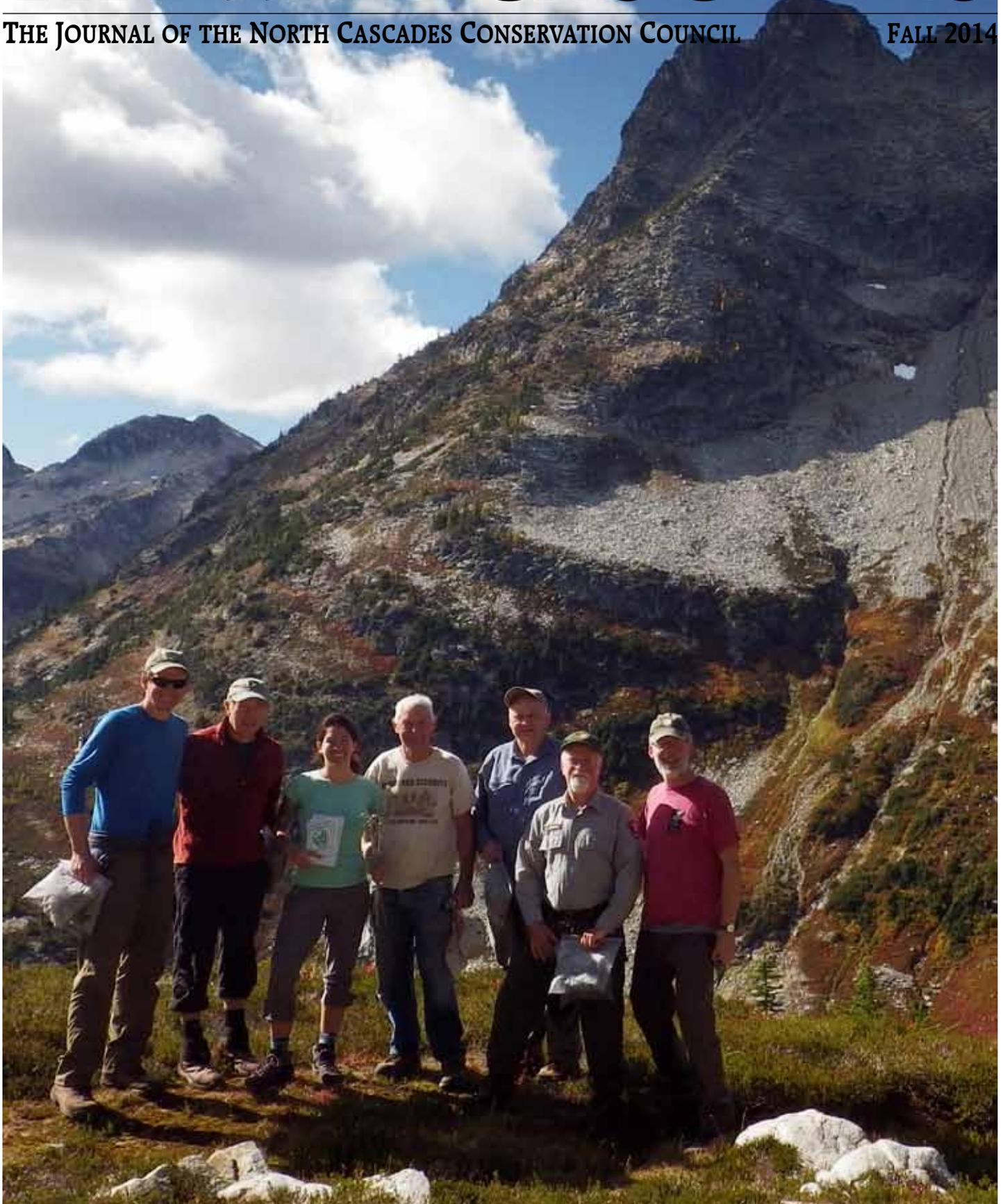


THE WILD CASCADES

THE JOURNAL OF THE NORTH CASCADES CONSERVATION COUNCIL

FALL 2014



THE WILD CASCADES ■ Fall 2014

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COVER: A day of plant collection isn't too bad when you have wonderful company and even better weather. (See article on page 16.) The NCCC Crew included (L to R) Michael Kirshenbaum and Russ Dalton of Skagit Land Trust, North Cascades Institute graduate student Samantha Hale, Tom Brucker and Marc Bardsley of North Cascades Conservation Council (NCCC), North Cascades National Park Volunteer and Youth Program Coordinator Michael Brondi, and Phil Fenner with NCCC. Not pictured, Ed Henderson of NCCC. —PHIL FENNER PHOTO

The Wild Cascades

Journal of the North Cascades Conservation Council

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THE NORTH CASCADES

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

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

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

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NORTH CASCADES CONSERVATION COUNCIL

Founded in 1957

SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

THE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

FALL 2014

During the summer of the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act, I was fortunate to explore wonderful new places in wilderness as well as revisiting old favorites. I hope you got out there too. By mid-October it was time to move indoors for the National Wilderness Conference, and it was great to see so many colleagues, old and new. NCCC veteran Polly Dyer made the trip, and we're grateful to Donna Osseward, co-organizer of so many Northwest Wilderness Conferences, for helping Polly make it to this National one. The NCCC board also thanks Athena Pangan Hammond, who recently stepped down from the board after years of service, and we have greatly appreciated her financial reporting and event organizing.

At the National Wilderness Conference, I gave a presentation on motorized recreation: threats to wilderness and opportunities to engage. It was well-received, and I gathered that many in the audience were there to learn how to fight similar battles in their own local wildlands. We used case studies from NCCC's advocacy here in the Cascades over the past 23 years.

From our four federal lawsuit victories involving off-road vehicles (ORVs) in Gifford Pinchot and Wenatchee National Forests, we distilled the following lessons:

- Litigation can halt ORV expansion in proposed Wilderness.
- Consider impacts of the entire ORV network, not merely the latest component.
- It's easier to defend a good decision than to overturn a bad decision.
- Build a good administrative record.

Changing gears, we examined how to use political and administrative processes to obtain improved protections without filing a lawsuit, as we accomplished in Reiter Forest adjacent to Wild Sky Wilderness. Lessons there included the following:

- Ground-truth, document the damage, and use the information in advocacy.
- To publicize the damage, also use videos and photos taken by ORV riders.
- Create enforceable routes and regulations, based on on-the-ground knowledge and observations.
- Create separate areas for motorized and non-motorized recreation.
- Cultivate relationships with agency decision makers, and educate them about ORVs, and about the site.
- Form broad coalitions for public support, recruit volunteers, and bring people to the site.
- Let the agency take the responsibility (and the heat).
- Get the agency to increase its presence; make riders responsible; promote a culture shift among peers; encourage ORV riders to patrol their own ranks.
- See and be seen; engage in visible action and meaningful collaboration; participate in agency process.

Continued on page 7

Helicopters used for major project near Cascade Pass without public notice

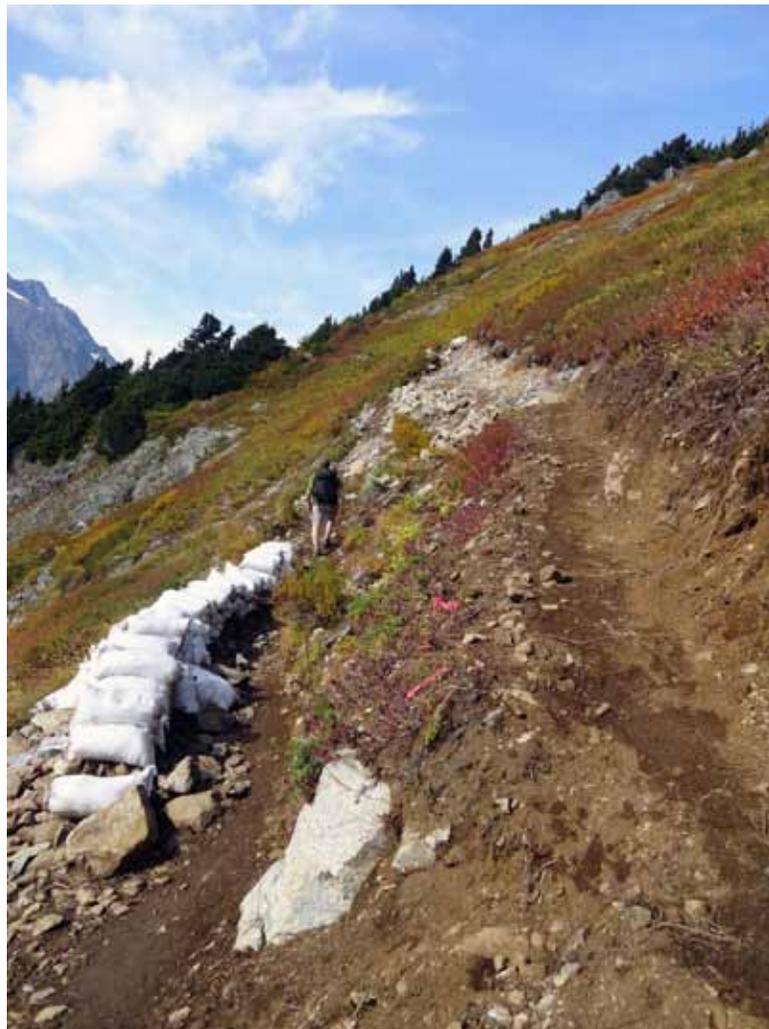
By Philip Fenner

We are investigating a complaint by one of our members who said helicopters ruined her backcountry experience last August around Cascade Pass. We have learned that the Park Service has been building new trail on Sahale Arm and new tent and cooking sites at Pelton Basin camp for two summers in a row, using multiple helicopter runs to move large heavy materials like rock and gravel from a nearby talus slope. We didn't know about this until our member told us about it, as no public notice was made.

