

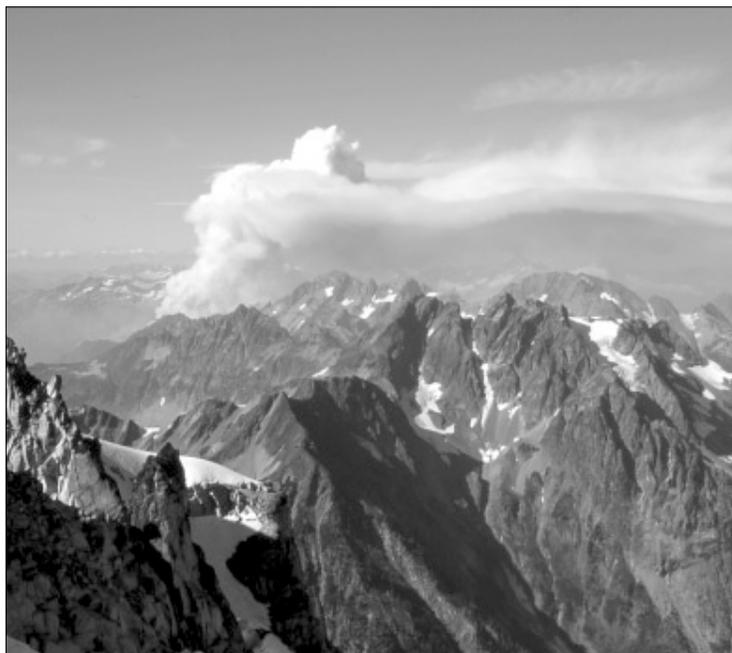
THE WILD CASCADES

THE JOURNAL OF THE NORTH CASCADES CONSERVATION COUNCIL

SPRING 2004



Above: Mount Baring from Arsenic Meadows (Ragged Ridge). Proposed Wild Sky Wilderness — KEVIN GERAGHY PHOTO



Left: Smoke from Dome Peak. — LOWELL SKOOG



Right: Backpacker's view of McGregor Mountain, Lake Chelan. — T.R. BECK

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The Wild Cascades

Journal of the North Cascades Conservation Council

EDITOR: Betty Manning

Printing by EcoGraphics

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

NCCC members receive this journal. Address letters, comments, send articles to:

The Wild Cascades Editor

North Cascades Conservation Council

University Station, Seattle, WA 98145-2980

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 legislative, legal, and public participation channels to protect the lands, waters, plants and wildlife.

Over the past third of a century the 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 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.

MEMBERSHIP

The NCCC is supported by member dues and private donations. These support publication of *The Wild Cascades* and lobbying activities. (NCCC is a non-tax-deductible 501(c)4 organization.) Membership dues for one year are: \$10 - low income/student; \$20 - regular; \$25 - family; \$50.00 - Contributing; \$100 - patron; \$1000 - Sustaining. A one-time life membership dues payment is \$500.



The North Cascades Foundation supports the NCCC's nonpolitical efforts. Donations are tax-deductible as a 501(c)3 organization. Please make your check(s) out to the organization of your choice. The Foundation can be reached through NCCC mailing address:

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Founded in 1957

SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

The President's Report

Spring 2004

By now we have all read numerous accounts of the damage to our forest roads and trails caused by the big storm late 2003. The impact on those of us who drive to the trailheads and hike on these trails will be very significant. I suspect that Congress may not be as slow as usual to provide additional funds to quickly repair the damage. As hikers, most of us would like things to get back to normal in the shortest time possible and to cause us the least inconvenience possible.

The agencies, in particular the USFS, are responding to a perceived urgency to restore our backcountry trails with some not-so-new, although controversial approaches. Trails in the Glacier Peak Wilderness probably suffered the worst overall damage. Apparently these have been singled out to receive quick attention by use of motorized equipment. In particular, the use of helicopters as a quick and safe way to accomplish the initial survey work has been proposed. It doesn't take much imagination to see that the next step will be to transport equipment, personnel, and the like into the Wilderness by helicopter. Speedy re-opening of the Pacific Crest Trail will be a focus, you can be sure. Quickly following will be the mechanical transport of bridging, gravel, and other material to speed up the process. Clearing feeder trails with chain saws will likely be part of the effort.

The Wilderness Act of 1964 is very clear that the use of motorized equipment in Wilderness is not allowed for administrative convenience. It does make an exception for emergencies. Instant gratification for hikers is clearly not an emergency.

The North Cascades Conservation Council has always supported these management provisions of the Wilderness Act. We have spoken up repeatedly when an agency seeks to declare an emergency or otherwise violate the intent of the Act. On the other hand, the NCCC is flexible enough to realize that a true emergency, such as the safety or rescue of human life, is an acceptable reason to use motorized equipment in Wilderness. Another acceptable relaxation of the "no mechanized devices" philosophy would be if there was a clear and obvious enhancement or protection of the wilderness resource. The general recreational public can perhaps be excused for not understanding the reasoning behind a hard-line "no motors" approach. An environmentalist knows better. Those persons reading this magazine should be prepared to speak up when the cry goes out, "**Damn the Torpedoes, Full Speed Ahead — Fix my trails no matter what rules need bending.**"

Marc Bardsley

Contributions Needed for North Cascades History

CHARLES EHLERT

Harvey Manning's manuscript opus, "Crisis and Conflict," is at last near publication. The book chronicles the story of the formation of the North Cascades Conservation Council, now nearly fifty years ago, the long campaign to create a North Cascades National Park and preserve the Glacier Peak Wilderness, the great fight to defeat Seattle City Light's High Ross Dam plan and the continuing battles to preserve the uniqueness of the Stehekin Valley. In these pages is the nitty-gritty of how this was all done. Many of the central figures of these struggles are gone now — Chuck Hessey, Grant and Jane McConnell, Dick Brooks, David Brower, Ray Courtney, Henry Jackson, to mention only a few. Many others labor on. They are all here. This book tells it all — the good, the bad and the ugly. As Dave Fluharty puts it, "It is our history."

To assure that it is not forgotten and is available to the environmental community, policy makers, scholars, historians, agencies and others who care about such things, the NCCC intends to publish this comprehensive history of the conservation movement in the North Cascades later this year. Board member Ken Wilcox is spearheading final editing and publication of the book, with help and guidance of other Board members.

The initial estimate of the cost of publishing a run of 10,000 copies was \$35,000. The North

Cascades Foundation, an independent 501(c)(3) organization set up to receive tax-deductible contributions and fund educational and related activities aimed at preserving the North Cascades, has made an outright grant of \$15,000 to NCCC for initial publication costs, with an additional \$5,000 to match funds raised by NCCC on a one-for-one basis. This would bring the total grant to \$20,000 and the total funds available to \$25,000 — enough, Wilcox estimates, to publish a smaller number of copies of a stripped-down version of the book. Additional funds, bringing the total budget nearer to the original \$35,000 estimate, would enable us to produce a high-quality book complete with historic maps and color as well as black-and-white images, showing readers what has been — and still is — at stake in all this sound and fury.

So NCCC needs help from members and others who care about this struggle and its story. NCCC needs to raise at least \$5,000 to secure the full \$20,000 grant, and \$15,000 to meet the original \$35,000 publication cost estimate.

There have been great successes in this long struggle. No logger's chainsaw has disturbed the old-growth quiet of the upper White Chuck River; wildflowers again carpet Cascade Pass; thousand-year-old Pacific red cedars still stand in Big Beaver Valley; and the North Cascades National Park Complex will mark its 36th year

next October — to pick out a few things that wouldn't be, but for the efforts described in these pages. But the battle is never over. With help from contributors the story of these efforts can be available to inform and inspire those who have the next watch.

Contributions may be made to either the Foundation (tax deductible) or the NCCC (not tax deductible), and in either case should be clearly marked, 'FOR PUBLICATION OF NORTH CASCADES BOOK' and sent to either —

North Cascades Conservation
Council
c/o Thomas H.S. Brucker, Treasurer
9111 SE 44th Street
Mercer Island, WA 98040

OR

North Cascades Foundation
c/o T. William Booth, Treasurer
5521 - 17th Avenue NE
Seattle, WA 98105

Selections from the pages of our proposed book: *Conflict and Crisis*

Heinrick Küster was born in the Alps of Switzerland. As Henry Custer, group leader for the U.S. Boundary Survey, he was the first European to travel the interior of the North Cascades. His journals for July and August of 1859 were not excavated from government archives until a century later, retroactively to "begin the literary history" of the range, as Harry Majors puts it, recording its "aesthetic discovery." Old-country Alpine skills and New World bushwhacking experience took him to the first ascents of twenty peaks. If not the world's first wilderness mountaineer, he surely was among the earliest to know what he was doing, and why, and to be able to write about it. "Nowhere do the Mountain masses and Peaks, present such strange, fantastic, dauntless, & startling outlines as here," wrote Custer. Unfortunately, he was very long in finding readers.



In 1899 The Mazamas, a Portland-based outing club founded in 1894 in emulation of the Sierra Club, visited Stehekin. On March 10, 1906, its directors assembled at the town of Chelan to adopt a resolution calling for a national park and perpetual game reserve in the region, described as marvelously rich in natural beauty and grandeur, possessing hundreds of unnamed snow-capped peaks and thousands of glaciers . . . the lake itself is a result of remarkable glacial work being sixty miles in length . . . the white mountain goat, or Mazama, and other noble game are found here in abundance.



