

WELCOME...

TO THE NORTH CASCADES HIGHWAY

Welcome to the unusual beauty of the North Cascades. Enjoy the view across deep canyons to towering, craggy peaks. Trace the cascading mountain streams from snowcapped peaks through fragile mountain meadows to azure-colored lakes.

This modern highway opens vast areas of these rugged mountains for the enjoyment of the forest and alpine environment. Many areas are fragile and easily destroyed by the simple act of setting up camp in an open heather patch or tramping out the delicate flowers of a water-soaked mountain meadow.

Environmentally concerned visitors are asked to assist in the protection of this great heritage by encouraging a few good environmental practices...

... pack out the litter—every litter bit hurts. Even the gum wrapper along the trail invades the beauty of the scene. Pick up what someone else might have dropped.

... camp only in designated areas. Concentrated use of an area kills the vegetation which takes years to replace at high altitude and fragile soil conditions.

... travel only on designated trails. Cutting across switch backs and making new trails can cause soil erosion.

... follow trail regulations posted for animals and motor equipment. Some meadow areas and trails are not suitable for heavy traffic. Use other than hiking will cause erosion problems.

... take nothing but pictures.

The North Cascades are yours to enjoy, protect, and keep clean.

History of the North Cascades Highway

For more than 100 years men have dreamed of a road through the North Cascades.

Fur trader Alexander Ross left the first recorded evidence of a route over the Cascades. His diary told about exploring the North Cascades in 1814.

For many years after Ross, a few hardy trappers were the only North Cascades explorers. Then the discovery of gold lured many men into this vast wilderness.

Prospectors, excited by the famous California gold strike of 1849, began working streams northward through Oregon and Washington looking for "color."

Ruby-colored stones (probably garnets), found with the gold nuggets that set off the gold rush of 1858 to the North Cascades, gave Ruby Creek its name.

While the diggings were not as rich as first expected, part of the reason that the rush lasted only one year was due to the difficult access problems posed by this rugged, primitive area. Access was either entirely by trails, or by a combination of trails and water—either up Canada's Fraser River or the Skagit River from the west, or the Columbia and Methow Rivers on the east—packing the needed supplies. Lack of transportation, rugged country, and fierce weather tended to discourage many prospectors.

During the next 20 years activity subsided to just the isolated prospector who was also a combination trapper-homesteader.

Another flurry of gold fever struck when gold was "rediscovered" in the upper Skagit headwaters around the mouth of Ruby Creek, and along Granite and Slate Creeks. This rush was shortlived also, culminating in 1880. A written reminiscence records: "On July 4, 1880, a miner's meeting was held at Ruby City. Around 4,000 men were in attendance at this meeting. Speechmaking and receiving reports from the various districts were the order of the day."

And, later: "Abandoning their tools and other belongings, the next morning found 5,000 disheartened miners on the trail. Only one man was left behind, the postmaster." It was a repeat story of earlier years; inadequate transportation played a large part in their failure.

The discovery of gold in 1858, and again in 1880, pointed up the need for better access, and several attempts were made to locate a wagon road. The miners and cattlemen in the Okanogan Valley alike petitioned the legislature of the new State of Washington for help to get their products to coastal markets. The State responded in 1893 by appropriating a sum of \$20,000 to build 200 miles of road from Bellingham Bay to the Columbia River by way of Ruby Creek. This was the grand total of \$100 a mile to survey and construct a road through one of the most rugged sections of the United States.

Eventually, in 1896, a board of examiners judged Cascade Pass as the most feasible route and work was started on a wagon road and trails. By the following year most of it was impassable even to pack stock because of slides and washouts. Little more was done on the road, however, until the 1930's when some piecemeal construction took place using Public Work Administration and Civilian

Conservation Corps funds. As a result, the Cascade River Road was extended to near its present terminus.

After World War II interest in the North Cascades route increased. The final route of the highway settled upon was up Ruby, Granite, and Early Winters Creeks. The North Cross-State Highway Association, organized in the middle 1950's, was instrumental in the culmination of the century-old dream. Construction began in 1960, 102 years after the first waves of eager miners fought their way up Skagit Gorge to Ruby gold field, or up Canyon Creek or Early Winters Creek to a hoped-for bonanza. Now, with few exceptions, only remnants of the mining past remain.



Devils Elbow, in the vicinity of present day Gorge Dam, was a well-named section of the old Skagit River Trail before construction of the highway.

Conservation Corps funds. As a result, the Cascade River Road was extended to near its present terminus.

After World War II interest in the North Cascades route increased. The final route of the highway settled upon was up Ruby, Granite, and Early Winters Creeks. The North Cross-State Highway Association, organized in the middle 1950's, was instrumental in the culmination of the century-old dream. Construction began in 1960, 102 years after the first waves of eager miners fought their way up Skagit Gorge to Ruby gold field, or up Canyon Creek or Early Winters Creek to a hoped-for bonanza. Now, with few exceptions, only remnants of the mining past remain.

Prospectors, excited by the famous California gold strike of 1849, began working streams northward through Oregon and Washington looking for "color."

Ruby-colored stones (probably garnets), found with the gold nuggets that set off the gold rush of 1858 to the North Cascades, gave Ruby Creek its name.

While the diggings were not as rich as first expected, part of the reason that the rush lasted only one year was due to the difficult access problems posed by this rugged, primitive area. Access was either entirely by trails, or by a combination of trails and water—either up Canada's Fraser River or the Skagit River from the west, or the Columbia and Methow Rivers on the east—packing the needed supplies. Lack of transportation, rugged country, and fierce weather tended to discourage many prospectors.

