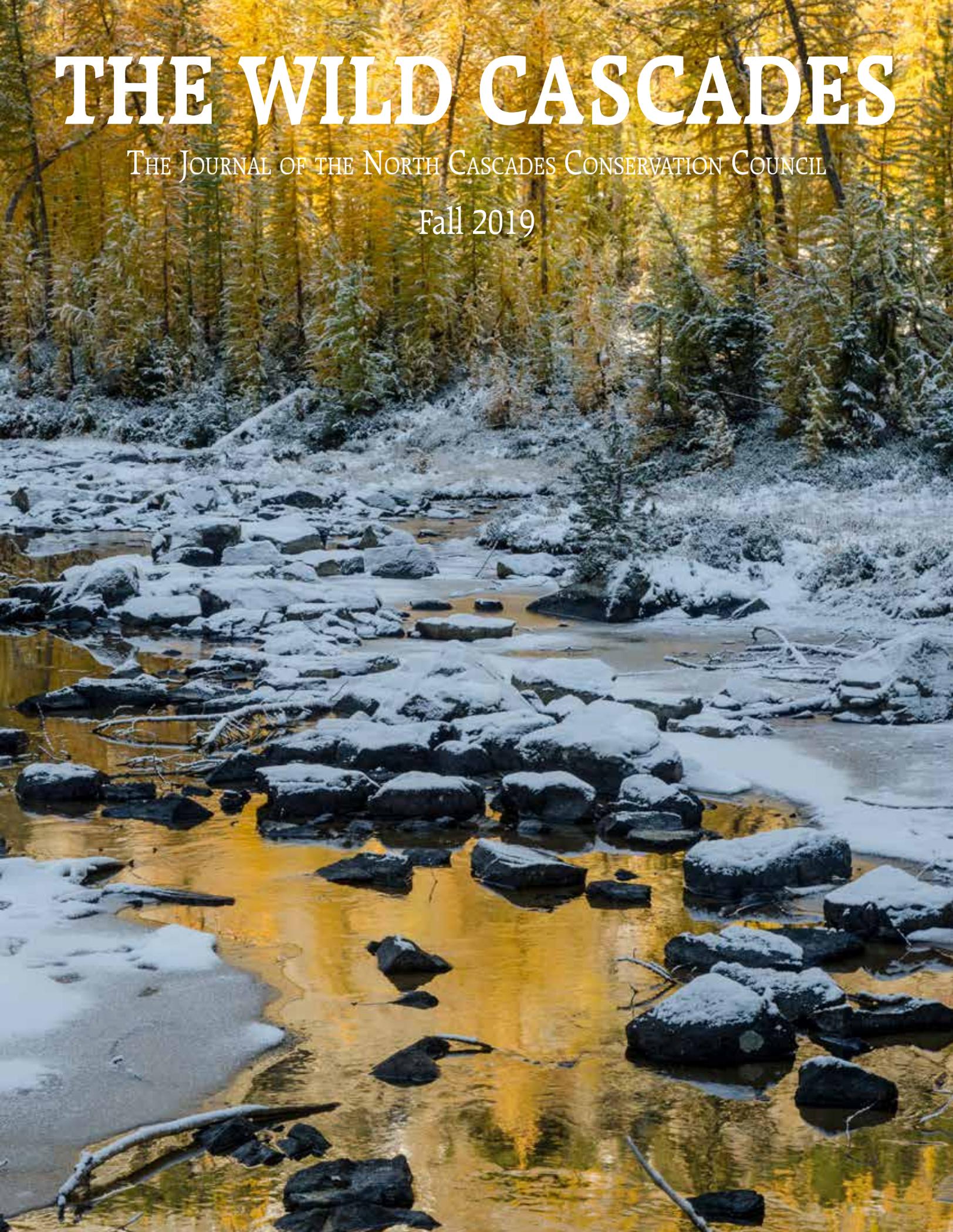


THE WILD CASCADES

THE JOURNAL OF THE NORTH CASCADES CONSERVATION COUNCIL

Fall 2019



THE WILD CASCADES ■ Fall 2019

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COVER: *Below Hilgard Pass.* —MIKE ANNÉE PHOTO

The Wild Cascades

Journal of the North Cascades Conservation Council

EDITOR: Anne Basye

EDITORIAL BOARD: Philip Fenner, Anders Forsgaard,
Tom Hammond, Ed Henderson, and Rick McGuire

Pat Hutson, Designer | Printing by Abracadabra Printing

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

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

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

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

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

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The Wild Cascades is printed on recycled paper.

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NORTH CASCADES CONSERVATION COUNCIL

Founded in 1957

SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

THE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

FALL 2019

It's been an eventful first few months as your President, and very encouraging. What a pleasure it's been to work with the Skagit River Alliance (SRA) to help them stop the monstrous quarry proposed in Marblemount, on the very doorstep of the North Cascades! Not often do we have such a clear, definite "win" in such a relatively short time. And the fine folks we partnered with who had to live with the direct threat on a daily basis did an absolutely stellar job of organizing rapidly and acting effectively!

As you'll read in the piece by SRA's president, it was a team effort all the way. As one of the biggest recent threats to the region, the Marblemount quarry proposal is no more, thanks to all the hard work opponents put into it, so we all can breathe the mountain air a bit easier. I've seen no better example of how to "Fight and Win" (to borrow Brock Evans' book title, a book that helped SRA organize). Vigilance is always wise in a case like this, of course, and N3C+SRA will stand guard as long as necessary!

There's nothing quite like having a personal shock to awaken the conservationist in us. In the National Forest logging heyday, the shock of returning to a favorite old grove and finding a moonscape probably motivated more folks to work for Park and Wilderness designations than any other experience. This summer I had a similar experience on a smaller scale, hiking above iconic Cascade Pass, inside both Park and Wilderness, and finding a landslide on a new trail where verdant meadow had been only a few years before. It was a small mess compared to some, but knowing the back story, it was a pivotal moment for me, showing the folly of mechanized "improvements" to Wilderness. You'll read more about that in this issue as well.

I'm pleased that members are stepping forward and offering to join the board and help in other ways, and N3C is very grateful to them. We have a lot of irons in the fire (see our Actions list), and greatly appreciate the help our members offer. Have an idea or want to assist with one of our initiatives you read about in *The Wild Cascades*? Email me!

When the time comes to face the next set of challenges, which may well be waiting for us sooner than we think in our political maelstrom, it's good to know our members are there and willing to step up and speak out for our beloved North Cascades!

Phil Fenner

philf@northcascades.org

Attention N3C members

Please inform us of mailing address changes! It's much easier to update our records and make sure you get your copy of *TWC*, than to wait for the P.O. to return it to us! Thanks!

We're now offering an electronic delivery option for *TWC*. Just let us know and we'll send it as soon as it's ready, usually a couple of weeks before the paper copies arrive, and not sending paper will save some trees and some postage.

For either of these, email us at ncccinfo@northcascades.org and we'll take care of it.



N3C Actions

MARCH
to OCTOBER 2019

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



DEFENDING WILD AREAS AGAINST DAMAGING INDUSTRIAL USES

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

- Supported Skagit River Alliance's opposition to a major quarry near Marblemount on the Skagit River. Kiewit withdrew their permit application after massive public opposition and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers awarded the contract for rock to rebuild the jetties at the mouth of Columbia River to a competing firm that will source the stone elsewhere, but Kiewit still owns the site. (See page 6.)
- Attended Seattle City Light meetings for the upcoming Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's relicensing of the Skagit Hydroelectric facilities, which raises the opportunity to mitigate its impacts. N3C board members have joined the Steering Committee and Resource Workgroups meeting throughout 2019. N3C members are participating in meetings/workshops to identify issues needing study for mitigation.
- Signed joint letter to the British Columbia (Canada) government opposing timber sales in the Skagit River headwaters, above Ross Lake and North Cascades National Park (NOCA).



EXPANDING, ESTABLISHING, AND PROTECTING WILDERNESS AREAS

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

- Attended public information and "stakeholder" meetings on the Mountain Loop Highway Feasibility (Paving) Study, presenting a range of options from adding and grading gravel to the unpaved portion to full paving. A preliminary draft of the Final Report is expected before the end of the year. (See *TWC* Spring/Summer 2018, p 10.)
- Attended public meeting/workshop by the Icicle Workgroup on the Icicle Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for dam maintenance & reconstruction in the Alpine Lakes Wilderness. N3C joins Alpine Lakes Protection Society (ALPS) in opposition to manipulation of lake levels in Wilderness. (See *TWC* Winter 2019, p 11)
- Met with the Upper Skagit Tribe to discuss fish and aquatic protection as part of the SCL Skagit Hydroelectric Project relicensing process.
- Signed joint letter to U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell thanking her for her support of Wilderness protection for the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, which would prevent oil development there.



PROMOTING ENVIRONMENTALLY SOUND RECREATION IN WILD AREAS

Why it matters: balancing access with economics and Wilderness preservation, we evaluate motorized use and places where it needs to be limited to reduce land impacts and recurring road repair costs.