Also in 1906, in January, Julian Itter, an adventurous young Canadian artist who had come to Seattle in 1904 and in 1905 had made his way up Lake Chelan to the Cascade Crest, opened an exhibition of his wilderness paintings in Seattle that caused something of a sensation. Supported by enthusiasts in the community, including the Seattle Chamber of Commerce, he set out for Washington City, the nation's capital, to propose to President Roosevelt a national park including Lake Chelan, Glacier Peak, and the area between Cascade Pass and the Skagit. He received such acclaim in Spokane and elsewhere he decided to remain in the state to enlist grassroots support. He did so, but also stirred such a bitter, slanderous attack by mining interests that he faltered and gave it up.

■ ■ ■

In 1937 and again in 1940, Grant McConnell, a member of the Wyeasters, a mountaineering club in Oregon, came uplake to climb. Memories of those trips were his spiritual support in the years his Navy destroyer bucketed around the Pacific Ocean, and never more so than on May 2, 1945, when his ship was sunk by a kamikaze off Okinawa. Home on a thirty-day survivor's leave, he and his wife, Jane, spent most of June in a cabin she had acquired for them at the foot of Si Si Ridge. In December they returned, intending to remain until his discharge pay ran out. At an expenditure rate averaging thirty-five dollars a month, they stayed three years, conceived a daughter and a son, and became full and true members of "Old Stehekin," a community that in the 1940s was very little changed since the turn of the century.

The idyll could not permanently satisfy an academic who had studied at Reed, Harvard, and, as a Rhodes Scholar, Oxford. In a mighty wrench he moved his family to Berkeley to complete his doctorate at the University of California. His thesis on agricultural policy and politics was published to such acclaim as to bring appointment to the faculty. The question then was, what to do for an encore?

"I had to pick some other topic," he wrote. "I looked around and, well, I'd been interested in the out-of-doors, and there was beginning to be quite a bit of noise . . . about [a proposed dam at] Echo Park, in Dinosaur National Monument. So I decided to examine the set of ideas that were at issue. . . ."

The resulting article appeared in the September 1954 issue of *Western Political Quarterly*, and because the research had entailed interviewing leaders of the Sierra Club, it served to hitch him to what was rapidly taking shape as the main force of New Conservation. McConnell was already acquainted with the group, as a short-term member of the Sierra Club during a brief San Francisco residence in 1941. He then met Doris and Richard Leonard (a future club president), and "a very dashing young fellow by the name of Dave Brower."

At Berkeley in the fall of 1956, McConnell taught a course on interest groups. He invited Dave Brower, as a "real live lobbyist," to address the class. McConnell then showed slides of Stehekin, and Brower was hooked. He commanded (Brower rarely made requests) McConnell to rejoin the Sierra Club, and promptly placed him on the Conservation Committee. . . .

■ ■ ■

The Conservation Committee of The Mountaineers was maturing to a vigor unmatched in the club's history. Three joint field trips with the Forest Service were held during the summer of 1955, along the White Chuck River, the Suiattle River, and the North Fork Sauk River—the major western approaches to Glacier Peak. The club was represented on these trips by Richard Brooks, chair of the subcommittee that arranged the trips, as well as Polly Dyer, Phil and Laura Zalesky, Leo Gallagher, Paul Wiseman, and Pam Olmsted. Forest Service people included Art Harrison, Supervisor of Mount Baker Forest, his recreation officer, Suiattle District Ranger Dick Woodcock, Darrington District Ranger Harold Engles, and a staffer from Region Six headquarters. Virilis Fischer, from Portland, appeared uninvited shepherding a guest, Irston Barnes of Washington City, an Auduboner and nature columnist for the *Washington Post*, who wrote glowingly about the magnificent forests and wilderness values of Glacier Peak, giving the area its first national exposure.

Each field trip had negligible value as a boundary study, but great importance as a meeting of minds—a non-meeting, rather. In fact, a confrontation. The Forest Service was startled to learn the club was dead serious in seeking a wilderness area and dismayed to find the group could not be shrugged off by a public relations exercise. The Mountaineers were stunned to hear Harrison brag up his clearcuts and praise a stand of ten-year-old second-growth as a foreground for Glacier Peak. He seemed baffled when they expressed strong preference for old growth.

Brooks did most of the talking on the trips, addressing the Forest Service in such terms as may have shocked Barnes' sensitive ears. Yet whenever Brooks paused to engulf another sandwich, Polly and Phil broke in to convey the identical message, as adamantly—if at lower decibels—that the Forest Service's intention for a boundary at the thirty-five-hundred-foot level meant little more than "wilderness on the rocks," to use the memorable phrase later coined by Dave Simons (about whom these pages will say more). Most of the old-growth forest resided below that elevation; most of the rocks above. The proposed boundary, therefore, was unacceptable to this cohesive group that planned to be in the contest for as long a run as it took. Personal and business affairs subsequently diverted Brooks from the Conservation Committee but his compatriots of the 1954–1955 period credit his tireless filibuster and sheer voice volume with keeping Glacier Peak ever before their eyes, and upon their ears.

The trips had no real impact on anybody's thinking about boundaries. The September issue of *The Mountaineer* described the purpose of the trips as "to become better acquainted with boundaries of the proposed limited area (sic)." The piece was headed, "More Study Needed on Glacier Peak."

The problem was that key members of the Conservation Committee had little or no per-

sonal acquaintance with the area. Phil and Laura Zalesky knew it well and arranged trips to "show and tell." These were the walks-and-talks that excited the committee leadership.

One of these trips concluded in a momentous serendipity. Polly Dyer and Phil and Laura Zalesky backpacked from Lucerne on Lake Chelan up Railroad Creek and down Agnes Creek to the Stehekin. In the restaurant at the boat landing, they were approached by a woman who had spotted their ice axes and asked what peaks they had been climbing. Polly explained they indeed were climbers, yet this particular trip was to study the wilderness. The woman said, "You should meet my husband, but he's seven miles up the valley." As an up-valley Stehekinite, Grant McConnell avoided the Landing during the mob scene of boat arrivals and departures, mainly coming to pick up and post letters. Jane was doing mail duty that day—that historic day—when Puget Sound conservationists first heard of the McConnells and the McConnells first heard that there were Puget Sound conservationists.

As it happened, Grant had been trying to learn if there were such, and if so, who they were and where. Rick Mack from Yakima chanced to visit the McConnells, and Grant had been picking Mack's brains for possibilities. Jane on this day was bringing Mack to the Landing to catch the boat, and as Jane was making the acquaintance of Polly, Rick came up and said (of Polly), "This is the person I was telling Grant about." The previous year Rick and Polly had met at Snoqualmie Lodge, during a meeting of the Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs. So it was that separate threads began winding together into a skein.

Back in Seattle, Polly Dyer arranged for Phil Zalesky to stage his slide show for the monthly meeting of The Mountaineers. So many of the club's trustees were in the audience that the evening amounted to a formal presentation by the Conservation Committee to the board. Leo Gallagher was so impressed that he paid Zalesky's way to the Labor Day convention of the Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs (FWOC) in the San Jacinto Mountains outside of Palm Springs, California. The slide show led Ed Wayburn, president of the FWOC, to assure Zalesky he had the strong support of the FWOC and the Sierra Club.

Phil's slide show also was a featured presentation at the dinner meeting of the first Northwest Wilderness Conference, in Portland in 1956. The main event of that dinner was the first-ever public reading of the wilderness bill that Howard Zahniser, Executive Secretary of the Wilderness Society, was drafting for Senator Hubert Humphrey, shortly before the bill was to be introduced in Congress. Also, Dave Brower received an award from Edward Graves of the National Parks Association for his efforts in the Dinosaur National Monument battle at Echo Park. And while Zahniser and Brower may have shared the spotlight at the Portland conference, the Glacier Peak proposal was by no means short-changed; this was its initial national exposure in the presence of national leaders.

The Ptarmigan Traverse — *Then and Now*



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STORY BY LOWELL SKOOG

PHOTOS BY TOM MILLER (*reproduced with permission*) AND LOWELL SKOOG

The Ptarmigan Traverse is the oldest and most famous high route in the Northwest. The first crossing of this route in July 1938 by four members of the Ptarmigan Climbing Club has become a standard in Northwest mountaineering folklore. Over thirteen days, Calder Bressler, Bill Cox, Ray Clough and Tom Myers pioneered the entire crest route from Dome Peak to Cascade Pass and made many first ascents. Yet the Ptarmigans, soon scattered by World War II, never published their story. For many years, how they made their journey and what they saw remained a mystery.

In 1953 five climbers, Dale Cole, Bob Grant, Mike Hane, Erick Karlsson and Tom Miller, calling themselves the “What is South of Cascade Pass Anyway?” Expedition, set aside two weeks in September to explore this “mysterious, legendary maze.” They traversed from Cascade Pass to Dome Peak, reversing the direction taken by the Ptarmigans, and recorded their journey in *The Mountaineer* in 1953. More significantly, Tom Miller returned with dozens of fine black and white photographs of the glaciers, lakes, and crags along the route. Ten years later, as conservationists fought for a North Cascades National Park, Miller lent his pictures from the Ptarmigan Traverse and several other trips to *The Mountaineer*. A book of his photographs, *The North Cascades*, was published in 1964.