During the next 20 years activity subsided to just the isolated prospector who was also a combination trapper-homesteader.

Another flurry of gold fever struck when gold was "rediscovered" in the upper Skagit headwaters around the mouth of Ruby Creek, and along Granite and Slate Creeks. This rush was shortlived also, culminating in 1880. A written reminiscence records: "On July 4, 1880, a miner's meeting was held at Ruby City. Around 4,000 men were in attendance at this meeting. Speechmaking and receiving reports from the various districts were the order of the day."

And, later: "Abandoning their tools and other belongings, the next morning found 5,000 disheartened miners on the trail. Only one man was left behind, the postmaster." It was a repeat story of earlier years; inadequate transportation played a large part in their failure.

The discovery of gold in 1858, and again in 1880, pointed up the need for better access, and several attempts were made to locate a wagon road. The miners and cattlemen in the Okanogan Valley alike petitioned the legislature of the new State of Washington for help to get their products to coastal markets. The State responded in 1893 by appropriating a sum of \$20,000 to build 200 miles of road from Bellingham Bay to the Columbia River by way of Ruby Creek. This was the grand total of \$100 a mile to survey and construct a road through one of the most rugged sections of the United States.

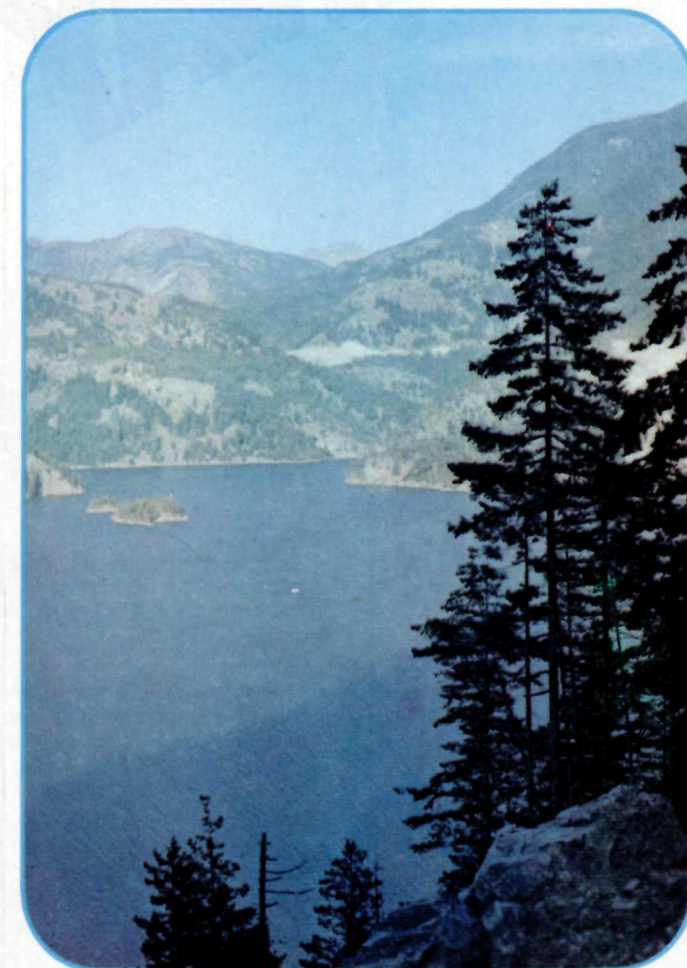
Eventually, in 1896, a board of examiners judged Cascade Pass as the most feasible route and work was started on a wagon road and trails. By the following year most of it was impassable even to pack stock because of slides and washouts. Little more was done on the road, however, until the 1930's when some piecemeal construction took place using Public Work Administration and Civilian

Conservation Corps funds. As a result, the Cascade River Road was extended to near its present terminus.