- ✓ Met with North Cascades National Park (NOCA) staff about the collapse of a new segment of trail built on Sahale Arm near Cascade Pass that followed work using helicopters without public notice for construction in Wilderness. Sent letter of objection to NOCA Superintendent awaiting reply. (See page 9.)
- ✓ Continued support for Leave No Trace and its training programs to minimize damage caused by recreation.
- ✓ Attended annual breakfast meeting of Washington Wildlife and Recreation Coalition (WWRC) and joined WWRC, which promotes and advocates for state and federal funding for parks and wildlife habitat across the state.
- ✓ Signed joint letter with 53 organizations to the Washington State House of Representatives and Senate advocating a state law to ban suction dredge mining (SDM) "recreation" to protect salmon-bearing streams. The legislation was punted to the Department of Fish & Wildlife (WDFW) which produced a weak rule. N3C seeks to ban SDM in 2020. (See *TWC* Winter 2019 p. 14.)

PROTECTING ANCIENT FORESTS, WILDLIFE AND WILDLIFE HABITAT

Why it matters: like real estate, they're just not making ancient forest anymore. We seek to restore watersheds and fisheries damaged from decades of heavy logging and road building and protect significant forests from degradation. From microscopic fungi to top predators, the wilderness ecosystem's living members are interdependent, so keeping viable populations of each species is essential to preserve the ecosystem for future generations.

- ✓ Signed joint letter to the U.S. Forest Service objecting to proposed changes to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) rules and processes that would weaken its requirements for environmental impact evaluation of proposed timber sales, road building and oil & gas drilling.
- ✓ Seeking legal advice on opposing logging and road building on 63,000 acres on the South Fork of Stilliguamish River for Vegetation Management (thinning, i.e. logging) by the Forest Service. (See *TWC* Winter 2018, p. 7.)
- ✓ Supported SnoKing Watershed Council's appeal of Snohomish County Permit to "rebuild" road in North Fork of Skykomish River valley. Flooding caused the river to follow the old roadbed, which became the new river bed in this salmon-bearing stream.
- ✓ Signed joint letter supporting Legacy Road and Trail funding for FY 2020, which focuses on urgently needed road decommissioning, road and trail repair and maintenance, and removal of fish passage barriers.
- ✓ Met with U.S. Congress Representative Kim Scheier's staff to discuss the Upper Stehekin Road in NOCA. N3C supports the National Park Service's decision to close the washed-out Upper Stehekin Valley road.
- ✓ Signed joint letter to the to the B.C. (Canada) Government protesting clear cutting of the remaining habitat of the "Deep Snow Mountain Caribou."



—John Scurlock/Jagged Ridge Imaging

Marblemount organizing ends Kiewit quarry threat

By Jose Vila

On March 14 of this year a small sign was posted in the driveway of the old gravel crushing site on Rockport Cascade Road just a mile or so downriver from Marblemount. It was kind of tucked away in the brush so it took about a week for neighbors to see it.

The sign was notification for a huge 100-year industrial quarry operation, construction of a 60-foot wide mining road to the top of the 900-foot tall rock mountain, millions of board feet of timber clearing, millions of cubic yards of high-explosive mined rock to bring the mountain down, hundreds of truck trips every day from dawn to dusk on our small chip-sealed gravel road, then down the North Cascades highway to barges in Anacortes.

The sign said 15 days was being given for anyone interested to look at the documents at the Planning and Development Services office and comment. As it turned out, the mess of application documents was about 1,000 pages in total... and there was only about a week remaining in the 15-day comment period.

Most neighbors living in woods around the quarry site have separate access to their properties and often hadn't met

or didn't know each very well, but this changed very quickly; everyone started talking. We looked up at the towering mountain imagining what it would be like to live in a mining zone, imagining what all the explosive blasting above us would be like, imagining what all the huge mining impact drills would be like, the huge mine trucks climbing up and then fully loaded, compression braking down the 12.5% grade. Imagined what would happen to the Cascade and Skagit rivers below and all the fish, wildlife, and outdoor activities.

We started tearing through the documents and made note of the lack of serious study and the repeated conclusion of "no foreseeable impacts". We started calling around to Skagit Valley groups, organizations, and tribes to see if they were aware of this requested use. The typical response was shock followed by "what can we do?"

What can we do? We took action, we responded. The application documents were voluminous and difficult to follow but we shared information, discussed findings, and in the end commented on hundreds of inaccuracies and unaddressed

significant impacts. So many comments were submitted that the county's comment system couldn't handle the load so a second posting with a fresh 30-day comment period was provided. By the end of the second comment period about 800 comments had been submitted. Of the total comments only about 5 were in favor of the proposed operation.

So the county told the applicant that they intended to issue a Determination of Significance and require an Environmental Impact Study. The applicant decided they didn't want to undergo this important and necessary process, and on September 6 withdrew their application asked for their money back.

We followed the required process and the applicant decided they would rather not. Now we don't have to live in a massive upriver mining zone, now we know our neighbors, now we are connected to so many great organizations including N3C, now we appreciate even more our reasons for living in this wild and beautiful place, now we are organized.

Jose Vila is President of the Skagit River Alliance

News from NOCA

- **Grizzlies again.** The grizzly EIS comment period was reopened at the request of Congressman Dan Newhouse, to allow more comments in opposition. Hence the recent public meeting in Okanogan. The new Trump ESA Critical Habitat rules might be used to hold up the reintroduction, but there is good evidence to support claims that grizzlies did previously occupy the North Cascades. N3C's position in support of grizzly reintroduction continues to recommend Alternative C of the EIS, but with no use of helicopters in designated Wilderness. A revised comment letter clarifying opposition to use of helicopters in Wilderness will be filed.
- **More goats.** The Olympic National Park (ONP), the Mount Baker Snoqualmie National Forest and the Washington State Department of Fish & Wildlife (WDFW) continued mountain goat relocation from ONP to the North Cascades. While N3C supports removal of non-native goats from the Olympics we remain concerned about and are monitoring the use of helicopters in the North Cascades Wilderness Areas. (See *TWC* Spring/Summer 2018, p. 8.)
- **Recreational hot spots.** Increasing recreational pressures by kayakers are being felt on Thunder, Bridge and Lightning Creeks, which can impact

wildlife in those riparian zones, and cause social trails to develop. Canyoneering has come to Thornton Creek, as well as rock climbing in the Skagit Gorge just East of Newhalem, where peregrines nest and rare moss and lichens live. Managing these new recreational hot spots is a major concern.



- **Huge culvert.** An 8-foot diameter culvert is being installed about 5 miles from the end of the road to keep the North Fork Cascade River from causing further damage to the Cascade Pass road.
- **Not NICE.** The long-dreaded and delayed Nooksack Integrated Conservation and Enhancement (NICE) project has risen again from its coffin. This decidedly not-NICE proposal from

the Forest Service would change the character of the region just north of Mount Baker for generations to come. Extensive logging, including clearcuts, plus industrial-strength recreation development is planned. Initial scoping is set for November.

- **Fishers.** Six fishers from Alberta were recently released near Baker Lake as part of the reintroduction program by NPS. More will be released soon in the Illabot Creek drainage.

Monte Cristo Road update

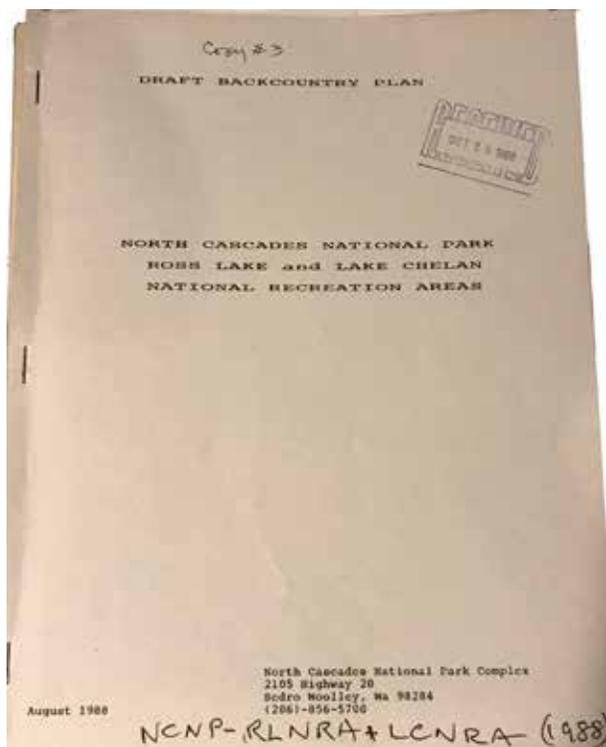
The mine remediation track to Monte Cristo through Inventoried Roadless Area will remain open through 2020 to allow access for waste repository monitoring. N3C has submitted a FOIA request for pre-NEPA public comments and a joint letter with 12 other organizations to Mount Baker Snoqualmie National Forest requesting the status of NEPA planning for the future of the track. Records of the gate key loans for 2018 reviewed by N3C show that 55 of 68 trips reported on the track were by private property in-holders, not for monitoring. N3C will continue to closely follow this issue to ensure that MBS permanently closes the track when monitoring of the mine waste clean-up is complete.