The book was a success. Not only did it help establish the National Park in 1968, it inspired a generation of Northwest climbers. It was the first picture book to showcase the peaks and glaciers of the North Cascades from a climber’s perspective. While the Ptarmigans in 1938 made their traverse a campfire legend, the 1953 party and *The North Cascades* made it a classic. Printed only once, the book soon became hard to find. Young climbers who started exploring the North Cascades in the 1970s, before modern guidebooks were available, jealously

thumbed through the book in their friends’ collections or on library shelves.

Photographer James Martin, who published his own collection of pictures in the 1999 book, *North Cascades Crest* (Sasquatch Books), wrote: “I remembered a shot from Cache Col ... a black-and-white photo of three crew-cut young men sorting food in the morning sun... From the cloistered gloom of my high school library, these young men seemed like gods, American versions of legendary alpinists Bonatti and Buhl. I prayed I would someday have the fortitude to follow in their footsteps.”

My own experience was similar. One of my climbing mentors showed me the book in the mid-1970s and for years I hoped to find a copy of my own. Two friends gave my wife and me a copy as a wedding present and we have cherished it ever since. In the years since I first saw the book, I’ve crossed the Ptarmigan Traverse several times on foot and by ski.

The summer of 2003 was the driest in over a century in the Northwest, and one of the warmest as well. From the Alps, reports of record heat and disintegrating glaciers brought worldwide attention to the effects of global warming. Reading these stories, I recalled that 2003 was the fiftieth anniversary of the 1953 Ptarmigan Traverse by Tom Miller and his friends. I nurtured a desire to retrace the route and see what changes had occurred in fifty years, especially to the glaciers. Tom Miller graciously provided me with xerox copies of the pictures he took on his trip, including photos never published. Phil Fortier and Matt Peters, two avid photographers, agreed to join me. Finally Tom Miller’s son Brian joined us at the last moment. Brian is a strong and active climber, but had never done the traverse before. Together, we made a very compatible party.

We planned our trip over Labor Day weekend. The 1953 party also started on Labor Day,

packing 150 pounds of food to sustain the five men for fifteen days. Dropped off at the end of the Cascade River road, they would have to find their way home by hitch-hiking. They hiked to Cascade Pass the first day, then continued over Cache Col to Kool-Aid Lake on day two and climbed Hurry-up Peak.

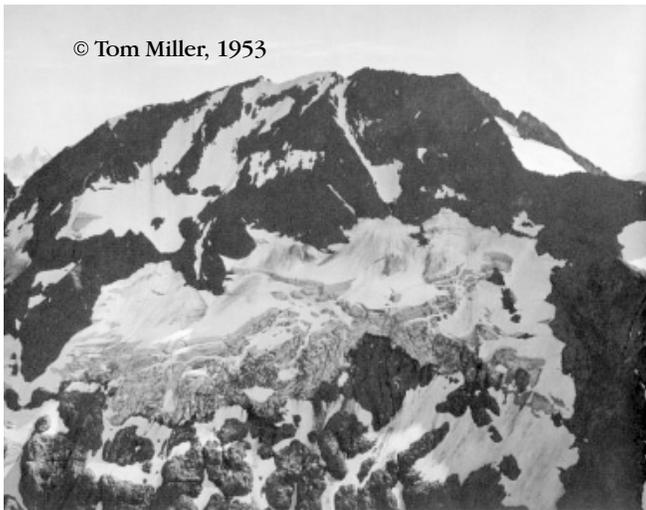
We carried lightweight gear such as Gore-tex tents, aluminum crampons and freeze-dried food and packed for only five days. Thanks to our lighter loads, we reached Kool-Aid Lake and Hurry-up Peak in a single day. I doubt that our faster pace reflected any weakness in Tom Miller’s group. Had our places been exchanged, they probably would have hiked circles around us.

On our second day we traversed from Kool-Aid Lake to Red Ledge, where we encountered a snowpatch that required donning crampons. This began a ritual repeated many times dur-



© Tom Miller, 1953

Climbers at Cache Col.



© Tom Miller, 1953



© Lowell Skoog, 2003

These pictures show the north face of Spider Mountain. The Spider Glacier covered roughly the same area in both pictures but the surrounding snowfields were almost gone after the

warm, dry summer of 2003. The snow gullies of the north face, first climbed in the 1970s, were also in poor condition.

ing the trip—stopping to put on crampons to cross hard, late-season snow, often just a few hundred feet wide. We roped up on the Middle Cascade Glacier and climbed to Spider-Formidable Col, where we had a fine view of Sentinel Peak and Le Conte Glacier.

It seemed fitting that Brian Miller should pose for my camera on the rocks of Spider Col as I tried to recreate one of my favorite pictures from his father's book. I found it impossible to frame the background scenery through the col exactly as in the 1953 photo, probably because the glacier where I was standing had become thinner. A step-ladder would have been necessary to duplicate the shot.

Tom Miller's party camped just south of the col and climbed Spider Mountain and Mount Formidable the next day. We chose to leave the rotten rock of Spider for another day, and climbed Mount Formidable enroute to a camp at Yang Yang Lakes, which were named by the 1953 group. Again we compressed two of our predecessors' travel days into one.

At Yang Yang Lakes we met another party of two, friends we knew from Seattle, who had hiked all the way from the Cascade River road that day without climbing any peaks. This was the surest sign of change since 1953. Historically, the first three parties to cross the traverse spanned almost twenty years. Today, more than twenty parties may make the trip in a single summer. Meadows along the route are crossed by a well defined path. Campsites are also well established, especially near the lakes. Fortunately, the campsites are clean and travellers have made an effort to tread lightly upon the land.

The next morning we climbed through bluffs to the ridgeline below Le Conte Mountain, which offered a panorama worthy of a scene in "The Sound of Music". We dropped our backpacks and scrambled up Le Conte. Here we saw the most dramatic change from 1953. The South Cascade Glacier, which occupies a hanging valley below



© Tom Miller, 1953



© Lowell Skoog, 2003

Two climbers - fifty years apart - admire the view of Sentinel Peak and Le Conte Glacier from Spider-Formidable Col. The Le Conte Glacier covered roughly the same area in 2003 as it did in 1953 and additionally had a small snout extending over the cliffs on the east side. The narrow snout extended to the valley bottom in the 1980s but has been receding since then.

the peak, has shrunk to a shadow of its former self. Our view of the scene was marred by smoke from forest fires burning at both ends of the Ptarmigan Traverse. Two hours later a breeze picked up and cleared away the smoke, but by then we were too far away to retake pictures.

The only advantage the 1953 party had over the original Ptarmigans was the knowledge that a route existed between Cascade Pass and Dome peak, if they could find it. Immediately south of Le Conte Mountain, they crossed the divide hoping for an easy descent to the South Cascade Glacier. Instead they spent several tense hours “on the steep till of an old lateral moraine, cutting steps in hard-baked clay, clinging to boulders and pebbles imbedded more or less firmly in the slope, and contemplating the result of a fall, which would surely result in a dirty death by abrasion.” As compensation, when they reached the head of the glacier they discovered three beautiful lakes to the south, which they named White Rock Lakes. The next day they climbed back up to the glacier with light packs and climbed Sentinel and Old Guard Peaks.

With the benefit of guidebooks and the accumulated knowledge of a generation of climbers, we avoided the unpleasant descent to the South Cascade Glacier, staying east of the crest until Le Conte Glacier and then crossing to the South Cascade next to Sentinel Peak. We dropped our packs and climbed Sentinel as we rounded its west flank, then continued to White Rock Lakes for our third camp.

From White Rock Lakes the 1953 party traversed to the west portion of Dana Glacier, climbed Spire Point, then continued to a camp below the SW summit of Dome Peak. They spent two days climbing Dome and several unclimbed peaks nearby. With less time avail-



© Tom Miller, 1953

Our party arrived at White Rock Lakes just as the sun dipped below the skyline, so I was not able to match the lighting of Tom Miller's 1953

able we chose Dome Peak as our last summit and debated whether to reach it from the lakes by a direct route through Dana-Dome Col or the conventional route past Spire Point and across the west flank from Itswoot Ridge. We settled on the latter route, both to shorten our final day and to avoid hard ice between the two Dana Glacier segments, which could be unpleasant with aluminum crampons.