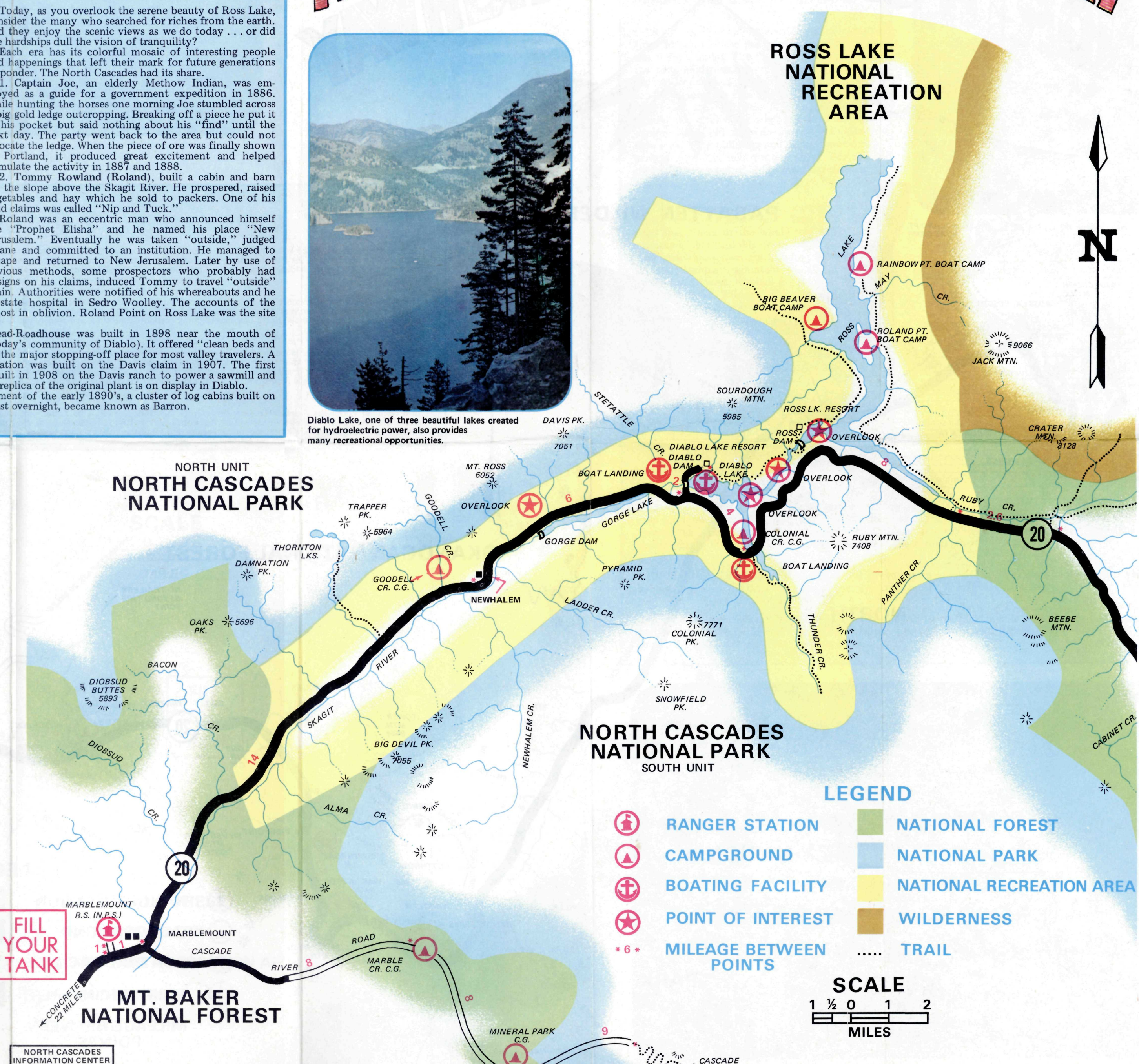
After World War II interest in the North Cascades route increased. The final route of the highway settled upon was up Ruby, Granite, and Early Winters Creeks. The North Cross-State Highway Association, organized in the middle 1950's, was instrumental in the culmination of the century-old dream. Construction began in 1960, 102 years after the first waves of eager miners fought their way up Skagit Gorge to Ruby gold field, or up Canyon Creek or Early Winters Creek to a hoped-for bonanza. Now, with few exceptions, only remnants of the mining past remain.

NORTH CASCADES HIGHWAY

WEST SIDE



Diablo Lake, one of three beautiful lakes created for hydroelectric power, also provides many recreational opportunities.



POINTS OF INTEREST (from West to East)

MARBLEMOUNT—Small town at junction of Skagit and Cascade Rivers, offers gas, food, lodging, Park Service Ranger Station.

CASCADE RIVER ROAD SIDE TRIP—A 25-mile-long road, mostly gravel, leads to a trailhead three miles below beautiful Cascade Pass, a favorite for afternoon hikers. Trail continues down eastside toward Lake Chelan. Two campgrounds are located along the middle section of the road.

NEWHALEM—Headquarters town for Seattle City Power and Light Company's Skagit operation, offers snacks, and a Public Information Station. Seattle City Light tour of the entire Skagit Project begins here. **ADVANCE RESERVATIONS ARE REQUIRED.** Attractions in Newhalem include the Gorge Powerhouse, Ladder Creek Falls and Rock Gardens, and Ross Crypt, where J. D. Ross, the "father of City Light," and his wife are interred.

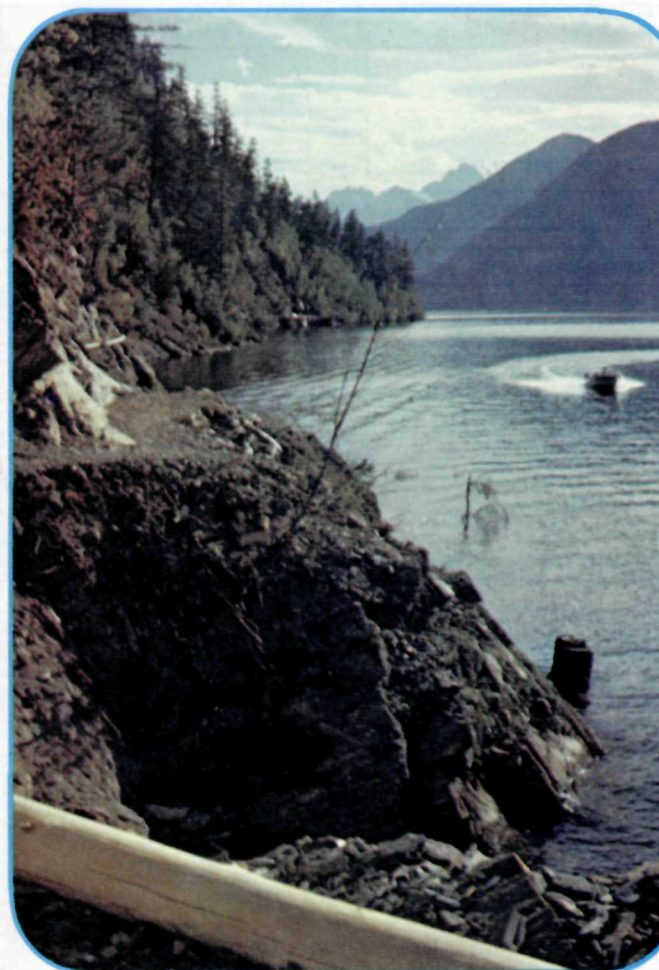
GORGE DAM OVERLOOK—The original dam built in 1919 was a wood crib. This was replaced in 1950 by a concrete diversion dam, and by the present high dam in 1961. It is 300 feet high, 670 feet long, backing up a reservoir 4½ miles long.