Goldsworthy papers go to UW Special Collections

Interns (L-R) Brynna Graham and Whitney Wyngaert from the National Council for Preservation Education (<http://www.ncpe.us>), led by Samantha Richert (R), Museum Curator of North Cascades National Park Service Complex, cataloged the papers of N3C founder Patrick Goldsworthy, preparing them to be added to Patrick's papers already at the University of Washington Special Collections. With them is N3C President Phil Fenner (center R) who has been storing the papers since Patrick's passing. Totaling 27 boxes, plus additional publications and ephemera, this collection is believed to be among the largest and most significant in Northwest conservation. —EVELYN KIDD PHOTO

N3C to NOCA: Make a Plan and stick to it



Draft Backcountry Plan for NOCA, 1988, from the collection of Patrick Goldsworthy, N3C founder (<http://www.northcascades.org/wordpress/in-memoriam/patrick-goldsworthy>).

actions that impinge upon the spirit, or even the letter, of the Wilderness Act. Many of us still have difficulty with the fundamental concept that Wilderness is to be left “untrammelled” (i.e. largely untouched) by humans, that it isn’t there for our benefit, to be improved to suit us, but exists for its own sake, as is. That is particularly difficult for the National Park Service (NPS) to accept, since their mission is in large part to make the places they administer available for public enjoyment. Meanwhile, recreation demand has grown exponentially since the Wilderness Act became law in 1964, to the point that even mechanized users are demanding they be allowed in to Wilderness, despite the Act’s specific prohibition of mechanized equipment.

As defenders of Wilderness, and without a Stewardship Plan in place, N3C must go back to the Wilderness Act

and its general terms in our discussions with the Agencies. A Plan makes it clear how each of the specific zones and locations within each individual Wilderness are to be managed. It takes the generalities of the Wilderness Act and applies them to the various zones of the individual Wilderness Area. It guides the Agency managers in what to do, and, more important, what not to do. If issues arise later, the Plan becomes the go-to document to settle disputes. The Plan for Stephen Mather Wilderness in North Cascades National Park is so old that we can’t refer to it when issues arise now. A new Plan is desperately needed.

A Wilderness Stewardship Plan is in its pre-NEPA stage now. Costs for completion of a full EIS for a new Plan are estimated to be in the hundreds of thousands of dollars. For comparison, the grizzly EIS cost about \$600K. A “Wilderness Character Monitoring Plan” will be one of the first steps.

If you feel as we do that the Park Service should abide by the current plan, and find the funding to draft a new one, feel free to write to the Park Superintendent:

Karen Taylor-Goodrich
810 State Rte 20
Sedro Woolley, WA 98284

Every Wilderness Area should have a Stewardship Plan. North Cascades National Park (NOCA) is 95% Wilderness, and it’s the showcase of the region’s premier scenic resources. The Park Service even named NOCA’s Wilderness Area after its founder, Stephen Mather. So of all the Wilderness Areas in our region, you’d think it would have a plan.

It does, sort of. The Stephen Mather Wilderness was designated in 1988, and the most recent Stewardship Plan dates to 1990. It was literally typed on an IBM Selectric typewriter and when we quote it to NOCA staff—pointing out, for example, that staff should abide by statements like “Aircraft may only be used if... there is no other practical way to accomplish the work”—it is often dismissed by staff as obsolete.

Without a Stewardship Plan for a Wilderness Area that all parties agree to, there are lots of “grey areas” where the Agency that manages the Wilderness can have free rein to make decisions and take



Virtual aerial view of Sahale Arm shows new segment of trail in lower-right, showing slide developing where steep meadow was cut to make new switchback.

Sahale Harm



Slide damage. —PHIL FENNER PHOTO

We probably don't have to recount how important, iconic, even sacred the Cascade Pass area is to N3C. Dave Brower shot the climax of Wilderness Alps of Stehekin there in the 1950s to advocate for a National Park; Margaret and Joe Miller of N3C pioneered alpine revegetation there to restore the Pass from years of trampling. We escorted Margaret Miller to the Pass to scatter Joe's ashes there, so it's consecrated. And we thought it was doing fine after years of helping the Park Service with "plant carries" in which N3C members took up the cause of the Millers, carried alpine plant starts up in backpacks and planted them to help recover social trails in the pass saddle.

We knew the spur route up from Cascade Pass to Sahale Arm was both where the best views were and also not a formal, planned trail. It was one of those climbers' routes that tended to go straight uphill rather than making gentle switchbacks. Apparently, the Park Service had plans to make it "safe" for the average hiker but didn't inform the public. About five summers ago, one of our members wrote to us and the Park Service to complain that her vacation backpack to the Cascade Pass area was ruined by the constant buzz of helicopters. Those incredibly noisy machines had been flying over the pass the whole week, she said. And they seemed to be part of some kind of Park Service project.

She indignantly stated that "helicopters should not be in Wilderness," which we generally agree with. If they are ever there, it should be for a very good reason, like Search and Rescue. In past years we probably would have been informed of any construction project formidable enough to need helicopters—in fact, we rely on the NEPA process to keep us informed by default, since construction projects of that scale require public comment and Environmental Assessment. Normally ... we assumed.

But when we inquired to the Park Service staff, we were told that this project was considered by them to just be "maintenance" and thus was excluded from NEPA, so no public notice was made. No notice to us or the general recreational public, not on their website or at the Wilderness Info Center. Apparently the only notices were posted at

trailheads, and didn't specifically mention helicopters. They call that a "Categorical Exclusion" in NEPA, intended to exclude minor maintenance work from a full work-up. This was clearly more substantial. And to top it all off, the work was done during peak tourist season.

Karen Taylor-Goodrich, Park Superintendent, replied to our member's complaint and assured her that using a helicopter makes it possible to do the job right, and "will virtually eliminate the need for maintenance and repairs, and future helicopter activity." Keep that in mind.

We objected, of course, but the work was already done. Now it became a matter of seeing what exactly was done and how well it worked out. Google Earth makes that easy these days (see opposite page). As you can see in the aerial view, the project cut new switchbacks into the steepest slopes, the least stable slopes, and disaster was the inevitable result. A delicate carpet of meadow plants grows in shallow soil on glacially polished bedrock there, at slopes in excess of 45 degrees. Even the slightest cut into that precarious natural balance is likely if not guaranteed to fail. And fail it has. The Google Earth view prompted us to take a look in person in July, and we found a scale-model landslide in action, as you can see in the photo. When shown the results, Park staff were quick to respond

that another helicopter sortie would be needed to make the necessary repairs.

So it becomes a circular problem, like the turning of helicopter rotor blades. The public needs to be safe, and the trail is too steep, but the thinking goes that nothing can be done up there without a helicopter, so when the funding for one is available then with the immense mechanical ability of a chopper there become few limits to what can be done, and much more is done than necessary or desirable, even to the point of damaging the very resource the Park is stewarding. And of course, to avoid interference in the grand plan, they say "we're only doing maintenance," thus avoiding required public notice. Which in the long run is the worst aspect of this, and the one that we feel merits raising the most strenuous objections. Where else are they planning and/or doing this sort of thing? We wouldn't have known about this one without a member who spoke up. And what other damage will they do with helicopters, that only a helicopter can fix?

As you can read in the letter we wrote to the Park Superintendent linked below, we hope to break this vicious cycle and reduce future harm to Wilderness. The current Wilderness Stewardship Plan dates to 1989 and is thus woefully out of date, which remains a major obstacle to progress on issues like this (see "Make a plan and stick to it" on page 8).

Meanwhile, your role as a N3C member becomes ever more important in this era of NEPA erosion. YOU are our eyes and ears! **See something? Say something!** Email us at nccinfo@northcascades.org

Correspondence and previous articles

Read our full letter to the Park Superintendent:

<https://tinyurl.com/y4c6o32z>

Read the original complaint by our member, Aug. 2014:

<https://tinyurl.com/y65a6lba>

Read the reply to our member from the Park Superintendent, Oct. 2014:

<https://tinyurl.com/y3nbcfxv>

See prior reports in TWC:

<http://npsbhistory.com/newsletters/the-wild-cascades/winter-2015.pdf>

<http://npsbhistory.com/newsletters/the-wild-cascades/fall-2014.pdf>

Meet new board member Kurt Lauer



Kurt Lauer is honored to be part of the N3C board. A member of N3C for over 25 years, this is Kurt's first leadership role with the organization. Kurt has had a lifelong passion in regard to visiting and protecting wild places. In the 1990s Kurt teamed up with the N3C on a number of environmental issues when he worked on Wilderness and National Park issues for the Sierra Club. His focus the past twenty years has been more directed towards education. He currently serves as principal at Federal Way Public Academy, a school he helped form twenty years ago.