We crossed Spire Col to Itswoot Ridge and set up camp on the ridge around noon. Then we scrambled with light packs across the slopes west of Dome Peak and up the Dome Glacier to the summit. From the top we could see fires burning on a shoulder above Sulphur Creek



© Lowell Skoog, 2003

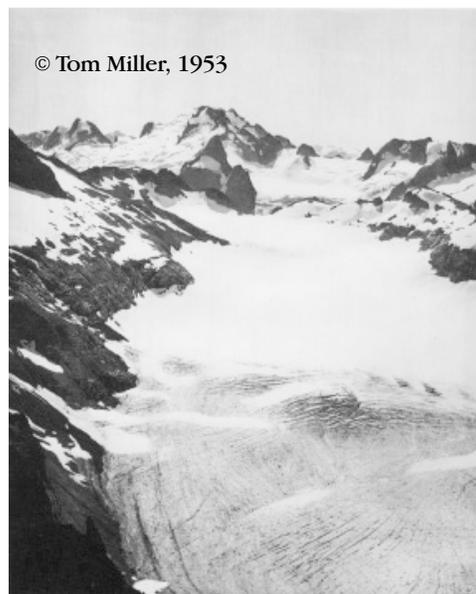
photo. The Dana Glacier in the background covered roughly the same area in 2003 as in 1953, but may have thinned somewhat.

and sending smoke over Sinister Peak and the Chickamin Glacier. To the north, another fire on the slopes of Johannesburg Mountain pumped smoke into the sky until it condensed in a billowing cloud of white vapor and sent a smokey banner across the Cascades to eastern Washington.

After returning to our camp on Itswoot Ridge, we cooked supper and watched the sunset bathe Dome and Glacier Peaks in golden light. I'd brought a story about the original Ptarmigans and read it to the group by headlamp as the alpenglow faded to starlight. Our fifth and final day required simply a long walk down the Bachelor and Downey Creek trails to our car.

In 1953, the end of the traverse was not so easy. The Bachelor Creek trail had long since vanished in brush so Cole and Hane, who had to leave early, bushwacked out Sulphur Creek to the Suitttle River, the shortest route to civilization. Grant, Karlsson and Miller packed east over Dome Peak to the Chickamin Glacier and down to Blue Lake below Agnes Peak. After a day of rain, they descended Icy Creek and the West Fork of Agnes Creek to the Stehekin River. Karlsson advised future parties against this route, but offered: “If anyone is interested in obtaining information on hanging valleys, waterfalls, slide alder, whip willow, and the latest beaver dam projects on the West Fork, we will be glad to inform him on such matters.”

Despite this struggle, Miller, Karlsson and friends soon forgot about the hardships and savored the rewards of the traverse. “There are not enough adjectives in the English language to describe the wonderful country we saw,” wrote Karlsson. “We most heartily invite you to make a trip into this area.” In the years since their historic trip, hundreds of climbers have followed in their footsteps. Let us hope that in



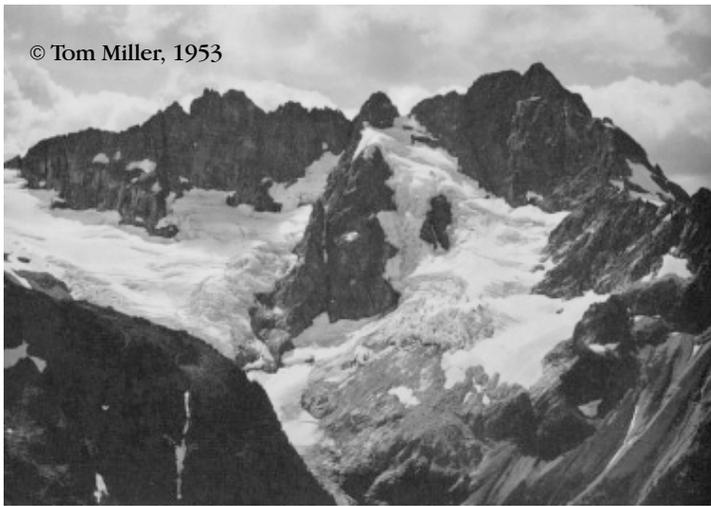
© Tom Miller, 1953

The most dramatic change along the Ptarmigan Traverse has been the South Cascade Glacier. The loss of glacier area and volume is unmistakable in the 2003 photo on

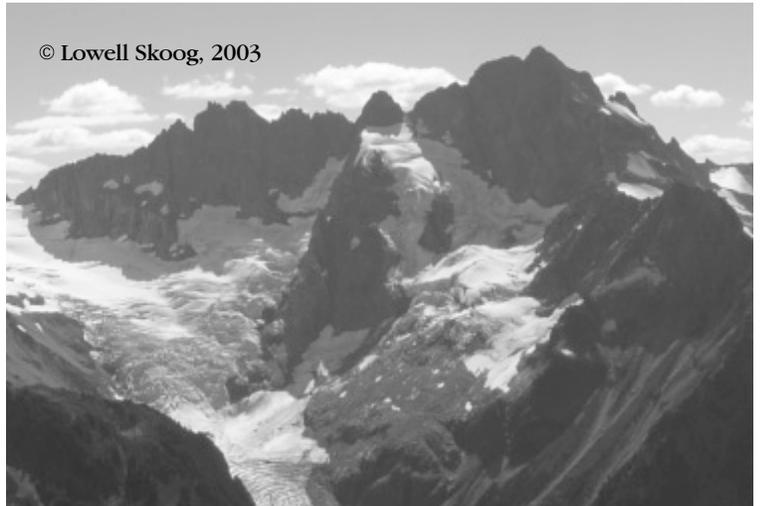


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the right, despite smoke from forest fires, which reduces the visibility. Note the small pinnacle at the lower left corner of both pictures, which confirms similar framing.



© Tom Miller, 1953



© Lowell Skoog, 2003

These photos, taken at slightly different locations near Cache Col, show only small changes in the glaciers. The Formidable Glacier (right of the rock buttress) had thinned somewhat by 2003 and was barely

connected to the Middle Cascade Glacier on the left. The snout of the Middle Cascade Glacier is not visible in either photo.



© Lowell Skoog, 2003

The smoke on our 2003 Ptarmigan Traverse was caused by fires like this one, started by lightning several weeks earlier. The smoke subsided at night and increased during the afternoon heat, sometimes erupting dramatically as in this view from Dome Peak.

another fifty years the Ptarmigan Traverse will not be too much different than it was in 1953.

Lowell Skoog is a lifelong climber, skier, and ardent conservationist. He has done the Ptarmigan five times, three on skis. A member of the Mountaineers History

Committee, he is working on a history of non-lift skiing in the Northwest. He is also a longtime member of the North Cascades Conservation Council.

Check www.alpenglow.org for articles, mountain pictures, and links.

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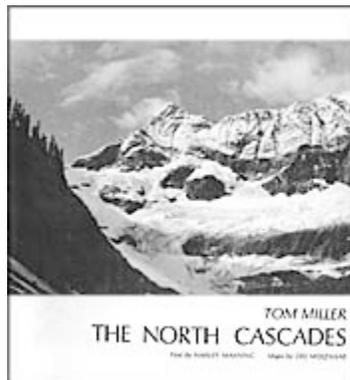
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These sources are available at The Mountaineers Library in Seattle.





HARVEY'S BURN

A party of new graduates from Harvard Medical School came west in 1985 to do hikes praised in our writings, notably the Chelan Lakeshore Trail. They were horrified one morning by the sudden eruption in flame of the Meadow Creek forest in which they were camped. The newspapers reported the story. I also heard a dramatic rendition on the *Lady of the Lake* while passing the neatly scorched hillside. The “talker,” engaged by the Boat Company to educate tourists about disasters wreaked by the North Cascades Conservation Council, gleefully quoted the Harvards, “We were doing just what the book said.”

The book was *Backpacking: One Step at a Time*, which soon after 1972 publication became, and for decades remained, a bestseller on backpacking. What the book says (page 34) is “. . . Dig a small hole. . . in the ‘biological disposal’ soil layer. . . there remains the problem of the toilet paper. . . a lighted match quickly eliminates most of it. . .”

If the Harvards minded the caution (“. . . if the spot is not tinder-dry. . .”) the papers didn’t say, nor did the “talker,” who was content to add that the book “was written by a famous environmentalist well-known in Stehekin.”

Since I was in the audience, it would have been simple courtesy to let me take a bow. He didn’t so much as mention my name. That hurt. Bill Longwell, Chief Ranger of the Issaquah Alps Trails Club, sympathized. He crafted two handsome signs and installed one. I did the other. In April 2004 my comrade of the Elderly Birdwatchers, T.R. Beck, took this photo.



Stehekin land exchange lawsuit filed

Seeking to reshape the National Park Service's failed land management policy in Stehekin, the NCCC has filed suit to stop the latest disastrous land trade the Park has proposed.

As we reported in a previous Wild Cascades, the National Park Service has failed to establish any sensible plan for dealing with private land in Stehekin and instead has adopted a policy of appeasement of private property owners. The NPS has rejected outright land purchase and instead has embraced land trades. The policy is an invitation to scams. With private land for purchase in Stehekin in short supply, much of what remains is swamp-land, cliff land, or yearly flood plain. But because the Park Service has identified this sort of land as precisely what it wants to acquire, you can buy such unbuildable land, threaten nasty development, and extort better land in trade from the Park.

In the current case, the land owner did not have to make any such threat and in fact has never applied for building permits on his land. He does, however, happen to belong to the dominant Stehekin clan, with whom Park Superintendent Bill Paleck seems to want to get

on. According to the Park Service, there are no documents on file about the plans for this land trade; it appears to have been arranged casually over coffee. The land owner bought the parcel just months after the Park issued its list of parcels it was willing to trade. Yet this trade would turn over to private development the beautiful, pristine woodland that defines a visitor's entry into the Stehekin Valley and forms a crucial wildlife corridor between valley and the shore of Lake Chelan.