DIABLO—Small company town for City Light employees. Interesting features include the powerhouse, a replica of the first Skagit waterwheel powerhouse, and the unusual incline railway. This powered lift rises 600 feet up the mountainside performing Company work as well as carrying thousands of tourists and fishermen each summer. All construction materials and machinery for the Ross Dam and powerhouse, and for Diablo Dam were taken up the 68% incline.

DIABLO DAM—When completed in 1930, this was the highest arch-type dam in the world. It is 389 feet high and 1,180 feet long. The five-mile-long lake provides scenic cruising up Thunder Arm or up close-walled Skagit Gorge to Ross Dam.

DIABLO LAKE OVERLOOK—A beautiful panorama unfolds from Thunder Creek to the hanging glaciers on Colonial and Pyramid Peaks. The blue-green color of Diablo Lake is caused by the "rock-flour" or fine sediment brought in by glacial-fed streams.

ROSS DAM VIEWPOINT—A glimpse of the upper portion of Ross Dam is available looking upstream, or north. This is the only point on the highway where the dam is visible. The only access to the dam, or to Ross Lake Resort, is by trail or by boat either from below on Diablo Lake, or from above on Ross Lake through Canada. Ross Dam, the key structure of the Skagit Project, was completed in 1949 to the height of 540 feet from bedrock. The five-foot-square waffle-like surface was designed to hold additional concrete for possible dam enlargement.

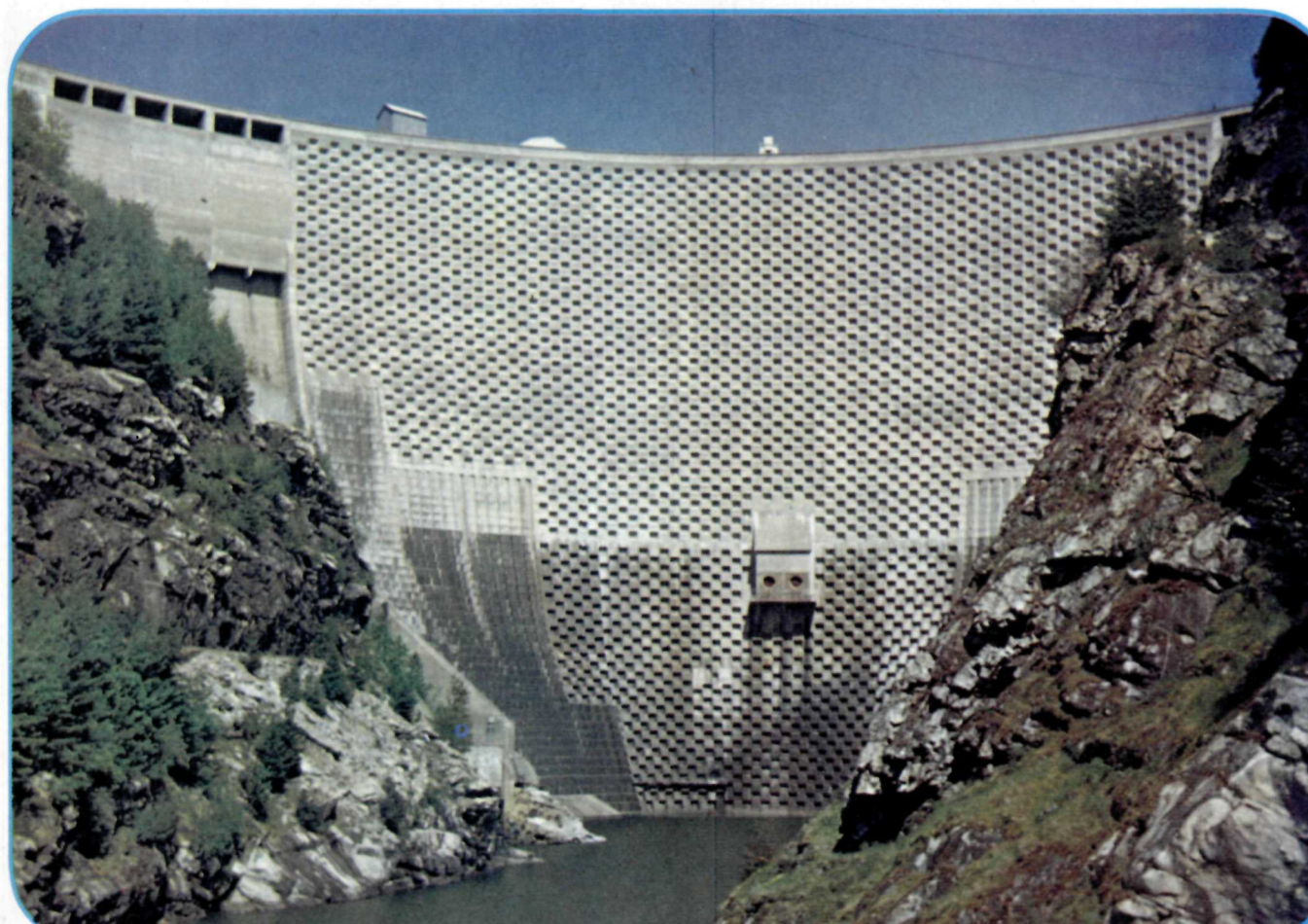


East Ross Lake Trail, Ross Lake National Recreation Area.