"I was biking the final mile from Pelton Basin to Cascade Pass when I was buzzed by a low-flying helicopter flying past me 30 times! The noise was deafening. It occurred ... the entire time I was biking through the basin. I came 900 miles to Stebekin and then biked for 3 days from High Bridge to Cascade Pass only to find the peace and sacred space of the North Cascade National Park violated repeatedly by the NPS helicopter. I feel strongly that helicopter flights should be banned in the National Park except for emergency rescue operations. Trail crews have been building tent sites for 100 years in the parks without the use of helicopters. It is totally unnecessary."

—NCCC member

The Cascade Pass area is protected to the maximum extent of the law, in designated Wilderness inside National Park. So as our member says, helicopters should not be there for any purpose other than emergency rescues, as per the Wilderness Act.



New switchback cut into fragile alpine meadow on Sabale Arm as part of helicopter-supported trail construction by NPS.

—CRAIG ROMANO PHOTO

We requested and just received a packet of papers about these projects from the North Cascades National Park office under the Freedom of Information Act. These papers were not made available for public review before work began, and reveal that the Park Service classified the work as "maintenance," which can be withheld from public review under the Categorical Exclusion (CE) clause of NEPA.

Considering the extent of the projects, however, we cannot agree with NCNP

administration that this was just maintenance work. From what we've seen (see photo) the work on Sahale Arm was clearly relocation and reconstruction, and thus should have been opened to public comment so we could have reviewed it before work began and had a chance to modify it to at least eliminate the need for a helicopter.

The extent of intervention these projects involve in an area NCCC considers "sacred ground" appears to be excessive, too — it's apparently being done in response to high backcountry permit demand. With recreation projected to continue to increase dramatically in coming decades, though, the Park Service's work to make Cascade Pass accommodate more visitors will only mean more demand to follow, leading to more impact and further loss of Wilderness character. In this case the cure looks to us worse than the disease, as more heavy mechanical intervention will likely happen there and elsewhere in the Park. And we are especially concerned that this project was undertaken as a CE without public notice.

We have a meeting scheduled soon with NCNP Superintendent Karen Taylor-Goodrich and senior Park staff to discuss this very troubling issue. We'll keep you updated on our blog, at: ncascadesconservation.blogspot.com/

As always, **our members are our eyes and ears!** Please feel free to let us know of any such encounters or experiences by emailing info@northcascades.org — **thank you!**

“Quid pro quo” wilderness and forest thinning

By Rick McGuire

The specter of “quid pro quo” Wilderness is inching ever closer to the North Cascades. So-called QPQ bills designate Wilderness as part of a larger package including other things for other interests. Some bills propose complex tradeoffs among recreational uses, such as mountain bikes and ORVs. Most include increased resource extraction from public lands, especially higher timber cut levels, sometimes much higher.

What could be wrong with that? one might ask. After all, politics is a never-ending stream of tradeoffs and compromises, balancing competing interests. With QPQ wilderness bills, the recurring pattern seems to be that while areas proposed for protection are modest, increases in timber cut levels are dramatic. Every political act is a deal, but QPQ Wilderness efforts so far seldom seem to be good deals from a conservation perspective.

QPQ deals had their start in areas where the political landscape is not normally favorable to conservation. An early one was the “Quincy Library Group” in the northern Sierra Nevada. Many more have followed, including an ongoing effort to carve up the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest in Montana. Closer to home, an effort has been mounted to make big changes in the Colville National Forest in northeastern Washington.

The Montana QPQ effort proposes to designate Wilderness in exchange for an increase in the cut level on the rest of the Beaverhead-Deerlodge. It mandates the Forest Service to cut at least 7000 acres per year for ten years. The Colville effort would designate some modest acreage as Wilderness in the Kettle Crest area in exchange for tripling the cut on the Colville National Forest.

Certain threads are common to these efforts. The calls for greatly increased cut levels are couched in terms of “restoration.” Never mind that there is really no such thing as restoration logging, which has been compared to research whaling. It has become an article of faith in many quarters that logging equals restoration, despite overwhelming evidence that it does no such thing. Foundations and many big funders never tire of the “loggers and environmentalists working together” story. For a certain segment of the envi-

ronmental movement, it’s a way to insure a continuous harvest of money.

Organizations respond to incentives, of which funding is almost always the strongest. Government agencies do the things that “bring in budget.” So do departments within corporations, along with just about any formally organized group of people. Perhaps “bureaucratization” comes close to describing it. Environmental organizations are probably less affected than most others, with many still actively pursuing the purposes they were formed for. But over the years, some have fallen more and more into the habit of doing the things that bring in budget, sometimes to the detriment of their original goals. QPQ wilderness brings in the budget.

Strangely enough, few QPQ efforts have passed Congress and become reality on the ground. The Montana Wilderness Association has been pushing its Beaverhead campaign for the better part of a decade, changing along the way from a “partnership” into the “Montana Forests Campaign.” The QPQ effort on the Colville National Forest does not appear anywhere close to fruition, in part because ORV interests refused to give up their use of trails in the Kettle Crest area proposed for Wilderness. Who would have thought that ORVers would play an important role in keeping chainsaws at bay, even inadvertently?

For decades, conservationists strove to keep QPQ or its equivalents from turning into the way to pass Wilderness bills. Conservationists in Washington state and elsewhere were mostly successful in keeping Wilderness bills “clean,” i.e., free of harmful provisions that used terms like “release” to keep places out of Wilderness and turn them over to resource extraction as a price of passage.

Sadly there are those who would like to change that. If QPQ Wilderness comes to the Cascades or anywhere in Washington state, it will almost certainly be sold as an effort to “restore” forests by logging them, raising cut levels on the National Forests.

For years the timber industry had terrible PR. Efforts to put a good face on Panzer-style logging were so transparently at odds with what everyone could see that they fooled no one. Interstate 90 over Snoqualmie Pass was, as one *Seattle Times* columnist put it, a “60-mile-long billboard of atrocious logging practices.” Entire val-

leys and mountains were stripped bare, and the checkerboard pattern of square mile clearcuts visible from space became a symbol of the timber industry.

Then a sea change occurred. The industry banished words like logging and cutting and replaced them with the innocent-sounding harvest, with its overtones of peasant life and honest toil. A concerted effort was also made to sell selective logging, or thinning, as something not only without harm, but which would actually transform forests into better places.

There have been some examples of places which have been successfully thinned—all small, privately owned forests managed on a tree-by-tree basis, by people who knew every square foot of their land, and every tree as an individual. Their number can be counted practically on one hand, but a major effort was mounted by forestry schools and the timber industry to convince the public that this kind of “new forestry” would change everything. Logging was no longer destructive, but positively beneficial. We could have our forests and eat them too.

There was never any way to scale up those few tree-by-tree thinning operations into industrial-scale logging. The need for maximum volume at minimal cost drives everything on National Forest timber sales, and the reality of thinning on public forests has been devastating. Blowdown has leveled many stands of trees which had mutually each other protected from the wind, then were suddenly and unnaturally opened up after being thinned. Selective logging also means that logs are dragged with ground-based skidders instead of cable systems, turning forests into mazes of roads and compacted soils.

In many wetter forests, a strange aftermath of thinning has been the creation of dense, doghair thickets of hemlock trees, sometimes with hundreds of thousands of stems per acre, forming near-impenetrable barriers. These thickets suck up moisture and nutrients that were supposed to make the trees grow faster and better, utterly defeating the supposed purpose of the thinning. No one knows quite why they grow up or what to do except ignore them. They now cover thousands of acres where thinning has occurred in the Mt. Baker Snoqualmie and Olympic National Forests.

Continued on page 13

Suiattle River Road reopened

By Ed Henderson



At a ribbon-cutting ceremony on October 25, accompanied by Native American chants, attended by politicians, interest groups and enthusiastic locals, the upper twelve miles of the Suiattle River road was reopened to motor vehicle traffic.

In 2011 NCCC sued the Forest Service and Federal Highways Administration to compel the legally required environmental assessment before proceeding with the four million dollar reconstruction (*The Wild Cascades*, Spring 2011). Following the Environmental Assessment (EA) in 2012 to which NCCC submitted extensive comments, the Forest Service selected Alternative B to rebuild the road to the end at Milepost 23.2 (*The Wild Cascades*, Winter 2013). While we were disappointed that Alternative C to stop the road at Milepost 19.0 was not selected, our advocacy has had a positive impact. NCCC members have followed the project through design, bidding and construction. We recommended relocating a road turnout point and reducing the width of the cleared zone through the John Edwards Memorial Grove of mature forest, and saved many large trees.