NCCC members responded critically to the shoddy Environmental Assessment on the land trade, but the Park issued a Finding of No Significant Impact and announced it was going ahead with the deal. The Park at first refused to release the appraisals of the two parcels in question, even after NCCC and the Western Land Exchange Project filed a Freedom of Information Act request. NCCC and the WLEP appealed the refusal and won. Those appraisals turned out to be odd documents, magically producing identical values for the two properties, even though the public land is 7 acres, the private parcel 5 acres, of which a portion is underneath the Stehekin River.

The legal complaint, drawn up by veteran

environmental lawyer Steve Volker, formerly with the Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund/Earth Justice and now in private practise, charges the Park with failing to consider all options to protect the private land from development, most importantly the option of seeking funds to buy the property outright. It also failed to show that the public good was served through the land trade. The Park has treated its identification of land trades as one possible tool in its arsenal to mean that it can do any land trade at all. But in fact any land trade has to serve the public interest by offering the best way to protect the wildness of the North Cascades National Park Complex.

If you'd like to donate to the legal fund for this case, please send checks to the North Cascades Foundation, with "Stehekin litigation" in the memo line.

North Cascades Foundation
c/o T. William Booth, Treasurer
5521 - 17th Avenue NE
Seattle, WA 98105

—CAROLYN MCCONNELL

IDEAS WHOSE TIMES MIGHT COME (?)

When the UW built a floating walkway through the marsh from Foster's Island to the Ship Canal signs were installed: "SPEED LIMIT 1/2 MILE AN HOUR." Partly because the walkway was too fragile to withstand heavy pounding. Mainly, though, because the purpose of the walkway was to let the birds be watched, the flowers sniffed, by humans who came for these purposes, not for "the loneliness of the long distance runner" nor the short-distance "runner's high." As Martha would say, these are "good things," but not the only things, and not in all places at all times for all humans the best things.

The Four-Minute Mile was a Holy Grail, as now is the Three-Minute-and Fifty-One-and-Two-Tenths-Seconds Mile. The Olympic Games begin with an inspiring Parade of the Nations, strikingly costumed athletes proudly bearing the flags under which their compatriots proudly fight wars. Occasionally an event of the games captures our imaginations, such as the trials and triumphs of a bobsled team from a Caribbean nation where snow never ever has fallen.

Could there be a shift in Homo Sapiens Universal Paradigm from Fast to Slow? Or at least, Slower? The Concorde is now in museums. That's a start. But the Cougar Mountain Grand Prix is staged every weekend night after the bars close, and we in our 200-meter hut wake to

tires squealing on the Milk Can Turn, where the Newcastle Road switchbacks up the Precipice. (A dairy-farmer's truck was going too fast and spilled the cans that were carrying the morning's milking to the creamery. Commuters en route to jobs found the gravel of the Turn all white, milk-white.)

A favorite local entertainment for folks in our area, returning from church on a Sunday morning, is to take the Klein Hill Road, built by the Willow Crest Community Club (by hand) when King County engineers quailed. From the signs, "SPEED LIMIT 5 MPH," worshippers look over the brink to the night's non-finishers.



A scholar of wildness once described to me a giant step taken by the (then) Soviet Union beyond our Wilderness Act/National Park Act, setting aside vast expanses of forest and other lands and waters from human entry. The details have escaped my memory and I've never heard of similar wildland dedications for scientific purposes elsewhere.

During the International Geophysical Year (IGY) the snowmen were given temporary rights by the National Park Service to establish a temporary station on the Blue Glacier of Mount Olympus. Some of our folks were wary. Let's see, when was the IGY? Half a century ago? Last I heard the station had been joined

by a couple-three other equally non-temporary stations. One of the snowmen, a good buddy of mine, told of a serendipitous use of the research hut. Academics being wooed by the UW are romanced in a way impossible for competitor institutions of higher learning. Chopper in, ski the Blue, perhaps "summit" the peak. Then steaks and beer, and wine (no women unless the woo-ee is one) and song, and chopper home to tenure.

Not the same direction as the giant step of the Soviets. But who am I to whine? The time Dick Brooks and I were blasted out of White Rock Lakes (the second time, the trip where our tarp was not merely de-grommeted but fatally shredded) and we hoped at best to get from the toe of the South Cascade Glacier to forest in the Cascade River valley, by happy chance the Glacier Wallah hut was currently occupied by Wendell Tangborn and his USGS crew. As the September 1 snows piled two feet deep on the outside we were pleased as punch to be inside with the steaks and beer.

The Soviet-type idea is stirring here. Mike Vandeman says in a recent e-mail: "I am working on creating wildlife habitat that is off-limits to humans ('pure habitat'). Want to help?"

Communicate directly with Mike: <http://home.pacbell.net/mjvande>

—H.M.

Scott Silver of Wild Wilderness ferrets out the flood of rascalities that the Malefactors of Great Wealth are attempting to ram through/sneak through/backdoor through Congress. For a full picture of industry-backed efforts to motorize, commercialize, and privatize America's public lands, go to the Internet: www.wildwilderness.org

Politics and the Fee Demo Carbuncle

SCOTT SILVER

Authorized in 1996 as a rider to the Interior Appropriations Bill, the Recreation Fee Demonstration program was to have been a three-year test. Seven years and many extensions later fee-demo still festers, threatening public lands and wild places with a sepsis Ed Abbey called 'Industrial Tourism' and 'Wreckreation'.

The good news is, this issue may be resolved before the end of the year. The bad news is, it may not be resolved to your liking. For better or worse, fee-demo is in political play with legislators hoping to resolve this issue before they adjourn. Toward this goal, Congress has recently held three fee-demo hearings. The Senate has already passed legislation that would make recreation fees permanent for the National Park Service only (S.1107) while a more wide-ranging and much more harmful bill (H.R.3283), received minimal support in the House.

Meanwhile, the Bush Administration is applying maximal pressure to ensure that permanent interagency fee authority is granted to six federal agencies. Likewise, the recreation industry, lead by the American Recreation Coalition, is pressuring Congress to authorize an entirely new 'Phase Two' demonstration program: a program of 6-year duration intended to maximally commercialize, privatize and motorize the Great Outdoors.

To complicate the situation, several powerful Western legislators have emerged in strong opposition to charging basic access fees for use of the public lands while several Eastern legislators are lobbying for enhanced fee authority to support evermore Disneyfied outdoor recreation and tourism. Some legislators are con-

cerned that fee-demo discriminates against low income persons and creates a barrier separating the public from their lands. Others look favorably upon the possibility of selling recreation products as an alternative to resource extraction. Some are eager to see fee-demo bring about increased recreational development and public-private partnerships. Others are insisting upon solid guarantees that fee-demo will not be used to perpetuate the "build it and they will come" attitude which pervades the land management agencies.

The motorized recreation community speaks with many voices. While a growing number of users and user groups oppose the pay-to-play concept, most industry associations actively support fee-demo, believing that the more economic value that can be attributed to their sports, the more access motorized recreation will be granted.

The non-motorized recreation community is no less conflicted. Those who enjoy the public lands have witnessed the failure of fee-demo to produce meaningful benefits. They have seen congressionally allocated funding disappear only to be replaced with revenues generated by fees. On the other hand, organizations which benefit from Congressional largess or look upon themselves as 'agency partners' passively accept fee-demo, fearing that to oppose the program might cost them a seat at the table or a share of the spoils.

The environmental community is more cohesive on this issue. Over 200 grassroots organizations are opposed to fee-demo, though many of the big greens have failed to weigh in one way or the other. The Sierra Club and American Lands Alliance are among those national organizations that have opposed fee-demo from the earliest days.

In spite of this confused and confusing situation, the fate of recreation user fees may soon be settled. Whether it is settled to your satisfaction could depend upon whether you have made your desires known.

As I write these words, House and Senate staffers are trying to draft compromise language that will be acceptable to all parties. Chances are low that their bill will be as bad as H.R.3283 or as good as S.1107. Chances are low that the Bush Administration or the commercial recreation industry will get all they want. Chances are low that the wilderness community will get exactly what it wants or that the non-motorized recreation community will do any better. But the chances are high that some fee legislation will be passed this year and the chance of that legislation being something you can live with can be increased by your participation in the political process.

Every person who cares about wildness should contact their Congressman and both Senators to tell them why they oppose fee-demo. But please show some sensitivity and restraint. Telling your conservative official that you oppose fee-demo because it confers advantage to high-impact recreational uses may not be the right tack to take. Calling the program "double taxation" and saying how the federal agencies have mismanaged the fees they've collected and how the costs of overhead, collection and administration have negated the value of the program will likely be far more effective.

The fee-demo program is not the beauty-spot its ideological and profit-motivated promoters claim it to be. It is a blight upon the face of public land management. The longer this program is allowed to fester, the greater are the risks of its infection spreading. And where it is true that in polite circles you do not point to such blemishes, in political circles the rules of engagement require that you do. In politics, decisions are made by those who show up and no-shows suffer the consequences.