or north. This is the only point on the highway where the dam is visible. The only access to the dam, or to Ross Lake Resort, is by trail or by boat either from below on Diablo Lake, or from above on Ross Lake through Canada. Ross Dam, the key structure of the Skagit Project, was completed in 1949 to the height of 540 feet from bedrock. The five-foot-square waffle-like surface was designed to hold additional concrete for possible dam enlargement.

ROSS LAKE OVERLOOK—Ross Lake, the heart of the Ross Lake National Recreation Area, extends some 24 miles northward, backing 1½ miles into Canada. The Recreation Area boundary extends about two miles up the mountains on each side of the lake. Beyond the boundary, on the west side, is the wild, rugged North Unit of the North Cascades National Park; on the east is the equally wild Pasayten Wilderness. Roads will not be constructed in either area; access is by foot or horseback only.

There are 10 small campgrounds located on Ross Lake; all are boat-access only, except the northernmost one at Hozomeen, which is served by a road through Canada. A proposed tramway up Ruby Mountain (to the south) would have its base area near here, in the vicinity of the Ross Lake Overlook.



Ross Dam, 540 feet high, the largest of the three dams in the Seattle City Light, Skagit Hydroelectric Project.

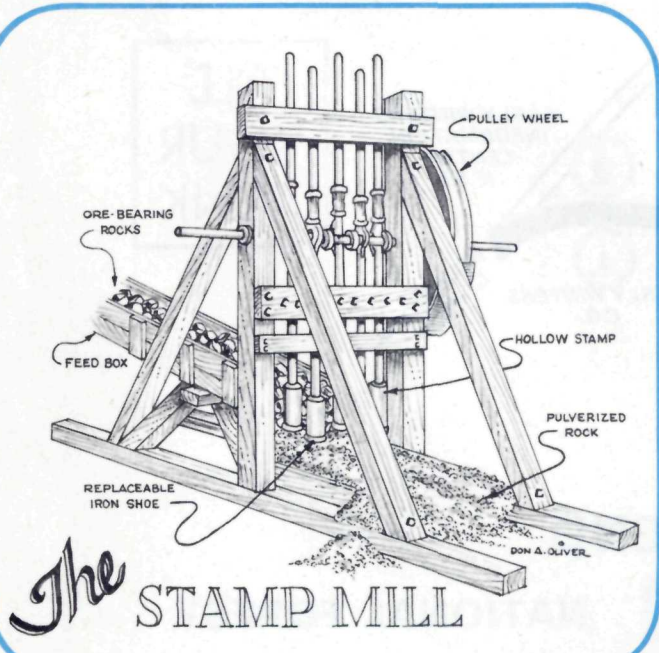
NORTH CASCADES HIGHWAY

Forest Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Washington State
Department of Commerce and Economic Development

The settlement, four miles northwest of Harts Pass, once boasted a post office, hotel, restaurants, saloons, dance hall, and more than 1,000 persons. At the beginning all equipment, including stamp mills, was brought in over horse trails from the east. Ore went out the same way. The ore was low-grade and did not yield to treatment as readily as was anticipated. By 1907 the whole town became panic-stricken. In a few weeks it was entirely deserted except for a few watchmen. Tools, blacksmith shops, wagons, bedding, and cooking utensils were scattered just as they were left by their last users in the final exodus. By 1910, most of the mining activity in the North Cascades, with an occasional exception, became a thing of the past.



HIGHWAY OPEN

The distances today's motorist on the North Cascades Highway can leisurely cover in one hour took the miner several days, but heavy snows will cover a major portion of the highway up to seven or eight months of the year. Although probable open dates will be from June through October, it will vary from year to year according to weather and avalanche conditions. The Washington State Department of Highways has jurisdiction over patrol, maintenance and snow removal of the highway itself.

FILL YOUR TANK

MT. BAKER NATIONAL FOREST

NORTH CASCADES INFORMATION CENTER AT CONCRETE (NPS)

POINTS OF INTEREST (from East to West)

NORTH CASCADES SMOKEJUMPER BASE—Four miles east of Winthrop on eastside Methow River Road. Home of the first airborne firefighters in the Pacific Northwest. Visitors welcome.

WINTHROP—Small town of 500, recently renovated in "Old West" theme with false front buildings, etc. Forest Service Ranger Station.

HARTS PASS—A 20-mile side trip northwest from Mazama. Slate Peak Lookout is an additional three miles. The road, hewn out to serve the 1890 gold rush, is very narrow in places. *No trailers are allowed beyond 10-mile point.* Reasonably mountain-wise drivers can pilot the family car to Harts Pass now. A small campground can be used for headquarters to hike and explore. Many old mines are located in the Harts Pass area. Mine buildings and improvements are private property, help protect them. For your own safety stay out of old tunnels and buildings, and keep off of old trestles.