Reducing right-of-way of bypass road saved trees in the John Edwards Memorial Grove.

—ED HENDERSON PHOTO

Also on a positive note, the dirt berm built to provide access to the Downey Creek Bridge has been removed. Downey Creek will once again spread out over its flood plain where it flows into the Suiattle River and thus reduce erosion. The roadcut below that point is still at risk of washout and sediment delivery into salmon spawning beds, however, so we will continue to monitor that area.

More than ten years after floods in 2003 and 2006 washed out the road, motor vehicle access has been restored to the upper twelve miles of the Suiattle River Road. The reopened road will allow driving to two drive-in campgrounds and a half dozen wilderness trailheads. These facilities have not been maintained for the past ten years and are a now priority for the attention of the Forest Service and volunteer groups. Because of pent-up demand there will be heavy usage next year when the snow melts. NCCC will keep watch as this situation develops.

Hoping for House Action on Alpine Lakes

NCCC and many partners are hoping that the U.S. House of Representatives will take action and pass the Alpine Lakes Wilderness additions bill. The bill would add roughly 22,000 acres to the Alpine Lakes Wilderness, comprised mostly of low elevation forests in the Pratt River and nearby Middle Fork Snoqualmie areas.

The bill has passed the Senate, and has been reported favorably by the House Resources Committee, chaired by eastern Washington's Doc Hastings. All that now stands between it and the President's desk is passage by the full House.

Conservationists are fervently hoping that the House will act. Changes in the political landscape will likely add to the challenges of enacting it in the next Congress, although all of the bill's current sponsors have indicated their intent to stay the course for as long as it takes.

The best hope at this point is for the bill to be included in a package with other measures, perhaps including a Manhattan Project National Historical Park, and a National Heritage Area encompassing the Mountains to Sound Greenway. Fingers are crossed - if the clock runs out, it is back to the drawing board. As ever, patience is a prerequisite for successful conservation.

Member profiles needed

Tell us about yourself!

We'd like to feature YOU on our new website! Email us a short profile of yourself and tell us why you're an NCCC member. Email philf@northcascades.org and include a photo if you'd like.

Thanks!

Paving Proceeds on Middle Fork Snoqualmie Road

By Rick McGuire

Contractors have been busily at work paving the Middle Fork Snoqualmie road. Asphalt has been laid starting at the upper end of the project at Taylor River and working downstream. As this issue goes to press, several miles have been paved. The contractor is working from the far end to avoid damaging the newly asphalted sections by running their own trucks over them.

Some concerns have been raised as to whether the three-inch thick top layer of asphalt will be sufficiently thick and durable. Trucks put far more stress and wear on roads than regular cars or SUVs, and the Federal Highways Administration (FHWA) says it does not expect much truck traffic on the road. However a talus mining operation on Bessemer Mountain will be running heavy trucks on the lower half of the road for the next 15 to 20 years.

The project was bid at only \$15 million dollars, much lower than the projected \$22 million. Only time will tell how well the paving surface holds up. Some observers believe it is highly unlikely that King County, which will be responsible for maintenance once the project is finished, will ever have the wherewithal or the desire to repave it whenever it becomes necessary. The Middle Fork road will have to compete for resources with every other road in King County located in places where people actually live.

Beyond concerns over asphalt thickness, the road project looks good. Conservationists did not want a giant swath cut up the valley, and did not want a 70 mile-per-hour road with 35 mph signs, as has been constructed in so many other places by FHWA.

The Middle Fork road is narrow, and seems to fit the valley well. Trees still arch together overhead in many places. Culverts that block fish migration have been replaced. The awful dust that has plagued areas along the road will be a thing of the past.

Of course, the challenge ahead will be how to deal with the flood of visitors who will follow. The Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR), which manages lands in the lower part of the valley, is developing as many new trails and facilities as it can. New trails will provide access to the Granite Creek valley and other places. A number of attractive new river access points are being built.

But compared to the Forest Service, DNR only manages a small part of the valley, and most of that area is wetland or unstable clay deposits, limiting the number of places where things can be built. Much more development needs to happen on National Forest land in the middle and upper parts of the valley if there is to be any hope of accommodating many thousands of visitors.

The Middle Fork is the closest mountain valley to Seattle. Once the paved road is opened, the level of visitation will be beyond anything ever seen before anywhere in the Cascades. The number of vehicles

entering the valley on peak days may very well be in the tens of thousands, far in excess of what can ever be accommodated.

It may be possible to construct new parking for 500 to 1000 vehicles in the area southwest of the Middle Fork campground, but the whole valley can't be turned into a parking lot. Some sort of limits will need to be placed on the number of vehicles, and alternative means of access developed, such as shuttle service. Dealing with the crowds will require creative thinking, and a willingness to accept change, from everyone who cares about the valley.

The President's Report, *continued from page 3*



- Demand proportional representation on user committees.

We then examined the unsolved problem of snowmobile trespass in Alpine Lakes Wilderness, which segued to the misguided 2012 Yakima Plan proposal for National Recreation Areas promoting ORV use on National Forest lands in the Cle Elum District. That's been covered in detail in this magazine. We concluded with a reference to WPPSS, the largest municipal bond default in world history. (Due to that default, construction stopped and my budding career as a construction litigator got redirected). Price increases caused people to engage in conservation, so that demand

Compare ATV tracks left of fence and Juniper Dunes Wilderness on right. Area is northeast of Pasco, Wash.

—KARL FORSGAARD PHOTO

dropped, and most of the WPPSS powerplants never got built. The Yakima Plan's proposed dams may be headed down a similar path.

Karl F. Forsgaard

BACK IN PRINT!

Stebekin: A Valley in Time

Grant McConnell

Originally published 1988

Paperback, 206 pages, \$16.95

Mountaineers Books (1988, 2014)

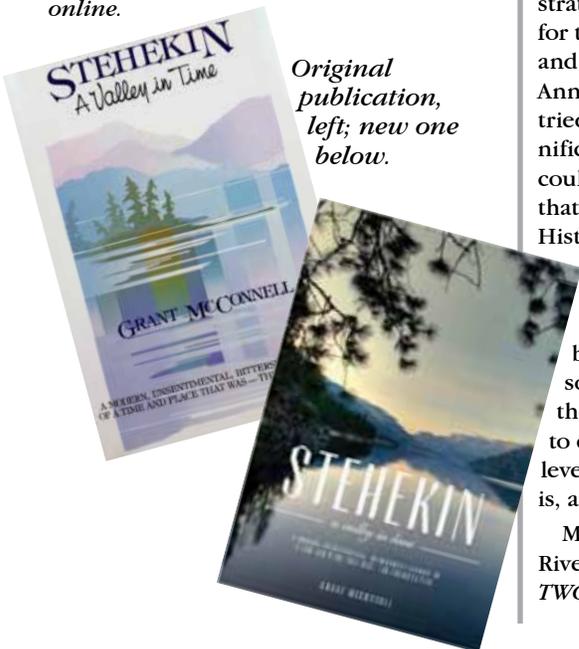
Imagine a valley of incomparable natural beauty, accessible only by boat, seaplane, or foot, and protected from the ambiguous benefits of modern civilization by craggy, snow-covered peaks and an alpine lake 55 miles long. Then imagine a small, close knit community of fiercely independent Americans whose economic system was based not on supply and demand but on ideas of need, ability, and neighborliness.

This was Stehekin at the end of World War II, not an exotic Shangri-La in some remote corner of the world, but a mountain valley located less than 120 miles from downtown Seattle, in the Cascade Range of Washington. Because Stehekin was and still is so remote and only accessible by boat or on foot, American pioneer values and lifestyles survived there long after they had vanished in the nation as a whole.

In Stehekin, McConnell has captured with warmth, thoughtfulness, and humor, the unique people and quality of life he found in the valley. This is also the story of the valley itself, of a sequestered beauty that better than most has weathered the ravages of time and progress.

Order one of the last remaining hard-cover copies of the first edition from the NCCC store at www.northcascades.org/wordpress/wild-alps-book (scroll down) or purchase the new version, with a foreword by NCCC Board member Carolyn McConnell, at your local bookstore or online.

Original publication, left; new one below.



Still a “Valley in Time”?

Notes from a short visit to Stehekin

By Philip Fenner

I had a chance to visit Stehekin for a long weekend this summer. It was peak season, but making reservations at the lodge at the landing wasn't difficult, so I was hopeful it would be uncrowded as it was in 1986, the last time I'd spent more than an afternoon there. I wasn't disappointed — we had the place to ourselves, pretty much — in August! The weather was mild and we had a wonderful time.

Having only recently learned much of the 'back story' on how important Stehekin has been to NCCC's history and the North Cascades National Park movement, I had a short list of places to see based on Grant McConnell's book *A Valley in Time* and back issues of *The Wild Cascades*. I was hoping it wouldn't be another case of “the tragedy of the commons,” that regrettable consequence of everyone pursuing their individual goals until there's nothing left of what was once available to share. It was a relief to find it didn't seem to have changed much.