THE SEATTLE-WALLA WALLA TOLL ROAD

Seattle pioneers made a start at construction of the first road over the Cascades in 1859, aborted by the Civil War. In 1865 boosters subscribed \$2500 to clear a Snoqualmie Pass Trail-Wagon road, and this was extended nearly to the pass, though actual crossings were so rare that one made in 1872 rated newspaper attention. The government proving apathetic, in 1883 A. A. Denny and H. L. Yesler rallied fellow townboomers to a demonstration of that good ol' "Seattle Spirit" and their Seattle-Walla Walla Train and Wagon Road Company opened the Seattle-Walla Walla Toll Road, the first dependable cross-Cascades wheelway. There was little call for it when built, less after completion of the Northern Pacific Railroad through Stampede Pass, and in 1892 the 6.2 miles of 14-foot right-of-way up Grouse Ridge were signed over to King County. Trees fell, creeks gullied, weeds grew. But time was marching (wheeling) on and in 1905 the first cars crossed Snoqualmie Pass, helped here and there by ferry, teams of horses, and shoulders to the wheel. The 1909 automobile race from New York to Seattle gave the race route a boost. Soon everybody was Sunday-driving in Model Ts and Merry Oldsmobiles, a nation of Barney Oldfields and Mr. Toads (of Toad Hall).

(Future issues of *The Wild Cascades* will have little vignettes of pedestrianism-environmentalism on the route of the 1883 toll road.)

A Selection of scams currently in progress

Purchasing a National Park Pass from retailers

If a National Park Pass is purchased directly from the NPS, the agency gets \$50 from which is then subtracted the costs of collection including overhead, administration, etc. What remains from your \$50 goes, in theory, to benefit the NPS. If a pass is purchased through a private vendor, the NPS still has basically the same costs but it rarely receives the same \$50. That's a problem for you and for the agencies.

One suggestion is to never purchase a recreation pass from any private vendor unless you know that vendor is giving every cent you've paid directly to the federal agencies. When you become completely disgusted with the ongoing commercialization of your great outdoors, consider giving the whole scene a miss. Stop purchasing the products these companies are selling and PERHAPS the Corporate Takeover of Nature can yet be stopped.

SAME OLD, SAME OLD

Great Outdoors Week, the annual hullaballoo coordinated by the American Recreation Coalition (ARC), interests the North Cascades Conservation Council and companion organizations.

See "Types and Techniques of Privatization," <http://www.privatization.org>.

Great Outdoors Week is supported by more than 30 recreation companies. The usual suspects. President Bush extols USA Freedom Corps, the new volunteerism initiative.

The president of the ARC, Derrick Crandall, has "bulleted" these privatization tools:

*Public-Private Partnerships (as in Yosemite Valley)

*Volunteerism (as in hard-hatting for free parking)

*User fees (Fee Demo)

ON VOLUNTEERISM

For the first time, all National Public Lands Day volunteers who work at a site managed by five federal agencies will receive a coupon good for a "fee-free" day at any site managed by the agencies. Those agencies, which have entry fees, are the Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and U.S. Forest Service.

The free entry day was initiated by National Public Lands Day and co-sponsored by Take Pride in America, a national partnership that

aims to seek, support, and recognize volunteers.

The "Take Pride in America" campaign is not what it appears to be. TPIA promotes privatization through volunteerism. It, like the Recreation Fee Demonstration program itself, is the creation of the American Recreation Coalition

- The five agencies that will be issuing these interchangeable access vouchers do not have interagency authority with respect to Fee-Demo. Furthermore, the Army Corps is not currently part of the fee-demonstration program, though the lobbyists of the American Recreation Coalition are working hard to pass legislation that would grant this authority (HR 3283).

- For the Federal Government to pay citizens for their labor with a voucher that allows that worker to access his or her public lands, is reprehensible. This method of payment is being seriously contemplated in legislation (HR 3283) as the "solution" to the problem created when recreation user fees discriminate against lower income and working Americans.

- Being compensated for such labor with something of value is not "volunteerism". The \$1-2/hour rate of exchange being offered to "volunteers" violates minimum wage and workers-compensation laws. This method of getting poor people to work on the cheap is an "outsourcing/privatization" tool of the kind favored by the current Administration.

FEE DEMO

Fee-Demo is not about the few bucks paid at the trailhead. It's not about a couple of thousand or hundred thousand in revenues collected at a particular recreation site. It's certainly not about sweet smelling toilets — though from listening to the USFS you'd believe toilet maintenance was driving the entire program. Fee-Demo is about something much bigger. Ultimately, and to many of Fee-Demo's proponents, it is about the "Privatization of Government" "The Corporate Takeover of Nature"... Perhaps Fee-Demo is really about something BIGGER than that.

The more things change the more they stay the same

Philipo Tomaso Marinetti called himself "the caffeine of Europe." The front page of the February 20, 1909 *Le Figaro* published his Futurist Manifesto:

"Speed is at the heart of Futurist morality. One must prosecute, lash, torture all those who sin against speed.

"Speed is 'pure,' the new good; slowness 'unclean,' the new evil.

"Speed is the synthesis of courage in action, aggressive and warlike. Slowness is stagnant prudence.

"Speed is the scorn of obstacles, the desire for the new and unexplored, modernity, hygiene. Slowness is the immobile adoration of obstacles, nostalgia for the already seen, rancid romanticism of the wild, wandering poet and long-haired bespectacled, dirty philosopher."

Marinetti met Mussolini in 1915 and when it was formed joined the Fascist Party. He later died.

(In his novel, *Slowness*, Milan Kundera says, "Speed is the form of ecstasy the technical revolution has bestowed on man." He decries the "ecstatic" speed of the man in a machine — the artificial annihilation of time. "There is a secret bond between slowness and memory, between speed and forgetting." The politics of speed are those of a world forever overseen by television cameras, a world of instant forgetting.)

(In the May, 1998 *Harper's Magazine*, Marc Kingwell concludes his article, "Fast Forward: Our High-Speed Chase to Nowhere":

"While the velocities go up, our mortality remains unchanged. No matter how quickly you move, death drives the fastest car on the highway. In the end, death always does the overtaking. Our desire to escape the vile earth necessarily ends with us buried in it.")

— H.M.

NCCC Positions on Current Forest Service and National Park Service Environmental Assessments

National Park Service Environmental Assessment

Protection of the Stehekin Valley Road in the Vicinity of McGregor Meadows, NCNPC — March 2004

Upon review of the EA for the Stehekin Valley road and McGregor Meadows, substantially impacted by the most recent flooding and natural re-routing of the Stehekin River, it is apparent that whether Alternatives A, B, or C are adopted, the Stehekin River will continue to change its course, resulting in flooding. Recurrence intervals, whether 100 years or 500 years, should no longer be depended upon in predicting what the river might do.

The Stehekin River cannot be permanently contained by whatever structures may be employed.

The logical choice is Alternative A, the Environmentally Preferred Alternative.

However, recognizing ten of the twelve private properties within the affected area are currently developed, we can, at this time, concur in Preferred Alternative B.

NCCC makes two requests. First, that the NPS develop a comprehensive river management plan for the whole lower Stehekin river basin so that management actions in one location do not simply cause problems downstream. This is the only step that would be in conformance with the NPS 2000 Flood Plain Management Policies to:

Protect, preserve, and restore the natural resources and functions of flood plains;

Avoid the long- and short-term environmental effects associated with occupancy and modification of floodplains; and

Avoid direct and indirect support of floodplain development and actions that could adversely affect the natural resources and functions of floodplains or increase flood risks.

In the long run, it is evident the Stehekin River's natural coursing, with associated flooding, is confirming the original goal for the Stehekin Valley to retain its pre-1960s low level of human habitation: To be a perpetual "jewel" at the head of Lake Chelan.

— DAVE FLUHARTY, NCCC BOARD

National Park Service Environmental Assessment

Projects to "Enhance Recreational Opportunities in Ross Lake National Recreation Area, April 2004."

This is a difficult Environmental Assessment and the set of alternatives to consider. There are a variety of issues other than strict environmental impact assessment, which cloud the available choices.

Key to the FERC process in Project 553 settlement was agreement among the intervenors and SCL that we would mitigate for continuing impacts of the Skagit River Project. Cost of that mitigation would be borne by the utility. A number of trail projects may already have been constructed under this provision.

The question is, how much funding is left? This is important with respect to scaling the project to the objectives and funding. Without detailed cost accounting for each of the other alternatives in comparison to the Alternative A, the public is left in the dark and is less able to comment objectively.

1. NCCC is in agreement that Alternative A [Construct Hozomeen Lake/Desolation Peak Trail] would represent strong negative impacts on Wilderness environments and should be rejected.

Because this alternative is the one envisioned in the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission

[FERC] - Seattle City Light [SCL] Project Settlement Agreement it would be useful for the National Park Service to describe more fully the objectives to be served by that construction and the amount of funding reserved for that activity.

2. The EA does seem to identify properly Alternative G. [Improve the Desolation Peak Boat-in Trailhead] as environmentally preferred alternative.

Alternative G seems to be primarily lakeshore, protection, restoration and reduction of continuing impacts of waterborne access, whereas all of the other options require blasting, tree and vegetation cutting or construction inside Wilderness, etc. The issue of water access and camping, however, is addressed in another lakeshore mitigation package. Thus, this Alternative would not fit under a trails mitigation alternative. Further, by making access easier, the efforts to manage for Wilderness experience in the Desolation Peak area would be diminished. Therefore, it is not clear that Alternative G is an appropriate project for consideration as trail mitigation.

