the Stephen Mather Wilderness. The current plan dates back to the early 1980s and is so obsolete it just triggers eye-rolls among NOCA staff when we refer to it. Funding to develop a new Plan is in the pipeline, we've heard, but hasn't arrived yet. We're working to assure it gets funded.

Our elected officials in Washington D.C. are listening, too. We've had a series of conference calls with their staffs, informing them of our findings and asking them to assist us in our efforts. We were encouraged to hear that when it comes time for more Wilderness additions in the North Cascades, the Washington delegations in the House and Senate will be sponsors as they have been in the past.

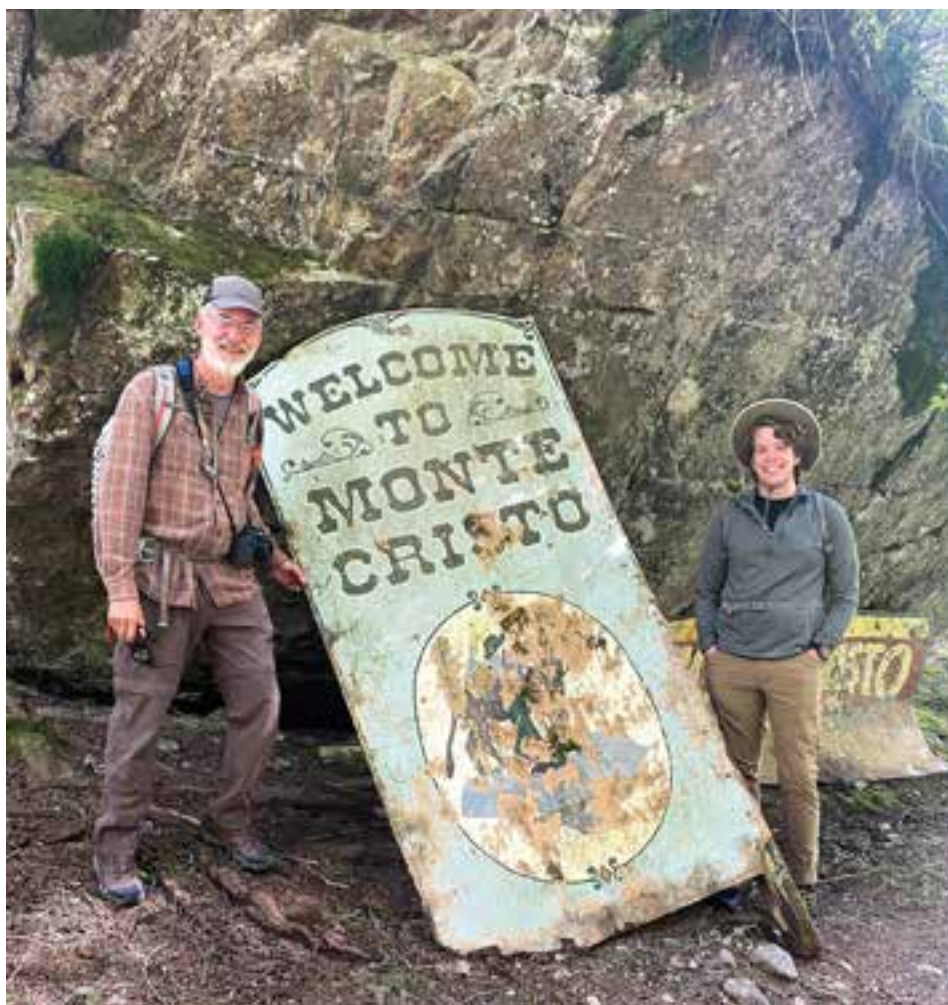
Meanwhile, we just learned of a new round of helicopter-assisted work deep in Wilderness, and hints of more to come. If you've ever been near one of these machines when it invades the natural world, spraying 110db noise, you'll want to help us.

Interested? Email us at ncccinfo@northcascades.org!

CONTINUED ON PAGE 17

Monte Cristo CERCLA route Update

By Ed Henderson



Not much remains of the Monte Cristo resort and cabins, operated by Del and Rosemary Wilkie from 1951 into the 1960s.

Last year, 2020, was a loss. Hopefully 2021 will be better. The fifth and last year of ground water monitoring of the mining waste repository in Monte Cristo is scheduled this year. That should conclude the Comprehensive Environmental Response Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA) activity at Monte Cristo.

Greta Smith, the Darrington District Ranger (DRD), has published a "Dear Interested Citizen" letter on June 3rd:

According to this guidance the route will remain in place this year to facilitate the required monitoring and no other motor vehicles will be granted access, no keys to the gate will be issued. While

it is gratifying that the gate key loan system for property in-holders has ended, DRD envisions leaving the route in place to facilitate motor vehicle access for various emergency services, such as Fire, Search & Rescue, and Law Enforcement. The CERCLA Engineer wants the route left in place just-in-case there is a need for heavy equipment access for remedial work. DRD further states that while the condition of the route is unknown, the Forest Service does not anticipate having the funds to inspect and clean-up the route this year.