A primary mission was to see the McConnell cabin, where so many big names in northwest conservation gathered to strategize with momentous consequences for the North Cascades. I got directions and rented a bike and went directly there. Ann wasn't home, but I got a look and tried to wrap my head around this significant yet still largely unknown place. I could envision many decades in the future that this cabin would be a small National Historical Park for its significance in the environmental movement, similar to the LeConte Memorial, the first public information center in Yosemite, built by the Sierra Club and maintained as a sort of shrine to the Club's history. But then again, I sure don't want Stehekin to ever resemble Yosemite Valley's usage levels, so maybe it's best just being what it is, a humble cabin.

My biggest concern was the old Stehekin River road. Having followed the saga in *TWC* over the years I wondered if any-

body would be grumbling about it being permanently closed at High Bridge. Not a soul mentioned any concerns. I guess after all the years of debate, it's useful to realize that once a road is closed even the staunchest proponents of roads accept and adapt to it. I remembered taking the old shuttle van all the way to Cottonwood back in '86 and day-hiking to Cascade Pass

from the south. This time, I took the shuttle to where the road ends now and day-hiked out the Agnes Gorge (spectacular and often overlooked when the road was open, I'm sure) and up onto the terrace to the northeast of there to see a nearby lake with an unfortunate name NCCC has sought to change. I enjoyed seeing areas that I would have probably not bothered with if the shuttle still took

you beyond them. And because the shuttle ride was a lot shorter, I paid more attention to every turn in the road. All of which is exactly what proponents of road closure had said would happen!

Seen and heard along the way

The new all-year dock slopes down into the lake and looks like it's sinking in summer when the lake is up. But it allows The Lady of the Lake to pull up to a solid, non-floating dock any time of year, and guests can just walk up a gradual ramp to the landing at low water.

NPS supplies all firewood to valley residents. NPS cuts selected trees, cuts them into rounds and splits them at their yard near the airstrip and provides/sells the cordwood to users. Nobody is supposed to cut their own, but some do.

I was surprised to find that the Courneys appear to have built their own horse trails from their ranch up to and on the plateau. These new trails are wide, deeply churned by hooves and I even saw a long, deep drainage ditch uphill from one section. Perhaps these are designed to route horse traffic off the trails that appear on maps, now that they can't drive horse trailers to the end of the road and have to start at their ranch. These trails mean hikers

After all the years of debate, it's useful to realize that once a road is closed even the staunchest proponents of roads accept and adapt to it.



don't encounter horses and their "residue." But they are on Federal land, not private land.

Another surprise: The Courtneys are operating a "glamping" service with large tents and stoves set up at the campgrounds along the old road. They carry all your gear and cook for you and you sleep on soft beds in huge tents. Don't know if they built platforms for the tents.

No work appears to have begun on the plan to relocate the road around McGregor Meadow. Posters in Golden West Visitor Center show the plans with 2011 dates. Probably funding shortages/sequestration put that on hold.

Several homesites under construction dot the lower valley. Many newer homes are far from "humble." This is probably the most disturbing trend I observed.

Signage at the airstrip says NPS sanctions it as a "State Airport" by a special permit. Loaner bikes are provided there. Logbook shows fairly frequent use. No planes were parked there. (The airstrip was a perennial thorn in NCCC's side over the years, as it is the only scar in the landscape of its size, is dangerous and caters to the fly-in crowd not the general public.)

Satellite dishes are common. After years of trying to keep telephone service out, it seems satellite internet has taken over. I guess it was inevitable. One of us had a device but couldn't get the WiFi to work at the landing, and gave up trying, which felt good!

Fire crews and supplies were coming and going from the dock area, and using the NPS staff grounds near the airstrip

Stehekin River road between Bridge Creek and Park Creek.

—KARL FORSGAARD PHOTO

for temporary housing while fighting the Boulder Creek fire.

The old upper valley road above High Bridge doesn't appear on the Stehekin Guide published annually by local businesses, so they seem to have accepted the fact that the road is not coming back.

The last copies of *Valley in Time* had just sold off the shelves of the Golden West Visitor Center bookstore. I told them about the new edition. The only other books about Stehekin in stock were ones they told me were written by locals to counter some of the things Grant McConnell claimed.

The blueberries purchased at "The Garden" were extraordinary!

We'll be back to Stehekin more often, I hope, to get a more in-depth feel and go further up the river. But this short visit felt right. It was good to know it was still the lonely, quiet place I remembered, all the more so with the road closed. It certainly provides a calm contrast to the ever more frenetic outside world. Keeping it this way will mean exercising more of the vigilance that NCCC is famous for.

Yakima Plan update

Sierra Club sent a letter to Senator Patty Murray on May 26, 2014 in support of funding for the fish passage component of the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan, while reiterating opposition to the Yakima Plan as a whole, including opposition to its worst components such as the Bumping and Wymer dams and the proposed National Recreation Areas promoting off-road vehicle use on National Forest lands in the Cle Elum District.

The Washington Environmental Council is another organization that declined to approve the Yakima Plan as a whole, favoring instead a more nuanced approach. WEC sent a letter to the State Department of Ecology on June 23, 2014, supporting fish passage and several other components of the Plan, but refraining from supporting the worst parts of the Plan: ORV use and destructive dams.

As we went to press, a public comment period was underway for the Draft EIS for the Cle Elum Pool Raise component of the Yakima Plan. This component would create additional water storage by raising the level of Cle Elum Lake by several feet, with heavy armoring of the shoreline. NCCC intends to submit comments by the November 25 deadline. The Bureau's Cle Elum DEIS is available for review at: www.usbr.gov/pn/programs/eis/cleelum-raise/index.html

A Draft EIS has not yet been issued for the Kachess Inactive Storage component of the Yakima Plan. This component has been renamed the Lake Kachess Drought Relief project; another option would be "Lake Kachess Taxpayer Subsidy project." In September, Kachess homeowners expressed "significant concern about the effect on an endangered species (bull trout) in Lake Kachess, which spawn in Box Canyon but require upper and lower Lake Kachess for habitat and passage. Pumping the level of the lake below its natural low level would cause a waterfall between the two lakes and endanger the migration of the bull trout."

We are also awaiting the release of the draft cost-benefit study being conducted by the State of Washington's Water Resources Center, pursuant to State legislation that funded "early action items" in the Yakima Plan.

[a PLACE that is] STILL VERY WILD

By Thom Schroeder

We cannot overlook the importance of wild country as a source of inspiration, to which we give expression in writing and painting, in mountaineering and in just being there.

~ Olaus Murie

This started a long way from the North Cascades. The sun slanted through big, south-facing windows inside the café of REI's administrative campus. It was July, warm. We had just settled into cushy, overstuffed chairs across from each other in a quiet corner, and Matt was going back in his mind, retracing his history in wilderness to its beginning.

For me, this story had started a month earlier, on a hike to the summit of Mount Persis. Through the stillness and quiet of the tangible fog, hanging out at the back of the group photographing as they climbed through trees, up over snow, I caught a snippet of conversation meant for someone else. Matt was talking about a trip into wilderness that had changed his life. After summiting and celebrating, on the way down I caught up to him long enough to ask about it. The trip, he confided, had been to Whatcom Pass in the far reaches of North Cascades National Park, now over a decade and a half ago. It still held a place within him, as wild as the pass itself. I needed to hear more about his experience, his thoughts on wild places.

Although he grew up in the Midwest, Matt was no stranger to wilderness, having backpacked throughout the Appalachians, in West Virginia and in Kentucky, learned how to climb the sandstone cliffs of Red River Gorge. Even back then he wanted to get out, explore. "I can remember pretty clear," Matt explained as I sipped my coffee, drawn into his story as it began to unfold. "I was sitting in a huge auditorium at the University of Cincinnati, in the back, flipping through a *Backpacker* story called 'The Back Of Beyond,' about the North Cascades." Matt had never heard of it. He

didn't know where it was, or anything about it, but as he read the article something clicked in his head, and it became somewhere he was going to go.

Months later, my living room dark after the last lamp on its timer clicked off, the sound of wet streets beyond the window panes, I try to remember my own first experience in the North Cascades. Certainly not as evocative, definitely more embarrassing. I had heard about Mount Baker so, seventeen years ago, as my first summer in Washington waned, I made the trip up to Artist's Point to explore and photograph. The thing was, I realized months later, I never made it to Artist's Point. I had stopped short of it, at Picture Lake. Mesmerized by the view across to a spectacular peak, the heather turning shades of crimson and gold, I walked around and fired off some frames of what I assumed was Baker before turning around and heading for home. When I discovered what I had actually photographed was the infamous west face of Mount Shuksan, I felt sheepish. But something, too, clicked about that place in my head, and I knew I had to return. And just like Matt has, I would, again and again and again.

Returning to his story, Matt told me how he had, from the back of that auditorium in Cincinnati, hatched a scheme to head out west. He ended up visiting the Tetons, Yellowstone, Glacier. "All the good stuff," as he put it. They had spent five weeks, and all of their money, without making it to Washington. That would have to wait. Following that trip, he read an *Outside* piece about the least-visited national parks. North Cascades was one of them. The article, Matt recalled, mentioned how "a visitor would be more likely to see a bear than another human." Something about that, too, resonated with him. "So the trip the next year became all about coming to Washington.