If the NPS pursues this alternative, it should,

at a minimum assess the impact on visitation in the Desolation Area and it should consider ways to manage boat traffic between non-motorized and motorized use of any facilities. Day-use by motorized boats would likely increase and this may displace non-motorized access if tie-up and landing space is limited. Thus, the problems of shore erosion and safety may not be addressed.

Foremost, must be the consideration of Wilderness impact. Putting in an additional dock on the lakeshore adds to the continuing decline of the wild and scenic character of Ross Lake NRA [especially at full pool]. Selecting another site would put the NPS in a better position with respect to liability for any safety problems — especially if a sign were posted advising of safety issues and notifying others of alternatives.

Due to lack of information on all aspects of the Alternatives put forth, NCCC does not have a preferred Alternative. We have brought up important questions regarding the NPS preferred Alternative that need to be answered by the NPS.

— DAVE FLUHARTY, NCCC BOARD

Forest Service Environmental Assessment

Forest Service proposal to use helicopters within wilderness areas for surveying and reconstruction purposes.

The NCCC opposes the use of helicopters within the Glacier Peak Wilderness area, or adjacent wilderness areas, for surveying or repair work of damage to trails and bridges due to the heavy flooding of October, 2003.

The surveying or rebuilding of a trail or bridge can hardly be viewed as an emergency, no matter how desirable the immediate rebuilding may be to recreationists. The May 6, 2004 USFS notification of intention to use helicopters makes no case for any emergency needs for surveying or reconstruction of trails and bridges. The issue of safety for surveyors or workers that is cited in the May 6, 2004 USFS paper appears to be a straw man. Justifying the use of helicopters while conducting any work in a wilderness area under the auspices of safety is disingenuous. Not only is flight a risk to all aboard, but the number of proposed cycles (take-offs and landings) is far more dangerous than potential stream/river crossings, which should not be attempted if such a crossing appears to be dangerous. This is just basic common sense. Furthermore, alternative routes to affected areas can almost always be found. The N. Fork Sauk river trail is accessible at Sloan Creek Campground, and areas north can be accessed from either the east or west side of the crest through various means. The precedent set by such activity is also a continuing concern.

Rather than employing helicopters for surveying, assessment and reconstruction purposes, trails can be surveyed and rebuilt step-by-step starting at the trailhead by surveyors and

workers on the ground. As each successive barrier/obstacle caused by the October 2003 flooding is encountered, it can be analyzed and repaired directly from the trail, itself. The same concept holds for bridges: as the trail is fully repaired up to the river ford, then the rebuilding of the washed-out bridge can be analyzed from the riverbank, and rebuilding of the bridge (if deemed desirable) can be done from the trail. Of course, if the river can be accessed by trail from both sides, a coordinated rebuilding effort can be commenced from both sides simultaneously. Reconstruction materials can be brought to the location using traditional ground-based methods of horses, mules, donkeys, llamas or humans. There appears to be no issue of lack of safety for surveyors or workers if this approach is adopted. It is, in fact, the only approach that should be considered within a wilderness area.

The NCCC requests to know how the USFS gained knowledge of the trails and bridges that are currently washed out. Was this through observations made by hikers on the ground, from aerial surveys, or some other means? When did the USFS gain this information?

The NCCC also wants to question some portions of the May 6 paper. Table 1 (p. 3) leaves the issue of helicopter time unclear. According to the table, there would be 40 flights (i.e., # of landings) with the total time listed is 10.5 hours. It is unclear if the 10.5 hours includes total flight time (including time on the ground) within the wilderness areas, or if it includes only the time the helicopters are on the ground

within the wilderness area, or only the time the helicopters are actually in the air above wilderness areas. Can you please clarify this table for us. Furthermore, while the table concludes that the 40 planned flights would consume 10.5 hours of time, the text above it suggests that up to 15 hours of time would be required. Is it possible to be more precise with this figure?

It also appears (from the section titled "Access Need Description") that the waiver sought for helicopter use is solely for the purpose of reconnaissance and assessment of damage, but not repair of the damage. Should a waiver be granted for these purposes, it is virtually certain that another waiver would be requested for reconstruction purposes, one that would require substantially greater helicopter support. The NCCC opposes the use of helicopters for either purpose unless the USFS can make a strong case, location-by-location, of an absolute need for helicopter support for reconnaissance, assessment, or rebuilding within any wilderness area. At a minimum, the USFS must prepare a more comprehensive Environmental Analysis for the request for a waiver.

The NCCC has a history of supporting mechanized devices in wilderness only if human life is at stake, e.g., a rescue operation, or when it can be clearly shown that use of this equipment will provide a net protection of the wilderness resource, or if it is impossible to provide a clear net benefit to the wilderness in any other way.

—BRUCE BARNBAUM
NCCC BOARD

Forest Service Environmental Assessment

Pacific Crest Trail Repair — Alpine Lakes Wilderness, May 27, 2004

"The proposed use of mechanized wheelbarrow(s) and motorized rock drill(s) within the Alpine Lakes Wilderness to expedite the repair of the Pacific Crest Trail."

The North Cascades Conservation Council (NCCC) opposes the use of mechanized equipment within the Alpine Lakes Wilderness or any wilderness. This would apply to helicopters, chain saws, tote goats, and other obtrusive devices.

Please note the NCCC has traditionally supported the use of mechanized equipment if there is a true emergency, human life/safety is involved, or there is a clear protection of the wilderness resource. In some case by case situations, it may be appropriate to use these devices where there is no other choice.

It has been fully understood since the inception of the Wilderness Act (now celebrating its 40th year) that mechanized vehicles and/or

tools are not allowed in wilderness areas, "except under extraordinary or emergency conditions". Nothing about the proposed trail repairs can, or should, be viewed as an emergency situation that would require extraordinary actions to deal with it, no matter how desirable the immediate rebuilding may be to recreationists. In short, expediting trail repairs by use of mechanized equipment does not meet the criteria of "an extraordinary or emergency condition"; and the convenience offered by mechanized tools is not an issue for consideration.

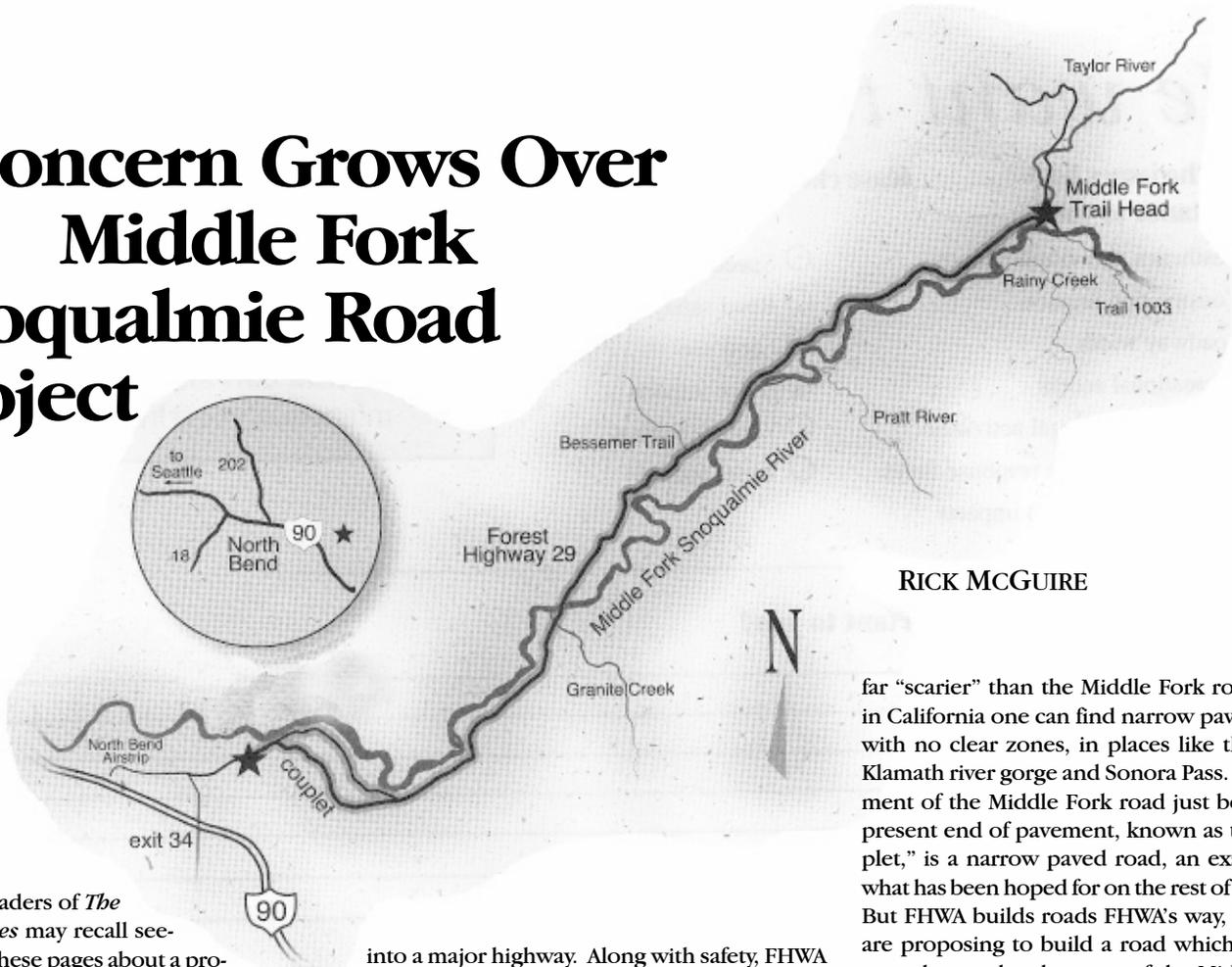
Having recently hiked in proximity to a mechanized wheelbarrow, some members can attest to the wholly disruptive nature of such

equipment: the smell of the exhaust and the attendant noise are completely incongruent with any definition of wilderness, and indeed compromise the wilderness for both transient human and permanent animal and plant residents.