Kurt is an avid outdoorsman who has hiked all over the North Cascades. He loves visiting our country's natural areas, and has explored 56 of our country's 61 National Parks, and has a goal to hike in every designated wilderness area in the United States (so far he has hiked in 653 of the country's 803 wilderness areas).

Kurt is eager to play a role in protecting our natural areas in Washington State, and has a particular interest in Park, Wilderness and all aspects of management of Public lands.

N3C member profile

Volunteer database manager Ileen Weber

I have always had a natural affinity for computer software. In the late 90s I acquired a computer and later learned the internet while on sick leave from Metro because of a broken bone in my right foot (broken while birding). When I moved from Seattle in 2000 to Snohomish County I volunteered with the Pilchuck Audubon Society first as the membership chair and database manager, and wrote, printed and mailed about a thousand fundraising letters using the database three to four times a year. I also wrote grants, and served as the Vice President for several years.

I developed a very basic database for Pilchuck Audubon and then taught myself how to use more sophisticated software like Salesforce. I don't have any professional training in computers or software.

Around 2005 another Pilchuck Audubon member, Laura Zalesky, asked me to help her transition to a better database for N3C. Laura did not have any experience

with modern computer technology and had never used a web browser or a mouse. When she was 85 I taught her how to use that technology along with training her on Salesforce. Salesforce database software is used worldwide and is offered to non-profits for free (at that time valued annually at about \$11,000). It is complex but Laura was unintimidated. When I mentioned to other clients that I had taught an 85-year-old woman who had never touched a mouse how to use Salesforce they were indeed impressed (I'm not sure if that was because of my skills or Laura's).

The rest is history. When Marc Bardsley started to take over the N3C database from Laura I trained him and continue to consult with him as needed.

I volunteer for N3C not because I experience mountains as a climber or hiker as most other members do but because I want wild lands to be protected. For me mountains are beautiful to behold and

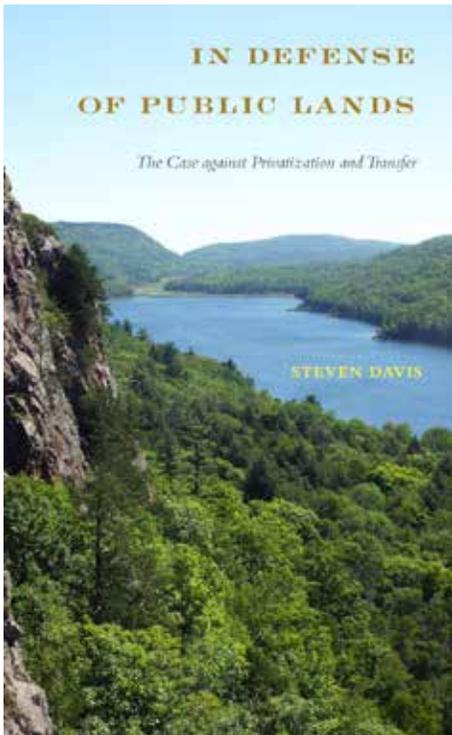
wild lands are sacred. If there is a higher power, that is where I find it.



Book review

In Defense of Public Lands by Steven Davis

(Temple University Press, 2018)



In recent news we read that despite strong objections from lawmakers, Interior Secretary David Bernhardt signed a secretarial order to extend William Perry Pendley's tenure as the acting head of the BLM for an additional four months. Pendley is known for suggesting the U.S. should "sell all public lands east of the Mississippi River."

These sorts of threats to our public lands have built into a crescendo during the Trump administration, but are sometimes overlooked in the swirl of scandals. This book explains why we need to keep our eyes on the public lands. Giving them away could prove the biggest scandal of them all!

The author knows our local story here in the Northwest, as evidenced both by references in the text to many areas and events here, and also by photos he included. The threat may be greater east of the Mississippi or in the desert southwest, but the timber and mineral resources of the

Northwest will doubtless motivate private interests to look again at areas we assume today are protected.

Davis summarizes his argument in Chapter 4, "The Valuation of the Invaluable," with this nugget:

Privatization is often held up as a net gain, as the government could sell the land and raise much-needed funds, but the tremendous stored value [of that land] suggests something else altogether: that privatization would [be] the most massive boondoggle of the century, rivaled only perhaps by the massive railroad and mining giveaways... The modest sum that we annually invest in the health and productivity of a massive base of natural capital that we all own and that provides us with invaluable public goods is actually one of the greatest bargains we will ever enjoy!

We couldn't agree more.

N3C helps protect fragile alpine environment at Early Winters Spires

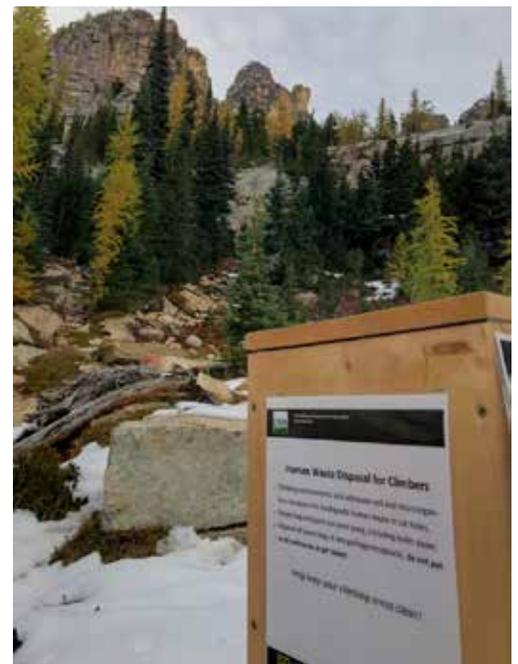
A contribution from N3C helped the Access Fund and the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest make significant progress towards protecting and restoring the alpine and sub-alpine environments around the west side of the Early Winters Spires. As reported in *TWC* Winter 2019 and Spring/Summer 2018, local and national recreational climbing groups have taken responsibility to repair and restore the damage created by social trails in this easily accessible and popular area in the North Cascades.

Since 2018, participants from the Access Fund, OWNF staff, Americorps, and The Mountaineers and others from the climbing community have hardened and stabilized existing trails, constructed an easily navigable new trail corridor, and rerouted unsustainable social trails. Summer 2019 tasks included installing signage to direct

climbers onto appropriate trails that can withstand traffic, and restoring meadows by re-seeding slopes and installing water diversion structures to minimize and prevent future erosion. N3C's contribution was earmarked for re-vegetation of the abandoned braided social trails and other damaged areas. We also requested that a pit toilet be installed and maintained to reduce the impact of human waste.

We salute everyone who has helped importance of protecting and restoring this easily accessible and very popular area in the North Cascades!

Human waste disposal for climbers.
—PHIL FENNER PHOTO





Thru-hikers: growing trend, decreasing impact

By Robert Kendall

Long distance “thru-hikers” love the North Cascades. A combined 520 trail miles of the Pacific Crest Trail and Pacific Northwest Trail form a perpendicular set of transects to provide a wonderful tour of the Wild Cascades, with its splendors appearing alongside the High Sierra and Northern Rockies on thru-hikers’ lists of favorite sections. I’ve had the great fortune of completing both of these trails, in 2015 and 2018, respectively.

The origins of long-distance trail hiking trace to the 1920s when the Appalachian Trail was conceived. No one considered it possible to hike the entire length of the AT in one season (the definition of a thru-hike) until Earl Shaffer did so in 1948. Emma Gatewood became the first female thru-hiker in 1955 at the age of 67, also on the AT. Both went on to hike AT twice more. The first thru-hike of the PCT is in dispute but may have occurred in 1952. Early thru-hikers were admirably intrepid adventurers carrying cumbersome gear and negotiating challenging conditions on poorly marked routes.

The PCT was conceived in 1932 and remained a gappy string of trail fragments for decades. The National Scenic Trails

(NST) Act was signed into law the same day as the North Cascades Act in 1968, with the PCT included. The PNT was conceived in 1970 and first thru-hiked in 1977. It limped along as an idea until becoming a National Scenic Trail in 2009. It remains a gappy string of trail fragments today.

A 1980 NC3 letter opposed NST designation for the PNT, mainly out of concern for fragile alpine terrain. A wary eye was cast on the PCT as well: Purpose-built sections of the PCT were over-engineered as surveyed grades were blasted into the side of the crest, and there have been concerns about the high numbers of hikers that the PCT has indeed ended up carrying. The PCT was completed by fewer than a hundred people each year until 2000 but exploded in popularity in the last ten years, with almost 1200 completing the trail in 2018. (In total, about 6700 people have now thru-hiked the PCT, while the PNT finishers list is only at about 125, total. Both figures are from 2018.)