We spent a week walking around Mount Rainier along the Wonderland Trail, then a week walking across the Olympics." Then, finally, Matt would see the mountains that had graced the pages shimmering with late-nineties-Velvix color in that issue of *Backpacker*. Driving up the Mount Baker highway, they stopped at the ranger station in Glacier and told the ranger, "We've got eight days, tons of food, massively heavy packs, and we're willing to suffer."

The ranger had the quintessential trip.

"We ended up going up to Whatcom, coming back down, going up Copper Ridge, and coming back that way. It was...." and here he paused for the first time that morning, while he gathered the words to convey the sheer epicness of the memory—"It was amazing. It really was. I didn't know what to expect, but it was amazing. It changed my life." There it was. That sentiment spoken on the hike

through the fog to the summit of Persis, now echoed to me, my coffee long-gone. "I can remember the second night," he shared, "we were at Tapto Lakes sitting there looking at Whatcom and the sun setting and seeing ice calve off the glacier hanging there and instantly I knew... it was a really pivotal moment."

Knew, he explained, how everything came together in that "moment of synchronicity." How clarity was gained. It was "the point in your life where you're like okay, I'm

done with grad school because I'm tired of accumulating debt and I don't want to be in the rat race to try and have a job as a professor somewhere at some point in time, and I really am in love with being outside and being in the wilds, and it's really important to me. It all made sense." I relate in my own small way, in my own efforts to balance my career and my family and my passions, for photographing wild

*Having places
that exist on
their own
terms...reminds
us that we're not
masters of the
universe.*

places and writing music, building and creating things. Matt was speaking to me that morning in the café, in more ways than he was aware.

I've also been to Whatcom Pass and Tapto Lakes. I, too, have stood alone overlooking the Little Beaver while the gibbous moon rose over Wiley Ridge and the colors of the Challenger Glacier faded from vermilion to violet to pink, then darkness. And I, too, think of sunsets, the "elemental half-light", as Laura and Guy Waterman wrote in *Wilderness Ethics*. Indeed, as Matt felt that pivotal evening, the pageantry of sunrises and sunsets in wild places has been well-celebrated by nature writers over the centuries. "The loneliness," the Watermans write of it. I feel Matt would understand, regard even, the words of Thomas Mann: *Hold every moment sacred. Give each clarity and meaning, each the weight of thine awareness, each its true and due fulfillment*. Ever since that moment overlooking the wild, wild Little Beaver and the scene of cascading creeks and glaciers and the setting sun, Matt and his wife Barb have done their best to go to the North Cascades at least once a year. Trips up the Big Beaver, bushwhacking into Luna Cirque. Up the east side out of Hart's Pass, into the Fisher Creek basin. Up in and around Cascade Pass and the big mountains found there, down even towards Dome Peak. They have two boys now, Nick (seven) and Alex (four). They're thinking of taking them up Thunder Creek, or maybe Cutthroat Pass. "Starting them young," as Matt put it. Proper.

Our conversation shifted from the unequivocalness of trip reports and memories to more esoteric, romantic ideas. Of humanity, and wildness. He started by offering the notion of how, in describing the North Cascades, "it didn't take long to feel really far away from absolutely everything." And of how then, "in some instances, it's like walking - not walking away from civilization - but walking backwards in geologic time." Being in a place that is still very wild. Places that, as he says, "remind us that we are not that advanced...really not that far away from the complete wilds that are still around us." Connecting with that is a good thing—"a soul-worthy endeavor in a big way."

I was blown away.

So I asked him about wilderness, what it meant, how it translated in his mind. Our thoughts were echoes of each other, about reconnecting to the wild within, rediscovering a distilled sense devoid of all the clutter and chaos and all of the mechanisms we build up for this modern life

we live. As he explained, he spoke more softly and slowly. "Wilderness is a place to understand yourself as a human devoid of all those things. It's also a place,"—he paused longer, grasping at the thought—"a place that's devoid of us." The catch is, we humans indeed must want it, must as a species consciously choose wild places over developed ones, must recognize not everything of value has worth. "Part of the beauty of having places that exist on their own terms is still wildly important. It reminds us that we're not masters of the universe, it reminds me who I am aside from any of those other things, whether that be just sitting somewhere looking out into amazing nothingness, having the time to do that," and here he lowered his voice even further, almost to a whisper, "the silence to do that. To remember that the keen sense of human observation is really sharp there, and we lose a lot of that when we're not in the wilderness. Just a day worth of that is fuel for two years of living outside of that."

It's a predicament: that we cherish solitude in wild places, but need fellow humans to support and protect them. "On one hand, I love the fact almost nobody knows about the North Cascades," Matt confessed. "But on the other hand, people need to know about it. They need to go there, and it needs to have an element of human connection, because wilderness and humans are intimately connected no matter how you want to slice it." He was right, of course. This was the quagmire of wild places, the issue that had seemingly no easy answers, even as our perception - and the very definition - of wilderness begins to evolve.

"I would like to think," he offered, what seemed on the surface to be a step toward a solution, as the morning quiet gave way to the bustle of the lunch hour, "that the North Cascades can exist on the merits of just being wild, spectacular, and amazing and unknown, and that is good enough reason for them to be there and that will never change."

More about Wilderness

Young voices in the North Cascades: tinyurl.com/ncy/kjd2

NCCC Wilderness Conference blog: tinyurl.com/mrk8pf5

Remembering Patrick Goldsworthy

I first met Pat when I was a seasonal ranger at Ozette in 1968. It was a cold rainy day and very few people were out on the trails or beaches. It was dusk and Pat was in the parking lot stowing his wet gear in his car after a trip he had made to the beach. We struck up a conversation which likely was rooted in reminiscence about past trips to Ozette. Well, Pat deftly turned the talk to that of the undone work in preserving the coastal strip and the lake area. I had been visiting the area since my childhood in the early 1950s and was thankful that the coastal strip had been added to Olympic National Park. And, it had never occurred to me that more could be done in that regard. Pat talked about Shi Shi Beach and how it, too, should be in the park, and there were people working to make that happen! And, true enough, a few years later Shi Shi had indeed been added to the park—it had become a jewel in the crown. Many thanks to Pat and those "people" that helped make that happen. I never forgot that encounter with Pat, his vision, and the positive certainty that he exuded.

—Russ Dalton,
NCCC member

How Polly Dyer's *untrammelled* won out in the Wilderness Act

By Philip Fenner

I've never heard a more obscure word get more frequent use than at the October Wilderness Conference, on the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act. One presentation there was even titled "Is it worth the trammel?"

Linguistically, *trammel* is a late Medieval word, one not often heard in the 20th, let alone 21st century.

trammel (n.) mid-14c., "net to catch fish" (implied in *trammeller* "one who fishes with a trammel net"), from Old French *tramail* "fine-gauged fishnet" (13c.), from Late Latin *tremaculum*, perhaps meaning "a net made from three layers of meshes," from Latin *tri-* "three" (see *tri-*) + *macula* "a mesh" (see *mail* (n.2)). Meaning "anything that hinders" is from 1650s, originally "a hobble for a horse" (c.1500).

—Online Etymology Dictionary, www.etymonline.com

There were a number of big problems with writing a Wilderness Bill in the early 60s, mostly to do with how to achieve conservation goals despite the power of extractive industries that stood to lose access to vast resources.

But one problem was just a matter of semantics — a definition of wilderness was needed, one that would hold up in court as well as inspire advocates. The Act's primary author, Howard Zahniser, is said to have struggled with this wording problem and sought expert opinions on all sides. The consensus seems to be that he had *untrammelled* in mind as the ideal word to describe lands that would qualify for protection, but legal experts had pretty much talked him out of using such a florid, antique term, in favor of simpler wording that would be less open to interpretation, like *unoccupied* or *unaffected* by man.

Several presentations at the Wilderness Conference dealt specifically with how this odd word was chosen. Doug Scott and other experts spoke at length about it, and not all versions of the story seemed entirely consistent with each other. Clearly, it was a struggle with many players.

Meanwhile back home in Cascadia, I've heard it said that NCCC's own Polly Dyer was the one who thought up and deserves credit for the word *untrammelled*. It's well documented that she was very active

in decades leading up to the passage of the Act, during which various drafts were circulating. It's quite possible that Howard (or "Zahnie" as he was known to friends then) already had thought of the word but set it aside, while Polly came up with it independently, similar to the way some inventions come from two different inventors at almost the same time. When she's asked about the mystery of the word, Polly simply credits her Baltimore High School. "I got a good education there," she said, "and to me, *untrammelled* just seemed right."

The most plausible explanation is that Polly suggested *untrammelled* as a new idea at a time when Howard had shelved it, and her suggestion tipped his opinion in favor of it again, and it became part of the Act. We'll never know for sure, but Polly certainly had a significant role. And if it's as I think it is, it's a good thing she made her suggestion. When you read the wording I'm sure you'll agree:

A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the

landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain. — An Act to establish a National Wilderness Preservation System for the permanent good of the whole people, signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson on September 3, 1964

Polly worked for many years to see the Wilderness Bill through to become the Wilderness Act, doing a lot more than just suggesting a word, of course. From co-founding the first northwest chapter of the Sierra Club with her husband John to campaigning for North Cascades and Olympic National Parks, she's done a lot with many conservation efforts throughout her lifetime. Congratulations to Polly for attending the conference. We'll always admire her indomitable and downright *untrammelled* spirit!