On the other hand, N3C members Kurt Lauer, Phil Fenner and Kathy

Johnson from The Pilchuck Audubon Society, along with a reporter from the *Everett Herald* newspaper, have walked and inspected the route and report that it is impassable to motor vehicles. Over the winter, windstorms brought down ten large and many smaller trees obstructing the route. If the route must be cleared for motor vehicle access for monitoring, the necessary funds will have to come from the CERCLA settlement.

N3C notes and objects to the access creep of DRD's attempt to add motor vehicle access for emergency services to justify maintaining continued drivability of the CERCLA route. Motor vehicle access to the Monte Cristo area in response to emergencies is neither practical, workable in a timely fashion, or necessary. The exception to the Roadless Rule was granted solely for the CERCLA clean-up and no other purpose. Attempts to justify other uses, however laudatory, are the camel's nose under the tent flap and will lead to requests for other illegal motor vehicle access. N3C will vigorously oppose any endeavor to retain the route for any purpose other than that authorized for the CERCLA clean-up.

N3C will continue to closely monitor this issue and act with the goal of permanently closing and rendering the CERCLA route impassable and undrivable to motor vehicles and restoring the integrity of the Inventoried Roadless Area. This is important not only to the Monte Cristo wild backcountry site and the Henry Jackson Wilderness but to the integrity of 59,000,000 acres of Inventoried Roadless Areas in the National Forests Nationwide.

A trip to Monte Cristo with the *Everett Herald*

By Philip Fenner

New Darrington District Ranger Greta Smith's announcement that gate keys will no longer be loaned to anyone appears to have caught the eye of an *Everett Herald* reporter who asked to meet us there. Luckily, Kathy Johnson, a member of Pilchuck Audubon Society and the Monte Cristo Preservation Association was able to join me June 12, and the weather cooperated.

We tried to "keep it simple" and explain that the track was never intended to be permanent, and that it cuts through critical habitat for endangered species, so that's why we support the new Ranger's decision to no longer hand out gate keys as her predecessor did. Now the track should be removed after monitoring of the mine waste repository is completed this summer.

As we walked the track, we pointed out already decaying log-stringer bridges and other elements that showed it was clearly not intended as a real, permanent road. We saw a red-breasted sapsucker, pointed out ideal nesting platforms for the endangered marbled murrelet, saw a Cascades frog, observed how dramatically the forest character changed when we crossed from ancient forest into second growth, and talked about how salmon spawning streams like the upper Sauk River are damaged by silt from roads. At one point he said, "I'm loving this Nature 101 lesson!"

We told him we recommend removing the wood stringer bridges on the track before they collapse and cause further damage to the streams they cross. We pointed out how we saw inholders abuse their gate privileges by allowing others, including a church group, in. It's impossible to limit any such gate key program to only those who sign for keys. We're very pleased that gate key loans have ended.

At our lunch stop the reporter said, "It's kind of a scandal, isn't it?" referring to how the inholders were able to get keys at all, and now want to keep the track open for their exclusive use.

There are numerous large logs across the track now, probably at least 10, fallen over this last winter. The first several have



*We made our case
and hope for an
article with strong
environmental
priorities.*

been cut out of the way, by whom we don't know. But a lot more clearing would be necessary to use the track for anything other than feet.

Next the *Herald* reporter will talk to the Monte Cristo Preservation Association for the inholder side of

Herald reporter with large trees across Monte Cristo CERCLA track. —PHIL FENNER PHOTO

the story. We hope our "plain and simple" explanation, along with showing him the situation for himself, will prompt an article with strong environmental priorities.

Skagit County commissioners CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15

Seattle must contribute its fair share on the Skagit and we also have an interest in ensuring that this is done with a laser-like focus on restoring commercially harvestable runs.

Anadromous recovery in the Skagit is not just Seattle's financial responsibility. But we should not forget that Seattle generates immense revenue selling green-certified Skagit power to California and elsewhere and it is hard to consider a hydropower operation as "green" when it involves Skagit steelhead and salmon headed toward extinction and puts Treaty

rights at risk.

We have run the numbers and an equitable contribution would cost the average Seattle electrical ratepayer something like the price of a latte per month. We do not think that is too much to ask.

We stand with the Skagit Treaty Tribes in their insistence that Seattle contribute equitably to the Skagit, and we are ready, willing and able to help effectively deploy that investment here in the Skagit consistent with the Tribes' recovery priorities.

*Peter Browning, Lisa Janicki
and Ron Wesen*

Creative alternatives to helicopters do exist. I've used them.

By Robert Kendall

Having been heavily involved with the upkeep of Hidden Lake Lookout (HLL) since 2000, I would like to comment on North Cascades National Park (NOCA) use of helicopters in wilderness.

HLL is located at 6900' about ten miles up the Cascade River in an unprotected area of the Mount Baker Snoqualmie National Forest adjacent to NOCA. The lookout is reached by a fairly challenging four-mile trail gaining 3500 feet. Despite heavy use, this 1931 cabin has been maintained in excellent historic condition by volunteers since the early 1960s.