The “discovery” of thru-hiking has been “blamed” on books and movies. However, a robust subculture was already developing around the unique pleasures and challenges of living on trail for months at

Fellow hiker Mr. B. crossing Swift Creek on PNT —ROBERT KENDALL PHOTO

a time. The familiar benefits of hiking are expanded greatly after about the ten-day mark: The long-haul hiker is consumed with a singular goal while feeling robustly free, buzzing with excitement while repairing with tranquility, reduced to the essentials of being. Thru-hiking is the purest form of travel, the best, most sensual way to see the world, seamlessly smoothing together a wide diversity of landscape over a significant swath of the Earth, earning a palpable connectedness. Time slows and perception is altered, basking in fantasy while paradoxically being much more grounded and centered than in “real life”. Word gets around.

While high-tech ultralight equipment has made it possible for many more to thru-hike, it has reduced each hiker’s footprint. Thru-hikers travel light and move quickly, averaging about 120 miles per week. They are very seldom interested in having a campfire. Where it is legal to do so, thru-hikers commonly “stealth camp” a prudent distance from the trail, with no

alteration to the site or visible evidence of their stay.

Readers are undoubtedly too familiar with the obnoxious crudity perpetrated by inexperienced, ill-educated, or simply uncaring hikers that have sullied many beautiful trails recently. (Think doggy-poop bags, unleashed and/or unruly dogs, blaring speakers, drones, littering, improper toileting, trail erosion, and much more.) Thru-hikers should not be associated with these behaviors. While many are in fact surprisingly new to the outdoors, they are deeply invested, and readily mentored. Poor wilderness ethics are not well tolerated in the thru-hiking community. Those with bad etiquette tend not to get very far.

The main concern with thru-hikers is their numbers, but even with the huge increases, thru-hikers still make up a small portion of trail traffic in most of the North Cascades when they pass through, mostly during a month in early fall. Despite the explosion of interest, further growth in thru-hiker traffic on each trail will be limited. Fifty long-distance permits are allocated per day for northbound hikers beginning from Mexico, where hikers must start within a two-month window in order to complete a thru-hike before snowfall. More are attempting southbound hikes, but doing so requires a faster pace. Reasonable solitude is a valued part of the experience, so more will turn to less-populated trails, which may account for some growth on the PNT. This may also spur the development of new long-distance trails

and inspire people to come up with their own creative personal routes, relieving stress on overused areas.

Let's juxtapose these projected several thousand thru-hikers walking through the sensitive wilderness of the North Cascades each year with the imposition of Highway 20, which carries several thousand *cars* per *day* through sensitive wilderness. The road to Harts Pass gouges into even more sensitive wilderness, carrying significant vehicle traffic during summer and turning into a mob circus during hunting season. Both of these are frequently invaded by screaming snowmobiles during the winter. Still, a tendency toward smugness with Leave-No-Trace pedestrianism doesn't feel completely honest.

What factor do hiker numbers play in the potential to recover grizzlies in the North Cascades? Will it be too late by the time studies can provide a definitive answer? At what volume of foot traffic do even the best practitioners of LNT erode wilderness values by their collective presence? How many LNT hikers does it take to equal the impact of one person on horseback? How much more difficult would it be to maintain trails without the political and practical support of horse packers? What is the best way to regulate hikers (and horses)? Walkers undoubtedly have a miniscule impact relative to any other group, especially in the context of global environmental catastrophe, but our cumulative effects can't be ignored.

In my opinion, we haven't reached the point of needing to further regulate

thru-hikers in the North Cascades, but I can see it coming in the future if we survive as a society. I think most lovers of wilderness understand the need for regulation, even begrudgingly wishing there were more of it, as long as it's science-based and fair. *We do* want laws and regulations to be proportional according to their impact! If this were the case, a person may someday not get to walk through the Pasayten as many times as they want, but many roads would cease to exist, unsustainable logging and mining would end, and ORVs on public land would be a thing of the past. For starters. One can dream.

The oversold notion that people must spend time in wilderness in order to advocate for it is a thin argument. Instead, the best reason for supporting properly managed trails, including our long National Scenic Trails, remains as always: they are a vitally important "greater good" for a sane civilization.

New restrictions limit thru-hikers in Oregon; will Washington follow suit?

Recently, the Willamette and Deschutes National Forest staff announced a new permit and quota system to go into effect in 2020. The decision followed publication of the Central Cascades Wilderness Study Project, which sought to identify high-impact areas in central Oregon's wilderness areas, and implement solutions to address issues such as overuse and damage to the environment. Starting in 2020, only a handful of PCT section hikers will be allowed to enter the Three Sisters, Mount Washington and Mount Jefferson wilderness areas each day. Hikers will be required to enter and exit on specific days—and pay multiple fees to do it—in a new access system that's more restrictive than most popular national parks. Following the mandatory public comment period, and numerous gatherings with concerned outdoor communities and organizations (including PCT: Oregon), the final decision made a few amendments to the initial draft decision, but moves forward on imposing forest-wide limits on day hikers, overnight backpackers, and PCT section hikers.



Typical camp, West Fork Methow. —ROBERT KENDALL PHOTO



Graffiti and the complexity of Leave No Trace in 2019

By Jason D. Martin

Reprinted by permission from Mount Baker Experience magazine

It was 2014 and there was a bandit on the loose. For 26 days, this bandit raced through seven national parks and left her mark – literally – in every single one. But this wasn't an ordinary bandit. This person wasn't a bank robber or a kidnapper.

No. This person considered herself to be an artist.

Over 26 days, a young woman named Casey Nocket traveled through iconic parks like Death Valley, Rocky Mountain and Canyonlands. In each park, Nocket painted pictures on the rocks, took photos of the pictures and then posted them on Instagram.

The fact that Nocket posted her pictures on Instagram made it easy for park officials to find her. Indeed, after they found her, Nocket pled guilty to seven misdemeanor charges of injury and depredation of government property.

Her sentence? Probation.

But it could have been much worse. She could have been fined up to \$100,000 per

count and she could have gone to jail...

Perhaps a larger sentence would have been better. Perhaps it could have been a warning to other potential vandals.

And perhaps such a sentence could have stopped someone from defacing another beautiful place. Or perhaps not.

On December 24th, a Utah couple posted an image on the @aprilidaisy Instagram account noting that they had carved their names into the rock at Lake Powell. And while the owner of the account was chastised across the internet, it's still too early to see what – if anything – the authorities will do about it.

It's uncommon for public land managers to capture vandals. But it is not uncommon for them to clean up after them. Graffiti removal is an arduous task and it is done every single day on our public lands by dedicated employees and volunteers.

We, in Northwestern Washington, are not immune to this. There's rock graffiti in the Sehome Arboretum, throughout the Chuckanuts, and at Mt. Erie. Indeed, on Easter Sunday in 2017, the Access Fund sponsored a graffiti clean-up at Larabee

Climbers scrub graffiti off sandstone at Larrabee State Park. —JASON D. MARTIN PHOTO

State Park. A dozen volunteers donned rubber gloves and protective glasses and scrubbed the rocks with wire brushes and an acidic solvent lovingly called elephant snot. It was hard work, and the results were mixed. Some paint soaks so deeply into the rock that it is nearly impossible to remove.

None of us are immune to the desire to leave a trace. There's something deep within us that wants to prove that we were here. Some of us do this by carving our names into trees or by painting rocks. Others do this by taking photos of ourselves, our friends or landscapes and posting them on social media. And yet others name trails, climbing routes or ski runs. Each of these fulfil this inner need to prove our existence, but each of these things can also have a detrimental impact on the land.

It should be obvious that painting rocks and carving trees are both inappropriate

ways to interact with public lands. The likelihood is that most readers of Mt. Baker Experience are well aware of this and don't need any type of lecture. But the other things aren't always so obvious.

Social media use is increasingly under fire for overpopularizing delicate areas and impacting wildlife. Many social media users are geotagging the locations of some of their most beautiful shots. This has increased the impact on select trails and viewpoints. Places that used to host a few visitors a day, are now seeing hundreds. People are taking selfies of themselves with bison, bears, moose, you name it...

Last year *Outside* magazine proposed a new rule to the Principles of Leave No Trace (www.lnt.org), "don't do it for the gram." In other words, maybe it's best not to tag the locations of all your best shots. Maybe it's better to post and be discreet. Maybe the experience is richer when people are forced to do their own research. In addition to that, some people are doing some really dangerous things to get that perfect shot. This should be obvious, but getting a selfie with a snake in your hand, or sitting on the back of a grizzly cub, isn't really that good for your health, or the health of the animal.

This social media dynamic can also be true with the naming and posting of routes, whether they be trails, ski runs or climbs. There's no doubt that this is a more complex issue than the last. Often those who are first to explore a specific location have a strong understanding of the larger area's needs. In some cases, it's better to focus everyone in one area. In other cases, it's better to distribute them over a large area. As such, it's important for trail, run and route developers – as well as guidebook authors and travel writers – to think carefully about the area that they might promote before posting. They should talk to people in the community and see what others think before either intentionally or unintentionally focusing or dispersing a recreational population.