Read more about Polly's contributions to conservation: tinyurl.com/me96csf

Polly Dyer receives ovation at Wilderness Conference

When historian Douglas Brinkley gave his keynote address at the conference, he lifted up Teddy and Franklin Roosevelt, Frank Church, Bob Marshall and Howard Zahniser. Many audience members were left wondering what one young woman asked in the Q&A session that followed: "Were there no women in the Wilderness movement?" Someone said they'd heard that Polly Dyer herself was in the audience — which she was! Brinkley called for an ovation and Polly got one of the biggest ones of the event!



Polly speaking with filmmaker John Concillo at the Wilderness Conference.
—PHILIP FENNER PHOTO

Granite Falls Motocross update

The long-running saga of the proposed set of six motocross racing tracks adjacent to the Mountain Loop Highway east of Granite Falls continues. In February, a hearing was held in front of the pro-tem Hearing Examiner over a period of three weeks (six actual days of hearings), following which the decision was passed down to permit the project. The permit entailed some new conditions placed by both the Snohomish County Planning and Developments Services dept. (PDS) and by the hearing examiner. Some made sense; some were essentially meaningless. Opponents of the project, led by the Mountain Loop Conservancy (MLC), with co-appellants NCCC and Pilchuck Audubon filed for reconsideration of that decision.

The problem was that for the hearing examiner to reach the conclusion of permitting the process, he had to overlook a number of key issues that should have ended the project long ago, in its 7-1/2 year odyssey toward permitting. In particular, years ago when PDS requested

specific information from the applicant (MXGP), with a year deadline to submit the required information, MXGP failed to supply all the necessary information. PDS continued its analysis of the project, saying it had been supplied sufficient information to continue analyzing the project (although the law clearly states that “all” information must be delivered, or the project is cancelled). Yet when pressed to answer specifically what information was supplied, PDS could not answer the question, saying that they had “purged the file” because it was becoming excessively large. Thus, PDS was unable to document what information it had received, yet the hearing examiner chose to ignore that bit of public transparency, to say nothing of clearly written law.

At the request of PDS the hearing reopened November 6, for a single day, with new testimony strictly limited to issues requested by PDS, and duly accepted by the hearing examiner. The hearing appeared

to be a sham, with PDS apparently trying to buttress up its weakest arguments, and the hearing examiner apparently eager to listen, to better support his earlier decision. Despite the limited subject matter of the hearing, PDS still needs time to explain things (as if nine months wasn’t enough time), so the hearing will again be reopened December 2. The charade continues.

The project still represents major noise intrusion into a rural-residential and an extremely popular recreational area. It still represents threats to the groundwater, located as it is atop a mapped critical aquifer recharge area. It still represents a potential trigger for a landslide down the steep slopes of Canyon Creek, immediately north of the project site. It still represents loss of more than 80 acres of carbon-capturing trees to be replaced with carbon-emitting motorcycles, a calculated difference of over a million tons of carbon per year.

“Quid pro quo” wilderness

Continued from page 5

Thinning has been sold as a way to cut trees yet turn forests into old growth faster and better than unassisted Nature. That this does not happen, that it is entirely untrue and even ridiculous, does not stop people from wanting to believe it. Foundations stand ready, checkbooks in hand, eager to underwrite anything that can be labeled as success, real or not.

Sometimes there is a “model thin,” a place to take people and show off how wonderful thinning is. The Olympic National Forest has McDonald Creek, a Potemkin thin where visitors are routinely taken to show off the beauties of new-style logging. Only a relatively small volume of wood was removed, and great care taken not to create the usual jumble of muddy skidder paths. It’s also one of a kind, looking nothing at all like what thinning does everywhere else on the Olympic forest.

McDonald Creek works well as propaganda. Wanting something to be true almost always makes it easier to believe that it really is true, even when there is plentiful evidence to the contrary. Few visitors ever make the effort to look beyond the “model thin” to the way thinning

looks in the other 99% of the places where it has been done.

So far, the North Cascades have escaped QPQ attention, but noises have been made about a large thinning program in the Finney “Adaptive Management Area.” On the east side of the Cascades, in the Wenatchee Okanogan National Forest, areas for ORVs and snowmobiles may be designated in exchange for some Wilderness acreage as part of the “Yakima Basin Integrated Plan,” an effort to increase the amount of taxpayer-subsidized water for Yakima valley agribusiness. Previous issues of *The Wild Cascades* have covered this issue in depth.

The push for thinning got its start in drier interior forests where low-intensity fires once burned frequently. The story of how a century of fire suppression allowed trees in some places to grow in much higher densities than they once did, increasing the chances of big hot fires, has been told many times. In theory, thinning out the unnaturally dense “ladder fuels” can help restore places to be more like they once were.

Once again, theory and reality are far apart. Frequent fires, not thinning, were what kept tree densities and fuel loads low. Many forests have now been thinned or “treated” to reduce fire dangers (“fire-

proofed” seems to have fallen out of favor), but seldom if ever do they get burned the way they once did. Before-and-after photos sometimes make these thinned forests look more fire resistant in the “after” scenes, with little understory and reduced ladder fuels.

Trees and brush start growing back the minute the “treatment” is done. Without fire, they keep growing, and within 15 or 20 years many “treated” places look every bit as flammable as ever, sometimes more so. Any reductions in fire danger are fleeting if regular burning does not follow. It almost never does. It seems very possible that we might see Wilderness bills in future mandating this kind of thinning in a big way.

Wilderness bills in Washington state so far have been “clean” bills. That approach has served the interests of conservation well, with Washington among the top five states in terms of protected lands. Some now argue that it is time to change that, and start trading away forests in hopes of getting more Wilderness. NCCC takes the view that the system isn’t broken, and isn’t in need of fixing. Politics may favor Wilderness at some times, not so much at other times, but there is no reason to start signing on to efforts trading away forests or anything else for Wilderness, and every reason not to.

The Corvid's eye

Anxiety grips the populace, or so breathless commentators tell us. Woman and manchild look to the horizon for temporary relief, but see only risk and calamity in between. Economic insecurity runs amok, like an outbreak of shingles, with collective worry now seemingly pervading every aspect of daily existence. The smug and self-satisfied corvid prefers to think himself above such generalized apprehension and similar human frailties, but cannot fully distance himself from the spiritlessness of the times. It must be confessed: many are the nights upon his roost when the corvid slips in and out of fitful sleep, somehow compelled to dwell upon a vague hint of menace blown with the marine winds.

To be sure, the corvid frets not over the usual sources of popular hysteria afflicting so many, so efficiently. He clucks at ebola, dismisses the raving Islamist, and waves away wide swings of the stock market. Nay, the ominous whispers and warnings afflicting the corvid originate from wholly different sources. These include the new "Anthropocene" warrior, having convinced himself that no landscape is too precious to be spared from engineering for civilization's narrow ends; as well as his jock cousin, who struggles to see wild nature as possessing any redeeming characteristic beyond serving as his personal exercise yard and rugged backdrop for chin-forward selfies. And with this malign utilitarianism arrives ever more examples of it, as the human population continues to explode at a pace to make a pine beetle envious. Thus the corvid, too, is underslept and overwrought.

With the arrival of the holiday season, there are the usual exhortations to be thankful, to remember our favorite things, to immerse ourselves in *auld lang syne* and the like. It occurs to the corvid that rituals of the sort and their emphatic delivery are often proportional to the gloom and despair otherwise experienced by the celebrant at this time of year. Although infrequently acknowledged, prior adversity can be a key ingredient to a blowout holiday party. We each die little deaths leading up to the winter solstice, only to be reborn on the other side for yet another crazy circuit 'round the sun. As if the light's annual immolation weren't trying enough, though, we now add the arrival of W.H. Auden's "Age of Anxiety" from



poetry's pages to life's direct experience. To celebrate is to cope.

What, then, does the conforming corvid have to be thankful for as the sun is swallowed by the dank but peculiarly comely gray of a Northwest winter? There is, in fact, rather plenty to savor. As a rudely unapologetic advocate for wild places in their wildest possible forms, thoughts turn to those locales where primitive attributes have not only been saved, but actually expanded in recent years. How might this occur, in an era of big money and political gridlock? It's in fact surprisingly straightforward. Given that no intrusion into a wild area is more detrimental than a road, it follows that elimination of the latter would augment primitive attributes to significant effect. And when considering the grand stretch of Cascades between mounts Baker and Rainier, we find several examples where irksome cherrystem roads are effectively gone and the adjacent wilds have poured in to fill the gaps. Few parts of our bludgeoned world presently enjoy such natural renewal.

Let us start by counting our blessings to the north, the corvid's home turf. Although the U.S. Forest Service has made a fairly concerted and admirable effort to reduce road density in the Baker River watershed, noteworthy meteorological events have sometimes helped this important process along. The old 1160 road that previously and unnecessarily abbreviated

the hike to Shuksan Lake was devoured by Shannon Creek a few years ago, with giant culverts tossed about like rubber ducks in an unruly toddler's bathtub. The Forest Service proceeded to finish the job by putting 1160 permanently to bed. If one were to travel the Baker River downstream from its remote headwaters, this road would have been the first observed to intrude on an otherwise self-willed upper valley, but gratefully no more.