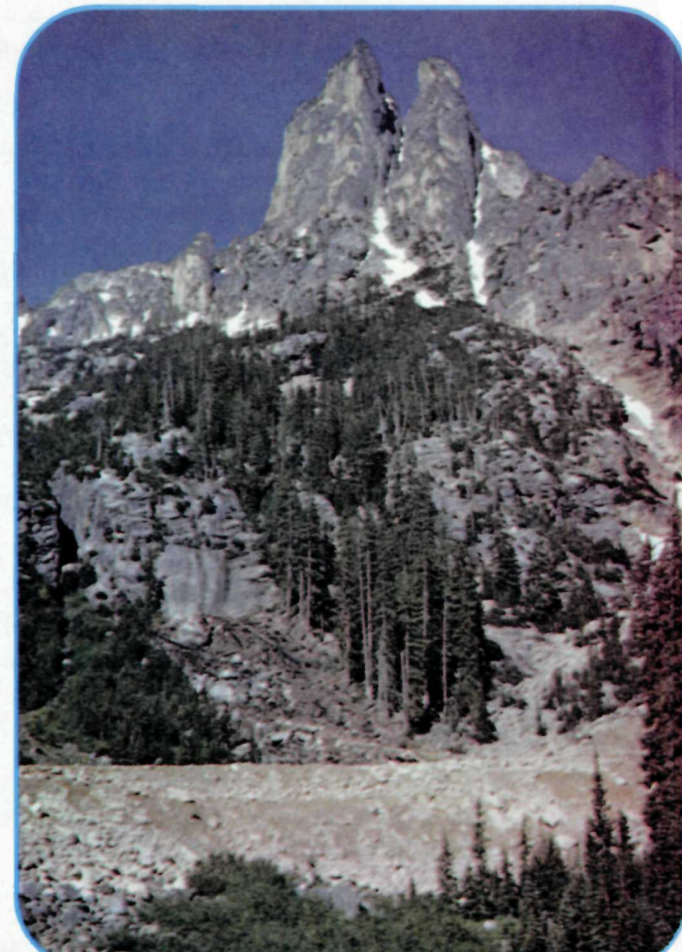
This is the most northern access point to the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail in Washington. The climax of the whole trip is the 360° panorama that unfolds from Slate Peak. The view encompasses several hundred square miles of wild, tumbled mountain scenery from Mt. Baker on the west, through the glaciated valleys of the Pasayten Wilderness, to the sere-colored eastern horizon, and south to snow-covered Glacier Peak.

EARLY WINTERS INFORMATION STATION.

WASHINGTON PASS OVERLOOK—One of the truly outstanding highlights along the North Cascades Highway. A 1/2-mile road leads from the highway to a parking and picnic area. The trail to the overlook is suitable for wheelchair travel. *Caution: The guard rail at the overlook cannot do the whole job of protecting visitors or guarding natural features.* Do not let children wander alone. The spectacular view looks down Early Winters Creek to the needle-peaks of Silver Star Mountain and Snagtooth Ridge; to Cooper Basin, framed by Kangaroo Ridge and Early Winters Spires; and culminates at Liberty Bell Mountain. Please do not remove or destroy any features of the area; rocks, mosses, living and even dead trees are part of the natural scene.

WHISTLER BASIN VIEWPOINT—Beautiful mountain meadows and fall colors on slopes of Whistler Mountain provide the only real close-up view of alpine meadows adjacent to highway.

RAINY PASS—Elevation 4,855 feet. Limited parking at present. A 1.4-mile trail leads to Lake Ann. The Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail crosses highway here. Heading west, the highway begins to drop down glaciated Granite Creek enroute to Ross Lake.