Graffiti has been around forever, but social media and the internet have not. We are in a brave new world right now. It's easy for most of us to see how chipping one's name into the rock has a serious impact, but it's not always easy to see how posting a picture of an obscure place can – in some cases – have just as serious an impact. To keep our wild places wild and to avoid over-regulation, we have to be cognizant of all of these issues.

We have to literally, leave no trace...

Seven + Three principles for leaving no trace

Leave No Trace is a wilderness stewardship philosophy. The seven principles were developed to help backcountry users mitigate their impacts on wild places. For more information, log onto www.lnt.org.

Plan ahead and prepare

1. Plan your route.
Make sure you have the proper clothing and equipment. Make sure that someone knows where you're going.
2. Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces
Stay on trails. Avoid cutting switchbacks. Use pre-impacted sites for camp.
3. Dispose of Waste Properly
Deal with human waste appropriately. Either bury it or pack it out. Pack out food waste and litter.
4. Leave What You Find
Leave flowers and plants for others to enjoy. Don't take artifacts like arrowheads or potsherds. The real joy is in finding these kinds of things. They lose their value to archeologists when taken out of context.
5. Minimize Campfire Impacts
Use a camp-stove if possible. Make small fires when needed. Avoid bonfires and the creation of new fire rings. Respect burn bans.
6. Respect Wildlife
Do not harass wildlife by trying to get close to it. Don't feed the wildlife. It can become habituated to human food and forget how to find its own food.
7. Be Considerate of Other Visitors
Think about how other people ex-

perience the outdoors and try not to impact their enjoyment.

In 2018, *Outside* magazine added three excellent additional principles:

8. Don't Do it for the 'Gram
Avoid geotagging and checking in at specific locations. Be wary of naming specific trails or features, if possible.
9. Minimize Personal Pollution
Not everyone enjoys your drone or the music you're playing.
10. Give Back
Consider joining an advocacy, environmental or conservation group. Consider donating time to a given area doing trail work or litter clean-ups. And consider donating money to an organization of this type.

JASON D. MARTIN

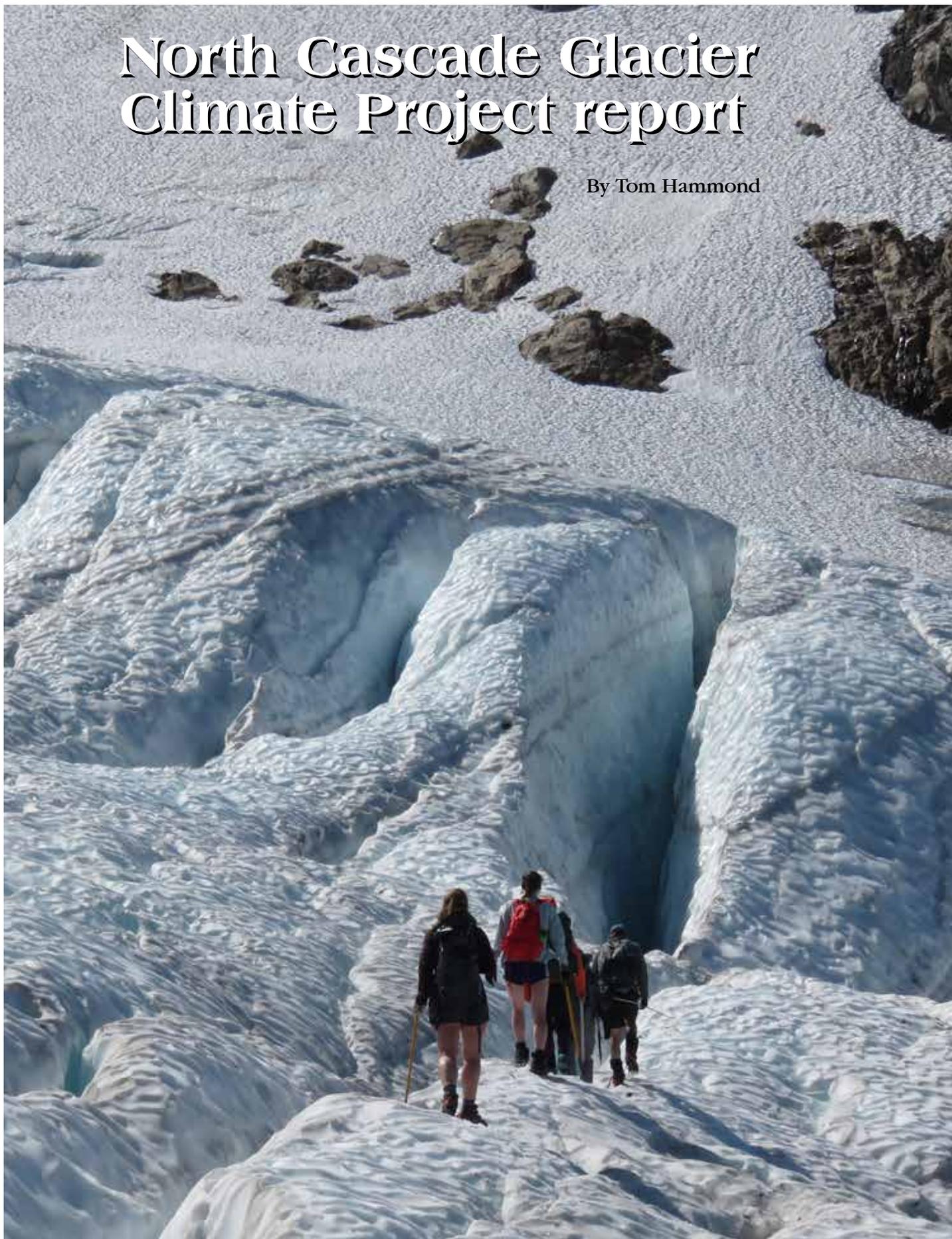
Jason is the Executive Director of the American Alpine Institute, an AMGA Certified Rock and Alpine Guide and a widely published outdoor writer. He has guided extensively in the Cascades, Joshua Tree National Park, Red Rock Canyon, the Sierras, Alaska, the Coast Range and in the Andes. He co-authored "Washington Ice: A Climbing Guide" and "Rock Climbing: The AMGA Single Pitch Manual," and authored both "Fun Climbs Red Rocks: Topropes and Moderates" and "Best Climbs: Red Rocks." Jason lives in Bellingham with his wife and two kids.



*N3C partners with Leave No Trace!
Learn more about outdoor ethics at
lnt.org*

North Cascade Glacier Climate Project report

By Tom Hammond



Lower Curtis Glacier has thinned 18 meters in 4 years

2019 marks my 17th consecutive year as a member of the North Cascade Glacier Climate Project (NCGCP) team. Let me start by stating how profoundly thankful I am to and for director Mauri Pelto. Mauri has welcomed me every year, and the bonds of friendship and love built over the decades with Mauri, Julie Brownlee, Ben, Jill and Megan mean more to me than experiencing the dramatic, sublime landscape defined by the alpine glaciers of the North Cascades. In earlier years, I did about half the field season, but the last few years have seen me focus on the Lower Curtis Glacier on the flanks of Mount Shuksan, the glorious flagship of the North Cascades. Shuksan is the most glaciated non-volcanic peak in the lower 48 states and is a marvel to behold up close—a giant collection of jagged fangs comprised of vibrant multi-hued rock known as Shuksan (blue, green) schist. The striped rocks are shot with crystals—big crystals like something out of old Star Trek—marble, glittering epidote, and a host of other interesting geologic attractions. And of course Shuksan is covered with hanging glaciers—150-foot thick slabs of blue-white ice improbably draped over every side of the massif, apparently elastic in places. Stimulating to all the senses, not just sight: Shuksan means “Thunder” in the aboriginal Salish language, not because of lightning, but because the mountain (used to)* avalanche continuously, calving ice thundering down near-vertical walls of rock. Most pleasing.

It is critically important to note mine is a report of but three days out of a marathon 16—more than 100 miles and 30,000 feet of elevation gain backpacking with heavy gear and food across eight glaciers spanning different aspects (south and north facing slopes) and locations (wet West to dry East) to get a complete picture of climate as so accurately described by gla-

Facing page: The NCGCP 2019 field team explores the collapse of the central section of the Lower Curtis Glacier closely above the terminus. A few years ago it would have been inconceivable to walk this section due to the dynamic nature of the crevasses. Now it is a deflating shadow of itself.

— © TOM HAMMOND PHOTO

ciers. The Lower Curtis involves about 15 miles and a few thousand feet of elevation.

NCGCP, founded in 1983, is the most extensive glacier mass balance field program in the United States. There are no permanent camps, helicopter support or salary for the director and the field season includes no days off. The focus is on glacier mapping, mass balance measurement, terminus observations and glacier runoff monitoring.