When we replaced the roof in 2016, a helicopter was reluctantly used for the first time in almost 20 years, making two five-mile flights from Irene Creek Road. Two full helicopter bags of shingles and other supplies were landed by long line, with a total weight in the range of 500 pounds, and two bags of accumulated junk of similar heft were removed on the return trips (two old wood stoves and associated parts, etc). I miscalculated the number of shingles needed and was only able to complete half of the roof. The inadequate leftovers were carefully stored underneath the cabin.

In 2017 we didn't want to use a helicopter again for the second round of shingles, which weighed about 200 pounds. So, we came up with a creative solution to take advantage of Hidden Lake's popularity. We purposely chose a busy Saturday morning to stage a volunteer at the trailhead, with varying sized bundles of shingles. Some were large enough to be fairly heavy, some were suited for a daypack, all were cumbersome because of their size and shape. The volunteer asked any willing hikers to each take a bundle or two. Few if any hikers declined to share in this bucket brigade, and most were quite proud and pleased to help. By early afternoon every last shingle had been powered up the mountain by granola and gorp to be stacked on the flat rock next to the lookout cabin.

The roof job was successfully completed. Now I suffered the comical embar-



rassment of surplus shingles. (Apparently math isn't my strong suit, and I didn't want to come up short again.) I gratefully had these 60-80 pounds removed to the trailhead in the same fashion, on many backs. Several hundred pounds of junk have also been removed over the years by simply asking hikers to each carry a little bit, additional to the many materials we have carried back and forth ourselves.

Several 8-foot cedar posts weighing 45 pounds each were airlifted with the shingles, but this wasn't strictly necessary, we were killing birds with stones; others had come up by human power previously. A heavy extension ladder was once gotten to the lookout (in halves) by attaching a note asking hikers to each carry it up the trail a few hundred yards. Bulky loads up to 100 pounds have been carried by backpack to the lookout, the pieces for an entire replacement shutter being one example. 40-50 pounds is the norm for my load of annual maintenance supplies such as cans of paint, on top of my personal kit. It's hard work... but we feel it is much preferable to using aircraft. After having

Shingles transported by crowd sourcing. Shutter on left, storm door propped against cabin, and ladder shown in photo are other examples of many materials brought up by volunteer human power. July 2017. —ROBERT KENDALL PHOTO

our wonderfully positive experience with "crowd sourcing", we hope to never hire a helicopter again.

The Park Service sometimes uses Sourdough, Copper, and Desolation lookouts, primarily for patrol purposes. The first two have natural water supplies that are reasonably accessible; Desolation does not but enough could be packed up to last for several days, after the snow is gone. A week's worth of fuel and other necessities could readily be packed in; large LP tanks are not justifiable. Helicopters should not be used for regular supply of these lookouts. On a related point, in alpine areas where composting or pit toilets don't work, use of blue bags is an inconvenient but more appropriate answer than absurd aerial poop removal.

Most of the materials used for trail maintenance and other projects could and should be transported by human backs and in some cases by pack animals. In my opinion, some trail projects could be designed with lighter engineering, with more modest standards. If there are circumstances that necessitate helicopter use in wilderness (or places that should be wilderness, and adjacent areas) aside from legitimate rescue operations, such use should be exceptional, when no other means are practicable.

Using non-industrial means of work are a funding, priority, and inertia challenge, not a technical one. It is apparently easier for the Park Service to routinely use a helicopter (or chainsaw) with dubious claims of "need" than to coordinate volunteers or fund employees or contractors. It seems this will continue unless they are brought to task. At present it does not appear the NPS is making a good faith effort to minimize their impact. This is antithetical to the wilderness ethics they rightly demand from recreationists.

From a June 2, 2021 NPS press release
2021 Stephen Mather Wilderness projects announced

Four NPS projects this summer in the Stephen Mather Wilderness will:

- resupply a remote fire lookout tower
- deliver supplies for trail/revegetation projects
- deliver materials for a bat gate for a historic mine entrance
- remove steel beams from a washed-out bridge.

These activities have been reviewed and vetted through an interdisciplinary team of park technical experts to minimize potential impacts to wilderness character. Due to the remote locations and types of supplies and materials needed, about seven helicopter flights into

the wilderness will be required to complete the planned work to deliver materials for trail projects, transport a metal, bat-friendly gate to a remote closed mine, and remove large steel I-beams from a washed-out bridge near the McCallister hiker campsite.

Projects flights have been combined when possible to reduce the number of flights needed to accomplish the work. No long-term trail closures are planned but visitor access may be temporarily restricted at project sites during flight operations. All flights are subject to last-minute schedule changes due to weather and emergency incidents.



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Twin Sisters as viewed from the Roadless and wild Marmot Ridge. Only partly protected in the Mt. Baker Wilderness, the ridge has been threatened by logging in decades past. —JIM SCARBOROUGH PHOTO