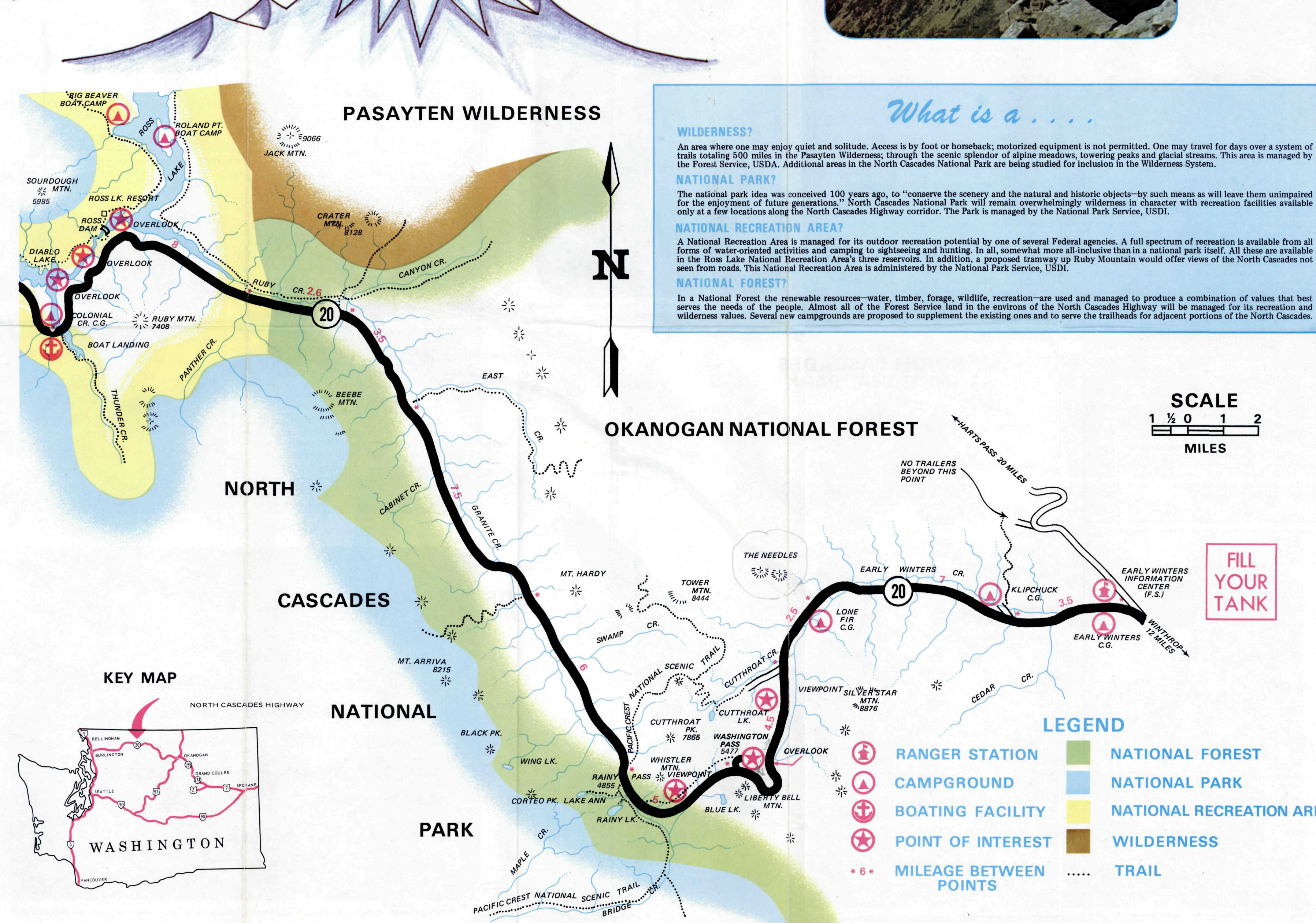


Early Winters Spires near Washington Pass.

CAMPGROUNDS

NAME	FACILITIES				
	TENT	TRAILER	PICNIC	BOAT DOCK	AGENCY
(FROM WESTSIDE)					
MARBLE CREEK	27		6		USFS
MINERAL PARK	2	17	4		USFS
GOODSELL CREEK		26	4		NPS
COLONIAL CREEK	67	107		1	NPS
(FROM EASTSIDE)					
EARLY WINTERS	7				USFS
KLIPCHUCK	26	20			USFS
LONE FIR	14	6			USFS

NORTH CASCADES HIGHWAY



The North Cascades Highway bisects an area that offers a great concentration of challenging peaks for mountain climbers.

THE MAKING OF THE North Cascades

CLIMATE AND NATIVE VEGETATION

Native vegetation is almost a direct reflection of the climate. As the first major mountain barrier on Washington's west coast, the Cascades wring out great amounts of precipitation from the moisture-laden storms that originate over the waters of the North Pacific. Most of the moisture falls in the winter months in the form of snow or cold rain; some of the higher elevations accumulate snow packs 20 feet deep. Even in relatively low areas several feet of snow is common. The inhabitants of the town of Diablo may be isolated by avalanches periodically throughout the winter. Avalanche chutes are readily recognizable as the long, vertical, shrub-covered strips on otherwise timbered hillsides.

In the far western portion, especially in the deep valleys, Douglas-fir occurs mixed with western hemlock and western redcedar, interspersed with lesser amounts of Pacific silver fir. Together, with a ground cover of moss, ferns, vine maple, huckleberry, etc., it forms the ecological blend known as the "rain forest." Timberline is generally in the 4,500- to 5,500-foot elevation range. The trees at this elevation consist of isolated patches of contorted mountain hemlock and alpine fir separating park-like meadows or eking out life in a rocky cleft.

In the Ross Lake area the vegetation pattern becomes transitional. Lodgepole and ponderosa pine are found interspersed with the westside species. Although most of the trees up Granite Creek are westside types, the typical westside undergrowth has disappeared. Near Rainy Pass eastside trees also take over. Lodgepole, western white, and ponderosa pines separate meadows and grassy areas. Much of the scenic grandeur of the Pasayten Wilderness is due to this open park-like character.

GEOLOGY

The North Cascades as we observe them now are at least "second generation" mountains. Out of the jumbled maze of rocks, geologists have deciphered the story that many millions of years ago—probably 400 to 500 million—sandstones, limestones and shales under a shallow sea were compressed and slowly rose to become moderate-sized mountains. Subsequent erosion lowered this range to small foothills which eventually subsided beneath an ancient sea for more eons of time. Today's mountains probably began some 15 million years ago as granitic-type intrusions slowly pushed up through the new sediments of this shallow sea. Many stages are evident with periods of erosion and faulting taking place. Pressure and intense heating altered much of the granite into crystalline gneisses which are left today as spires and horns of some of the highest peaks.

GLACIERS

About 500,000 years ago the "ice ages" began in the North Cascades. They peaked three or possibly four times when the glaciers covered most of the land surface in the area. Between each glacial retreat and the next advance, the climate moderated with the ice melting and the forests again forcing their way up the valleys.