For the second consecutive year, the field team was comprised entirely of women. Mauri noted not a single male applied, and there were more applicants than spots this year. Besides Mauri, staff included earth scientist Clara Deck, graduate student Ann Hill, WSU graduate teacher Abby Hudak, and artist and lead field scientist Jill Pelto. As I packed for this trip, I realized that I had not done a backpack overnighter since last year's visit to the Lower Curtis—for the first time since I was 19 years old I didn't backpack once this year.

Sunday August 4

I arrived hours early at the trailhead to avoid traffic and to explore a bit of what the Heather Meadows-Artist Point area has to offer in terms of front-country hikes and (human) usage patterns. I was stunned by the crowds. There was not a single parking space open at Artist Point, and every trailhead (including ours, Lake Ann) had cars overflowing along the highway. Literally thousands of people visit on any given summer weekend—dogs, RVs, constant vehicle traffic, and many motorcycle clubs with ear-splitting, peace-shattering exhaust systems I liken to placing cards in spokes of a bicycle—the louder the cooler.

I don't think any of the animal residents eking out a living in the snow-free months think those deliberately loud machines are cool. Getting people to the mountains is not the challenge: the challenge is to get people to appreciate and respect the ethic of Leave No Trace and to step softly.

In an effort to beat the heat, or at least avoid direct sunlight, we started hiking after 5 pm. While not stifling, it was warm, and we paced ourselves accordingly. This was the first year in many with no smoke from wildfires! It was great to have blue skies and easy breathing—it really made a big difference in mood and enjoyment. Camp was made at sunset and we were

well rested for the survey of the glacier on Monday.

Monday August 5

We were up early to beat the sun, and a good strategy it was. We were able to hike to the glacier, descend to the terminus, do a full survey of same, and re-ascend to the main body of the glacier before the sun blazed over the ramparts of Shuksan. The terminus is toast. What used to be a series of steep towering seracs is now mainly a low convex uniform surface, thinning, flattening and melting faster than can be believed or communicated. We can literally see the recession year to year—tens of meters gone each year. Stunning. And not just the terminus of the lower glacier. EVERY glacier, even the ones above 8,000 feet, show the same “angle of repose”, with ice-cliffs and giant towers of ice replaced by laid-back, smooth convex surfaces. Now you know why I put an asterisk after the meaning of Shuksan. Those thundering ice cliffs are melting faster than they can calve.

As we ascended from the terminus to the main body of the glacier, we felt and heard a constant rumbling beneath our feet. Mauri located a gap under the glacier and successfully navigated us UNDER the glacier! I've been in ice caves and under glaciers dozens of times, but not like this. Five meters under the glacier, we could

*Shuksan's
thundering ice
cliffs are
melting faster
than they can
calve.*

actually see the glacier cutting the bedrock—a wedge of ice carving deep into the abyss—a raging river and I suspect big falls roaring under us—forming the headwaters of Shuksan Creek and the Baker River. The structure of the bottom of the glacier that allowed us to crawl underneath was flat—perfectly flat, as though the ice was running over a giant

planing tool with some velocity. Again, in all of my years, I've never seen this—in every other instance the glacier has had scalloped surfaces/structure(s). I ran my bare hand along the surface to experience if it really was so smooth—not so much as a ripple or groove—an incredibly powerful moment. I do not like things above me or on my six (behind me), but now there were thousands of tons of ice over my hunched body, ready to crush me like a tiny berry. Needless to say none of us loitered there.

Up and onto the glacier surface to do the mass balance and longitudinal profile. It was a banner day—perfect weather, blue skies, no smoke and rock fangs and



Mauri Peltó crawls out from under the west margin of the Lower Curtis Glacier. The glacier (20+ meters thick here) has receded laterally from where this photo was taken in two years. Note how flat the bottom of the glacier is at this location.

— © TOM HAMMOND PHOTO

ice all around us. The winter was terrible: very little snow fell and there was little in the way of outright accumulation to survive the heat of spring and summer. Most of the glacier had about 1-2 feet of snow when it should have had 1-2 meters. As well there was very little to avalanche from the upper slopes—the very lifeblood of the Lower Curtis Glacier. The central part of the glacier has continued to collapse. Since 2015 the glacier has been disintegrating along the terminus, lateral margins and indeed, even in the center. In a few decades this glacier, which measures about 50 feet thick in the central, western and lower portions (area about half-square kilometer) will cease to exist and will likely be a series of chain lakes. The glacier will remain as a group of avalanche fans along the eastern and northern portions. As we traversed to and fro, I noticed some exposed rocks on the southeast portion

of the glacier I didn't remember seeing before. Jill noted spectacular boulders striped vivid blue and green (freshly melted out) on the northwest portion of the glacier. Mauri's response: In four years, the glacier has thinned 18 meters, losing 59 feet of ice.

Water from this glacier flows through two hydroelectric dams, waters countless farms (see Skagit Tulip Festival and some of the best vegetable farms in the state) and supplies cold, clean water to the largest natural salmon runs left in the lower 48 states, and of course all of the human settlements that depend on this priceless, irreplaceable resource.

As we completed the measurements, it became evident this was the hottest day of the year. A few steps from the glacier, and the temperature shot up to the mid 80sF. We stayed on the glacier nearly until sun-

set to avoid the worst of the heat (it was about 90F in Seattle on this day—great timing!).

I suspect the lack of smoke helped keep the depression factor down—that, and it seems that Mauri, Jill and I are inured to what we're witnessing firsthand. The field team helped buoy my spirits. What a great bunch of people—young and energetic, optimistic and all with a wonderful sense of humor. Each woman brought a special quality of intelligence, passion, compassion, creativity and energy that was refreshing in an otherwise devastating scene. Special shout out to Clara, on her first major backpacking adventure. Talk about a steep learning curve!

Tuesday Aug 6

We were up early and had a great hike out filled with meaningful conversations and football picks.



Upper Curtis Glacier. Just a few years ago (and for centuries before) the seracs here were higher, thicker and more robust, regularly avalanching down to feed the Lower Curtis. Note elastic nature of glacier ice stepping down the cliffs at right of image.

— © TOM HAMMOND PHOTO

I'll end where I started: with a deep and abiding gratitude for the ability and desire to participate in the North Cascade Glacier Climate Project. I'm very thankful for the opportunity. I am also thankful to every person reading this. Your interest and support mean so much to me.

Wildlife: there was evidence of goats, but we didn't see any. I'm happy to report the Pika population has rebounded—they were all over the place, and cute as ever. Clara even had one run around her feet! It was disconcerting to hear only a couple of marmots in the scree below the pinnacles of Shuksan Arm. I have experienced ptarmigans in this area before, but not for the past five-plus years, perhaps because there has been no snow at all near the glacier. There were very few bugs considering there was plenty of water in all of the streams and seeps.

Very few blueberries this year—certainly only a handful of ripe ones. While we saw every type of wildflower, the numbers were down—no “carpeted” hillsides.

Astronomy: Sunday night was spectacular — moon set early and the Milky Way flowed right from Shuskan all the way to Kulshan and the Whulge. No meteor shower activity.

Glaciers: The average mass-balance across all glaciers is negative 1.8 meters — the biggest loss in four years and one of the three worst years in the 35 years of the project.

For more information, visit <https://glaciers.nichols.edu/>



Massive increase in logging on Mt. Baker Snoqualmie National Forest

After nearly 25 years of low levels of cutting on the Mt. Baker Snoqualmie National Forest, (MBSNF,) the holidays are over and the U.S. Forest Service is now back in the logging business in a big way. The “South Fork Stillaguamish Vegetation Management Project” will see 50 to 95 million board feet of timber cut from the South Fork Stillaguamish watershed, across as much as 65,000 acres. This massive timber sale will have devastating consequences for one of the most heavily visited valleys in the MBSNF.

The Forest Service has not done an Environmental Impact Statement on this gigantic sale, the largest in decades, instead turning out only a superficial “Environmental Assessment.” All of the acreage to be cut is within Late Successional Reserve Riparian Reserves delineated under the

NW Forest Plan. There will be 60 miles of new or reconstructed roads built, and likely the figure is much higher if unofficial roads and tracks are included. This will have very adverse consequences for the salmon and other fish populations of the South Fork Stillaguamish River. Little or no mitigation can or will be done for such extensive roading.

The Forest Service’s justification for this massive sale is the same one we have become all too familiar with: “restoration,” supposedly improving habitat for marbled murrelets and spotted owls. The Forest Service has managed to spread the belief that selective logging in second-growth forests will accelerate the development of old growth, despite mountains of evidence to the contrary. This sale will take the predicted canopy closure in logged areas

Maturing second growth forest targeted for cutting along Heather Lake trail. — KATHY JOHNSON PHOTO

down as low as 40%. What will really happen is likely to be far worse. This means it is basically a clearcut with scattered leave trees. The idea is that the leave trees will be “released” from competition, and grow more rapidly. They are essentially claiming that they know how to produce an old-growth forest faster and better than unassisted Nature.