Leaping across the Cascade crest to the mighty Stehekin River, perhaps the most thrilling of all recent de-roading examples may be experienced. For too long, the Stehekin road, in combination with the Cascade River road insinuating itself on the opposite side of the divide, pinched some of the grandest wild country to be found in the lower 48 into a regrettable wasp-waist. This misfortune came to a decisive end with a series of rain-on-snow events, eventually resulting in closure of the final ten or so miles of road beyond carwash falls. The National Park Service, to its credit, largely adapted to these new circumstances, despite some attempted meddling by politicians seeking to reconstruct the road along the route of the Pacific Crest Trail. That pandering went nowhere, and so the upper valley is now once again the dominion of shy, rare fauna and respectful, observant walkers.

Vaulting back to the west slope of the Cascades, a massive rock slide which

peeled off the west face of Jumbo Mountain just over a decade ago took the Squire Creek road with it. Instead of a vehicled intrusion of two-plus additional miles into the splendor of the Boulder River Wilderness, the road grade beyond the slide quickly revegetated and now offers easy, shaded walking to the former Squire Creek Pass trailhead. More's the pity that the Forest Service still waxes nostalgic about this road and officially (if not internally) plans to one day reconstruct it, with no justification aside from an apparent desire to show Ma Nature who's boss. Yet just a corvid's hop, skip and jump away on Canyon Creek, at another incidental and happy enlargement of Boulder River area wildlands, the agency seems to have thrown in the towel on road 41 beyond its collapsing bridge over the south fork. Visitors have adjusted by parking their cars and cheerily biking to the trailheads accessing Goat Flat.

To the east, a partial victory came about on the Whitechuck River a few years back. Following severe, storm-caused washouts on the Whitechuck road a short distance above the Mountain Loop, some argued in favor of closing it entirely for near-total rewilding of this lovely valley. The Forest Service, with one nervous eye on aquatic habitat requirements and the other trained upon a head-scratching insistence toward keeping a road open over Rat Trap Pass, opted to split the baby. The lower half of the Whitechuck road saw expensive and complex repairs, while the upper half, which at one time accessed a trailhead to the now-buried Kennedy hot springs, was decommissioned. Although this outcome initially offered all the excitement of kissing one's sister, the corvid has gradually warmed to it; particularly when contemplating the glorious blanket of old forest bordering the south side of the Whitechuck, finally reconnected with Meadow Mountain's slopes across the river to the north.

Proceeding ever-farther south, we must also stop and admire the ruins of the upper Lennox Creek road beyond the Bare Mountain trailhead and Bear Creek, where it once aggressively penetrated the northwest periphery of the Alpine Lakes Wilderness all the way to the valley's cirque. The corvid on one occasion chanced to encounter fresh wolverine tracks in the snow of Lennox's upper basin. Despite the fact that mustelids and corvids often have much to quarrel over, both heartily agreed in this case that a pushed-back road was good for all involved. And since we've

come so far south already, should we not also exalt in the long-time-coming closure of the Carbon River road at Mount Rainier? The Park Service's belated concession of defeat on the Carbon meant that arguably the finest remaining bottomland forest in the Cascades would never again be defiled by the internal combustion engine.

It should be further recognized that these treasured examples of rewilding via road quietus, both intentional and unintentional, were preceded by earlier generations of decisions and events also resulting in problem roads meeting their maker. Revisiting those old stories is instructive, as sufficient time has passed to view firsthand how natural processes will and do heal a landscape, stitching torn wildlands back together again into a cohesive whole. Consider in this context the likes of the (uppermost) North Fork Nooksack River and Taylor River, as well as Shuksan, Newhalem, Damnation, Marble, Lime, Elliot, and West Cady creeks. Whether relatively contemporary or archival, these highlights aren't exhaustive. Armed with curious boots and a bit of historical knowledge in tow, the intrepid traveler will no doubt rediscover any number of Cascade valleys where motors have been silenced, replaced by nature's mosaic in all her variations.

As might be expected, there have been a few losses along the way, too. The contro-

versial Suiattle road should also have been decommissioned, at the very least beyond the Green Mountain turnoff, for conservation of Downey Creek's vulnerable chinook run and a modest, representative roadless parcel of that basin's deep-forested bottomlands (woefully underrepresented among the Cascades' protected areas). Mercifully, the Suiattle was a mitigated loss, thanks in no small part to NCCC's and a few others' dogged persistence over the need for sensitive road design standards, but a loss all the same. The Glacier Peak Wilderness is the poorer because of it, and tamer due to willful reinjury. May the boisterous river rise up once again. Moreover, the Forest Service's backpedaling in the din of certain trailists' howls over the agency's intent to decommission the endless and endlessly absurd Illabot road must surely merit an exhibit in the halls of tragicomedy.

Ah, but this is the season of gratitude, of celebration, correct? It is the corvid's firm wish that wildland lovers near and far take stock of the blessings described here and those still to come, so that they may warm you from within throughout this chilly and half-lit season. And may they inspire you to act further on Wild Nature's behalf, allowing her ample room to thrive and reclaim her own.



—LAUREL MUNDY



“Majestic Methow” Valley restoration

By Samantha Hale

With more than 10,000 visitors a year, the Maple Pass Loop is one of the most heavily visited trails along the Highway 20 corridor. Stunning 360-degree views and brilliant plant communities make this trail an easy choice for day hikers. Unfortunately, heavy use is having a strong impact on the fragile alpine habitats. Social trails weave through heather, cryptogamic soils cling desperately to the ground and large patches of dirt or rocks, perfect for a lunch break, steadily grow in size.

This past summer, the Methow Valley Ranger District of the Okanagan-Wenatchee National Forest and the North Cascades National Park began work on a project called the Maple Pass Restoration Plan. Funded in part by the National Forest Foundation, the plan falls under the larger ‘Treasured Landscapes, Unforgettable Experiences: Majestic Methow’ Project. The National Forest Foundation will match every dollar raised for the project by the Forest Service and Park Service, up to a million dollars. The goal of ‘treasured landscapes’ is to ‘revitalize our forests and strengthen our natural connection through stewardship, restoration, building better community bonds to the natural world and education’. This work includes site closure, re-vegetation, site engineering, installing interpretive and regulation signs, and increasing ranger patrols. The

Methow Valley Ranger District will coordinate a variety of sites, including Maple Pass, Blue Lake, Cutthroat Lake and Fred’s Lake.

The Maple Pass Loop, with individual restoration sites at Heather Pass, Maple Pass and Lake Ann, was the first trail to see funding put to use. In June, Forest Service and Park Service staff and I (a graduate student at North Cascades Institute) scouted the sites in June. I coordinated the partnership between the Forest Service and Park Service and designed a restoration strategy to help balance restoration work with recreational needs. During the summer, I led dozens of educational and stewardship hikes along the trail this summer, helped to map and coordinate trail closures and set up a long-term monitoring plan to assist with re-vegetation.

Throughout the summer, the crew worked to map, sign and rope off 1 mile of planned trail reconstruction, 5,000 feet of trail closures and 1.5 acres of planting area. Permanent educational signs were installed near Heather and Maple Pass; new signing comes to the trailhead next year. With volunteers, the crew collected seed and plant clippings from white and pink heather, mountain ash, alpine huckleberry, partridge foot, and a variety of grass and grass-like species, and brought them to the Joe and Margaret Miller Greenhouse at the Marblemount Ranger Station. In September, NCNP

Volunteer and Youth Program Coordinator Michael Brondi, and members of NCCC joined me in collecting trash bags full of white and pink heather for the Marblemount Greenhouse. (See cover photo.)

Starting in fall 2015, the propagules will be planted back into the sites. Re-vegetation and monitoring will occur for the next few years, with monitoring continuing until 2030. The Forest Service and Park Service needs volunteers to help collect, replant and care for the propagules. If you would like to help, please contact The Methow Valley Ranger District at 509-996-4003 or The North Cascades National Park, Michael Brondi at 360-854-7275. For more information on the Treasured Landscapes Project, visit www.nationalforests.org/treasured.

In September, Lake Ann is flanked by Fall’s best colors as huckleberry, mountain ash, fireweed and grasses start to turn. —SAMANTHA HALE PHOTO



North Cascades Glacier Climate Project 2014

By Tom Hammond

Of the two weeks and 10 glaciers evaluated this season by the North Cascades Glacier Climate Project (NCGCP), I only attended three days and one glacier, the Coleman Glacier/Heliotrope Glacier, though I went to Lava Divide in late September to image the final melt on the Rainbow Glacier, an important element to informing the final mass balance numbers for the hydrologic year.

“Heliotrope” is a color—a purple tint to be exact, and that is fitting, considering how many wildflowers the core team (the biggest ever, with field assistants Ashley Edwards and Justin Wright, videographer Melanie Gajewski, Illustrator Megan Pelto, Jill Pelto of the University of Maine, and Ben Pelto, a PhD candidate at University of Northern British Columbia) and I saw on the northwest flank of the mighty strato-volcano that is Komo Kulshan (Mt. Baker). More than a dozen species, and featured prominently were purple lupine and gold arnica—*Go Dawgs!* Entire mountainsides were carpeted with flowers, with the air

Mount Shuksan at sunset.
—TOM HAMMOND PHOTO

scented in a most delightful way. Go for the glaciers, but stay for the flowers! And to have the two juxtaposed in such close proximity was remarkable.