Most of the alpine scenery left today—U-shaped valleys, horns, serrated ridges, hanging valleys, and cirque or tarn lakes—is the result of the last ice age which ended some 10,000 years ago. In some localized areas the ice age never ended. These are the glaciers and permanently snow-capped peaks of the North Cascades. The continental United States has about 1,100 glaciers covering a total area of 205 square miles. The state of Washington alone has about 800 glaciers covering 160 square miles.



Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail crosses the North Cascades Highway at Rainy Pass. The Trail, shown here at Harts Pass, meanders along the crest of the Cascades and Sierra Nevadas between Mexico and Canada. It is closed to motorized vehicles.

BE WISE! FILL YOUR TANK

There are only limited recreation supplies available between the towns of Marblemount and Winthrop, a distance of 85 miles. Wise motorists will check their gas and oil before entering the North Cascades.



Washington Pass meadow and Liberty Bell Mountain. Alpine meadows are fragile. Walk on designated trails, and camp in designated areas.

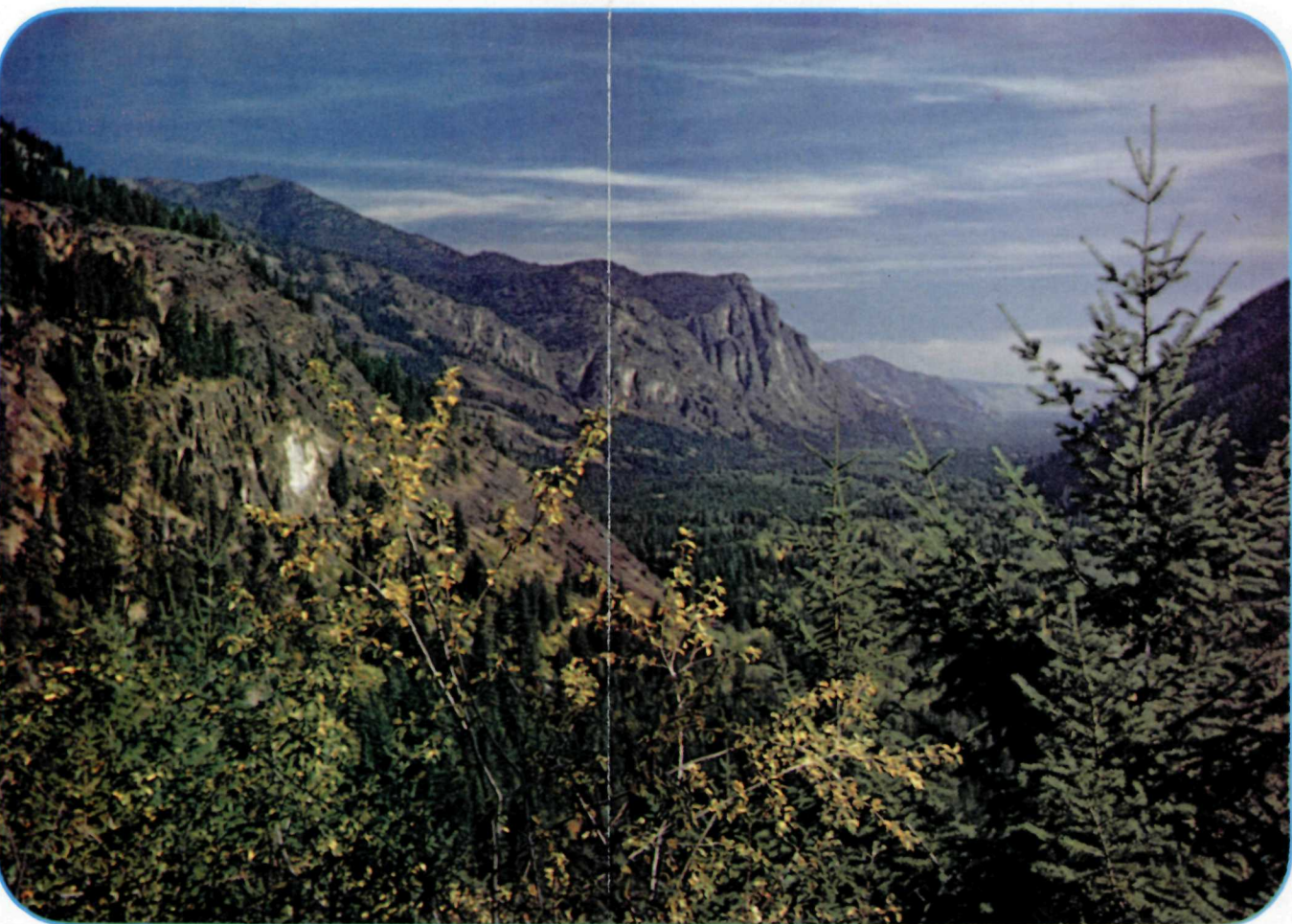
FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION WRITE OR CALL

North Cascades National Park
Marblemount Ranger Station
Marblemount, Washington
Phone 873-4590

Mt. Baker National Forest
Baker River Ranger Station
Concrete, Washington
Phone 853-2851

Okanogan National Forest
Winthrop Ranger Station
Winthrop, Washington
Phone 996-2266

The Washington State
Department of Commerce and Economic
Development, Travel Development Division
General Administration Building,
Olympia, Washington 98504
Phone (206) 753-5610



Methow Valley from viewpoint on Harts Pass Road.