The reality is far different. Forestry has always been much more a pseudoscience than any kind of real scientific discipline. Crude computer models are constructed to guarantee desired results. Any and all evidence contrary to what they want to

be true is ignored. The results of selective logging so far have been dismal. But the Forest Service has zero interest in looking at the realities on the ground five, ten or twenty years later.

Those results commonly include massive blowdown. Trees of coastal NW forests do not grow extensive root systems. They instead rely on the mutual protection of growing together in a stand. When these stands are taken apart by selective logging, the leave trees are suddenly left naked and exposed to the elements, and the near inevitable result is for them to start falling to the wind. In some selectively logged stands the blowdown rate approaches 100%.

Even where blowdown is not so severe, other problems arise. In many selectively logged stands, growth of dense hemlock thickets follows. These can be as dense as hundreds of thousands of stems per acre. These thickets can form a near-impenetrable mass, hindering wildlife, and taking up the water and nutrients that are supposed to accelerate the growth of the leave trees. This totally defeats the supposed goal of the logging, and puts a forest into a strange, stagnant desert-like state almost never seen in natural stands. No one knows why these hemlock thickets spring up, and the Forest Service has no interest in looking into how and why they form. It may have something to do with the unnatural half-light that occurs in many selectively logged stands.

Selective logging requires massive roading, since ground-based yarding must be used in order to maneuver cut logs around the leave trees. This results in massive soil disturbance, since tractors and “forwarders” are used to drag logs across the forest floor. The compaction and scarification from these machines of-

ten turns the ground into a horrible, churned up mess. One “benefit” that the Forest Service is touting for this sale is the bulldozing of larger trailhead parking areas, so more visitors can experience the degraded forests along trails such as those at Perry Creek, Sunrise Mine and Heather Lake. The EA states that

the Forest Service may impose closures to recreation for up to ten years. Even this supposed “benefit” is uncertain, as it depends on future grant funding.

Old-growth forests form slowly in natural conditions. Young forests gradually self-thin as trees die off individually, here and there over the years. Natural stands are not abruptly torn apart. The idea that going in and thinning down a stand all at once will speed up the formation of old growth is a crazy conceit unsupported by evidence. Only those who studiously avoid looking at its real results could possibly believe it does any good.

Unfortunately, the Forest Service has fully embraced this conceit. As Upton Sinclair once said, “it is hard to get someone to see something when their paycheck

depends on them not seeing it.” The Forest Service’s new logging drive really boils down to a massive subsidy to employ a mere handful of bureaucrats. Monetary costs for these sales, such as personnel and administration, are not counted. The environmental costs are simply ignored. It is basically a make-work program with taxpayers and the forests paying the price. Even the timber industry hardly benefits. These sales often fail to attract bids unless virtually given away.

Thinned forests look, and are, unnatural. Selective logging puts a forest in a state, and on a trajectory, never seen in nature. People do not know how to create old-growth forests faster and better than nature.

N3C is committed to stopping this craziness. If left unchecked, it will ruin almost all the second-growth forests on the MBSNF, undoing decades of recovery from the great 1950-1990 logging binge. After this massive South Fork Stillaguamish sale, the Forest Service intends to move on and do the same thing to virtually all the second growth forests of the North Fork Nooksack valley. Emboldened by the Trump administration, the Forest Service is planning a grim, ugly future for the forests of the Cascades. N3C plans to continue its opposition to this sale however it can. Let’s hope that some way can be found to stop this craziness before it ruins most—or all—the lower elevation, and heavily visited parts of the Mt. Baker Snoqualmie National Forest.

People do not know how to create old-growth forests faster and better than nature.



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Logging, cutting and the English language

By Rick McGuire

Readers of books in the English language are likely familiar with George Orwell. His *1984* and *Animal Farm* are classics, essential reading for anyone interested in society, politics, or just how people interact with one another.

Among numerous other works written during his too-brief life, *Homage to Catalonia* is a gripping page turner chronicling his experiences fighting with the anti-Franco forces during the Spanish revolution. One short work from 1945, *Politics and the English Language*, has some relevance to the way the English language has been used and abused to promote the logging of forests, and disguise the bad effects of doing so. It begins:

Most people who bother at all with the matter would admit that the English language is in a bad way, but it is generally assumed that we cannot by conscious action do anything about it. Our civilization is decadent, and our language—so the argument runs—must inevitably share in the general collapse. It follows that any struggle against the abuse of language is a sentimental archaism, like preferring candles to electric light or bansom cabs to aeroplanes.

Most of the abuses he was talking about pale in comparison to those seen today. The changes in Orwell's time were mostly unplanned. Today's abuses are often the result of conscious decisions, backed by people and corporations with very deep pockets, carried out by big public relations firms, "branding" consultants, and a news media for sale to the highest bidder. They are done to hide the realities of exploitative industries. Among their customers are the fossil fuel lobby, industrial agriculture, big pharma, and many others, a long list, including most of "the powers that be" in the U.S. and elsewhere.

Some of the most blatant examples are the work of those paid to soften the image of industrial logging. As the last remnants of ancient forests were heading for the chopping block, the timber industry realized it had a problem. It was no longer possible to hide the results of its overcutting. For years, the worst scenes of logging

were in relatively remote places seen by few. That changed as vast clearcuts spread to places like Snoqualmie Pass. A *Seattle Times* columnist wrote during those years how Interstate 90 was a 60-mile long billboard of ugly logging practices. That was, if anything, an understatement.

The timber industry's consultants knew they couldn't change the realities, but they could help their clients' image. And did they ever. First out the door was the very name *timber industry*. In the days when there were plenty of big trees, the images of crashing giants that came with the word timber were not a problem. But when they became one, *timber* went down the memory hole, replaced by *forest industry*. It's amazing how seldom the word *timber* is seen these days, and how quickly it vanished. It's proof that highly paid PR firms can sometimes be worth the money.

Next to go was the word *cut*. No one cuts down trees any more. Instead, they are *harvested*. The H word carries far better connotations, evoking scenes of gaily dressed peasant women swinging scythes under the blue skies of the vast Russian steppes. Or perhaps salt-of-the-earth Iowa farmers confidently running their big John Deere harvester-thresher combines to feed America and the world. Never mind that *harvested* also describes what happens to the body organs of condemned prisoners in China. It has been decreed that trees can no longer be *cut*, only *harvested*.

The most far reaching verbal engineering has not quite entirely been implemented yet, but is coming close. This is the transformation of the word *logging* into *restoration*. This one may not have been such a conscious decision, at least at the beginning. But it naturally follows the other two. It seems to have had its beginnings in the forests of drier areas, commonly ponderosa pine in the U.S. Many of these forests used to burn frequently but at low intensity. Fires, whether caused by lightning or intentionally set by Indians, would periodically clear out the underbrush, helping to create the attractive grassy savannahs described by early European explorers and settlers in many parts of North America.

The people who took over management of those forests from the natives decreed that all fires were bad and should be extinguished as rapidly as possible. Plenty

of people, including John Muir, predicted that this would lead to heavy fuel buildup and unnaturally hot fires.

And it did. A few years back, the Forest Service tried convincing itself and others that logging was the answer. This led to the brief adoption of another term, *fireproof*. It quickly became apparent that logging, without continual underburning, did nothing to prevent or ameliorate fires except perhaps in limited areas very close to houses, where mechanical fuel and brush clearing is practical. Claiming that logging would fireproof forests obviously had some bad implications for legal liability, so the term was quietly dropped, although the idea is still alive and healthy.

Fireproofing didn't quite catch on, but *restoration* certainly has. Almost every logging project, every timber sale, is now a restoration project. The term *timber sale* is almost extinct. East side, west side, all across the Cascades, *restoration* is now the answer to every imaginary forest "problem." And rare indeed is the forest that does not need *restoration*—even untouched, old-growth westside forests where someone has decided that there are not enough snags—or any other problem that can be dreamed up. The possibilities are endless.

Perhaps a few more words from Orwell are appropriate:

In our time it is broadly true that all political writing is bad writing. Where it is not true, it will generally be found that the writer is some sort of rebel, expressing his private opinions, and not a 'party line'. Orthodoxy, of whatever colour, seems to demand a lifeless, imitative style.

It says much about how things have changed since 1945 that lifeless, imitative style seems like a minor problem today. Not many people know much about the mechanics of forest management, or are very likely to delve into the details of it. Thus the timber industry's PR people have taken their new terms beyond mere euphemism, and seem to be succeeding at changing the language. How many people will be inclined to question anything about how the *forest industry* is *harvesting* trees to *restore* the forest?

Now that really is Orwellian.



From
Cutthroat
Pass towards
Black Peak
—MIKE ANNÉE
PHOTO



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Easy Ridge in the Northern Picketts 50 years ago, summer of 1969. This scene resulted in a four-day storm the next morning. Whatcom Peak on the left; Challenger on the right.—PAUL BERGMAN PHOTO