The main reason to visit this “outlier” glacier (not part of the usual eight measured for all 31 years) was to evaluate stream flow and snow melt for the Nooksack Tribe as it affects the flow of the Nooksack River. We took detailed stream measurements including flow volume, speed and turbidity morning, noon and evening. We also did some snowpack analysis and mass-balance measurements on the lower NW arm of the Coleman. The snowpack was pretty lame, and in keeping with observations I made during various summer trips across the range, had low density and water content, as confirmed

Continued on page 18

Glacier Climate Project

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by the number of air pockets encountered as we probed.

What was good was the experience: fantastic views high and low, serac fields near and far, and countless waterfalls and cascades providing that symphony of life I so enjoy being immersed in. I also did some of the best boot skiing I've done in many years—it made me feel young again to actually carve turns and do it with little pain and much confidence. In keeping with a disturbing theme this summer, we saw a couple of low elevation aircraft fly-bys. First, the entire Snow Birds aerobatic team flew up, circled the summit of Kulshan, then flew back down the Nooksack-Fraser valley. I expect they came from the Abbotsford Airshow and decided to do some sightseeing. Then an EF-18 out of Whidbey NAS circled the summit closely above us, rolling on to the port wing in a tight bank. Less intrusive and more enjoyable was watching the International Space Station make a horizon-to-horizon pass right over Kulshan, just before the “super moon” came up and allowed all climbers to climb without headlamps.

The hydrologic calendar year ends September 30, so we try to gather images or visit the glaciers as close to this hydrologic new year as possible. I usually go out to Lava Divide to photograph the Rainbow Glacier, especially the terminus and the Portals area. The forecast called for a nice weather window September 27 and 28, not the exact “new year”, but one must go when one can actually see the glacier...

Best of all (not from a glacier-health perspective, but from a timing/measurement aspect), the last week of September was split between days of record heat, and then three days of monsoons—1.6” of rain in Seattle in 26 hours, well over 6 inches on the Rainbow at snow levels above 8,000’—meaning it rained across the entire glacier, even the very top normally in the “accumulation zone”. This meant I was able to capture some serious ablation and provide a very accurate view of the glacier near the turn of the hydrologic year.

The hike was wonderful, if sloppy and muddy through the forest section. The

rains that made for some challenging hiking also provided my drinking water at the Rainbow valley overlook—a fantastic camp high on the ridge that is normally bone dry at the end of September. I should note the team got hammered by monsoonal rains in mid-August at the Lower Curtis Glacier. It seems those rains aren't confined to November any more...

Blueberries were the best ever. The entire three or four miles of hiking were lined with ripe berries, many featuring that indescribable woody, nutty flavor that is so.....wholesome. I was browsing the mountainside below camp well after sunset, berries everywhere and a fine bedtime snack.

I saw eight hikers, two dogs and seven hunters over 30 hours. All except

three of the hunters were older than me—a troubling trend in the backcountry. Indeed, I told the three 20-somethings toting their hunting rifles that I was happy to see ANYONE from their generation out living real life, not tapping away on some “smart” phone.

There were dozens of goats below/along Ptarmigan Ridge and in the Rainbow Valley. Another disturbing trend—only saw/heard one pika, and no marmots. Where have all the critters gone?

Even though it was a nice weather window, the atmosphere was really breathing—clouds shifting in and out, high and low. It was a real treat to watch tendrils of cloud flow up the valleys of the Baker River, then reach in to the feeder valleys, and finally curl up and over my position high in the sky. Much of the time it was cloudy everywhere—everywhere except over the Rainbow! Simply amazing to watch the Pickets and Shuksan emerge before sunset—I could see from Whitehorse to Eldorado to Canada. As ever, I am thankful for the ability and desire to visit these places.

Mass balance for 2014

Easton Glacier: minus 1.25 meters

Rainbow Glacier: minus 1.9 meters

Sholes Glacier: minus 1.7 meters

Lower Curtis Glacier: minus 1.3 meters

Columbia Glacier: minus .5 meter

Ice Worm (Hyas Creek) Glacier: minus .6 meter

Daniel Glacier: minus .8 meter

Lynch Glacier: minus 1.15 meters

Cache Glacier: minus 1.55 meters

As one can see from the mass-balance measurements, it was a very bad year for our glaciers of the North Cascades. The implications are serious for all of us: from salmon to Skagit tulips, from apple farmers to hydro-power generation, our quality of life and livelihoods are eroding before our eyes. Mauri's extended research on the Rainbow Glacier calculated that 5.3 meters of snowpack ablation or melt occurred between July 13 and September 27, 2014—that's 17 and a half feet in just a couple of months! Perhaps more importantly, that represents 3.2 meters of water equivalent pouring off the glacier, and marks the highest ablation since direct measurements began in 1984. The Rainbow Glacier has retreated linearly one-half kilometer since 1984.

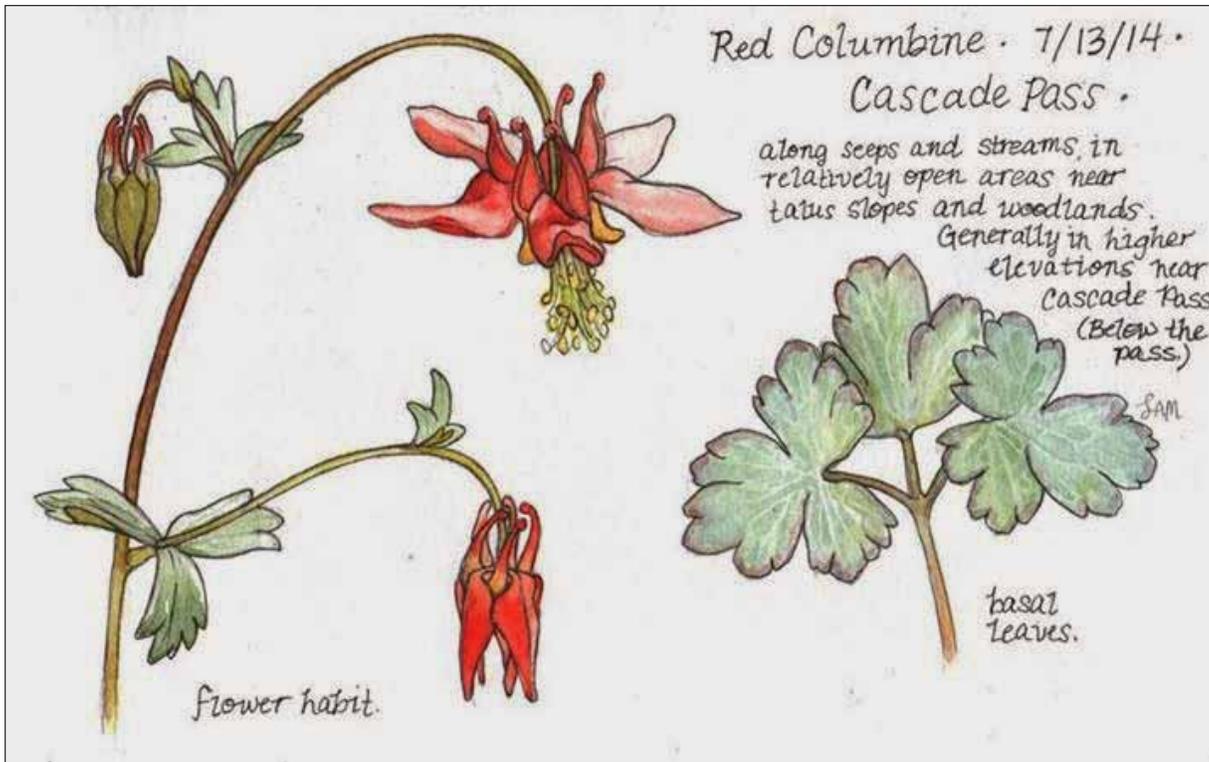
Check out Mauri's fantastic summary of the Rainbow Glacier here:

glacierchange.wordpress.com/2014/10/05/rainbow-glacier-record-ablation-in-2014-for-1984-2014-period/

“Glaciers of the North Cascades” talk February 12 in Mazama

Tom Hammond will give a talk on “Glaciers of the North Cascades” at North Cascades Basecamp, 255 Lost River Road in Mazama on Thursday, February 12, 2015. The talk is part of Basecamp Lodge's Thursday Community Soup Night and Presentation series. Find details at northcascadesbasecamp.com

Now in its 31st year, the North Cascades Glacier Climate Project, studies and records the mass balance of eight glaciers in the North Cascades annually, with several others less frequently. The project is directed by Mauri S. Pelto, professor of environmental science at Nichols College, Dudley, MA 01571
mspeldo@nichols.edu
www.nichols.edu/departments/glacier/



Red columbine by our guest artist, Laurel Mundy, a scientific illustrator who was artist-in-residence at North Cascades National Park in July. See more art and illustrations on her website, laurermundy.com



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Wildflowers carpet the moraines above the seracs of the Coleman Glacier; Roosevelt Glacier terminus beyond.
—TOM HAMMOND PHOTO