Reconstruction materials can be brought to the location using traditional ground-based methods of horses, mules, donkeys, llamas or humans. There appears to be no issue of lack of safety to workers if this approach were to be adopted. It is, in fact, the only approach that should be considered within a wilderness area.

—MARC BARDSLEY
PRESIDENT, NCCC

Concern Grows Over Middle Fork Snoqualmie Road Project



RICK MCGUIRE

Regular readers of *The Wild Cascades* may recall seeing items in these pages about a proposed Federal Highways Administration (FHWA) project to pave the Middle Fork Snoqualmie River road from the current end of pavement a couple of miles north of Interstate 90 to the Taylor River area, about ten miles or so.

A public meeting was recently held by FHWA in North Bend to outline the project's status. The alternatives on offer are not encouraging. There has long been some feeling among some segments of the conservation and recreation communities that there might, just possibly, be some advantages to paving the lower Middle Fork road. The hope was that paving the road would allow greater law enforcement presence, and help change the character of this valley which was for many years a "no man's land," by making it more accessible, as well as reducing dust and runoff.

These potential benefits might still make it worthwhile to pave the road. However, the option of simply paving the existing road as it now is does not appear to be on offer. All of the alternatives presented by FHWA involve much more than simply paving the road which is now there. They all, to varying degrees, widen the road, straighten out curves, and entail "clear zones," areas on both sides of the road where all vegetation is cleared away, ostensibly for "safety" reasons.

"Safety" has always been the great god of American highway engineers and many a quiet old road has been sacrificed on its altar, turned

into a major highway. Along with safety, FHWA refers frequently to "liability," implying that if the road they build is not as "safe" as it possibly can be, they, or some unnamed governmental entity, will be sued if someone drives off of it or has some other mishap. But if liability is a concern for a new road, why is it not a concern with the present road? Are people suing King County or the Forest Service because of the present road? Apparently not that anyone knows of.

FHWA's track record offers no encouragement, and much to worry about. Places where similar projects have been built have invariably turned into major highways. The Icicle Creek road above Leavenworth was once a pleasant, winding drive through ponderosa pine forest - until FHWA "improved" it. The Cle Elum river road from Ronald to Salmon La Sac is a 70 m.p.h. road with 35 m.p.h. signs on it, and a big moneymaker for Kittitas County thanks to traffic radar. A wide swath was cleared up the valley, with huge cuts and fills, only the gentlest of curves, a road that is virtually impossible to drive at the posted speed. And this road is the "toned down" version of what they wanted to build. Similar examples of these "backwoods freeways" can be found all across the National Forests and National Parks of the United States.

It would be very possible to pave the existing Middle Fork road as it is, with only the most minor changes, and no clear zones. There are thousands of paved roads in Europe which are

far "scariet" than the Middle Fork road. Even in California one can find narrow paved roads with no clear zones, in places like the lower Klamath river gorge and Sonora Pass. The segment of the Middle Fork road just before the present end of pavement, known as the "couplet," is a narrow paved road, an example of what has been hoped for on the rest of the road. But FHWA builds roads FHWA's way, and they are proposing to build a road which will forever change the character of the Middle Fork valley. Changing the Middle Fork valley has been desirable in many ways, and it is gradually losing its reputation as a lawless place to be avoided. Conservationists have long dreamed of making the transition from just stopping bad things happening to actually making good things happen in the Middle Fork. There have been many successes, among them a new campground coming near Taylor River, and near-miraculous cleanups organized by the indefatigable Wade Holden and "Friends of the Trail."

Paving the road has been considered part of the vision of a new Middle Fork, a place where recreationists could go without undue worries about their persons or cars being riddled with gunfire. But there is a big difference between paving the existing road and building what FHWA is proposing. Even the "mellowest" alternative on offer from FHWA is miles away from what most people would probably like to see on the Middle Fork. There may still be a chance to get FHWA to just pave the existing road, but prospects aren't looking good at the moment. It would require a sea change from FHWA, doing something they have never done before. Perhaps it was always unrealistic to think that FHWA could be tamed. NCCC and other groups will be watching closely. We may still be stuck in the era trying to stop bad things in the Middle Fork.

Political Parties See Votes in National Parks, and Park Veterans Join Debate

BY TIMOTHY EGAN
NEW YORK TIMES
JUNE 19, 2004

OLYMPIC NATIONAL PARK, Wash., June 15 - Despite their name, the Roosevelt elk that roam the rain forest here are neither Republican nor Democrat. But they may be one of the few things within the increasingly clamorous units of the National Park System that have not been drawn into the fray of election-year politics.

From the moody hollows of the Gettysburg battlefield to the expansive rim of the Grand Canyon, national parks and historic sites are the only places where many Americans see the federal government in action. About 250 million people visit parks every year. If toilets are clogged at campgrounds, or boyhood homes of former presidents are closed on weekdays because of budget cuts, people often blame the administration in Washington. With that in mind, both parties are latching onto the nation's natural wonders to gain advantage this year.

Wary of the fallout that a ragged park system could mean to the president, the Bush administration has asked park superintendents to call budget cuts "service level adjustments" and has provided them with talking points on how Mr. Bush has been good for parks. But four months into the new orders, many employees are going decidedly off-message. Groups of active and retired park officials have released memorandums and budget figures that they claim show the parks in disrepair, and they are challenging the administration's rosy depiction of some of the United States' best-loved places.

"There has always been an attempt to use the parks in an election year, but we have never seen such a blatant effort to get people to spin conditions of the parks one way for political purposes," said Bill Wade, the former superintendent of Shenandoah National Park, who is spokesman for a new group, Coalition of Concerned National Park Service Retirees.

Jeff Ruch, director of Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility, which says it has hundreds of park rangers among its 12,000 members, said, "The Bush administration is trying to turn every national park into a local re-election campaign office."

Administration officials say they have increased financing for the parks over all. They attributed the high-volume complaints from park employees and their supporters to resistance to "institutional change" they are trying to bring. As for accusations of trying to get park

rangers to spin budget cuts, Bush aides say they want employees to tell the larger story of the parks. . . .

It has not come to the point where the red and blue colors of partisan America have been superimposed over the 387 units of the National Park System, but both political parties are using the parks to make their points. Culture wars with a recreational twist are thumped at party fund-raisers. [One such battle was over the use of snowmobiles inside Yellowstone National Park, which the House voted for on Thursday.]

Last month, Representative Norm Dicks, Democrat of Washington and the ranking minority member of the House committee that authorizes park money, toured this 922,651-acre park with news cameras in tow and sympathetic park rangers at his side. Mr. Dicks said a vote for Democrats in the fall was the best way to help the domain of Smokey Bear.

"We shouldn't have to have bake sales to run the national parks, but that's what it's coming to," Mr. Dicks said. "This is a problem that stems from the White House."

He accused the administration of breaking its promise to eliminate a national parks maintenance backlog of \$5 billion. . . .

What is different this year is both the effort to make sure that rangers talk about park budget cuts in the least onerous way, and the rise of active and former park employees in the political debate.

The former-employee group, made up of 255 retired park officials, including dozens of former superintendents and regional park directors, was created last fall to raise concern about park financing. Initially, the group was welcomed by White House officials. But its recent news conferences have led to the group's being shunned by top-ranking administration leaders. Group members say White House appointees will not even answer their letters anymore.

It was the retiree group that first released internal memorandums in which park superintendents were told to substitute the term "service level adjustments" for cuts.

"What does this mean?" asked Denny Huffman, former superintendent of Dinosaur National Monument in Utah. "Sorry, folks, the campground has had a service level adjustment - it's not available."

In one memorandum from Randy Jones, deputy director of the National Park Service, park superintendents were advised to make cuts in "areas that won't cause public or political controversy."

In another memorandum from a national parks spokesman, David Barna, employees were told that when asked about budget shortfalls or deteriorating conditions in the parks, they should say things like "This administration is very committed to preserving the resources of the national parks."

. . . Bill Laitner, the Olympic Park superintendent, said that the number of seasonal rangers here had been cut to 25 from 130 this year, and that his park, home to glaciers, wild seashores and more than 3,000 miles of streams, would have to do without a fisheries biologist. The cuts also mean that lawns will not always get mowed, restrooms will not always get cleaned, and visitors will have fewer encounters with rangers at a park that consistently ranks among the 10 most popular in the nation.

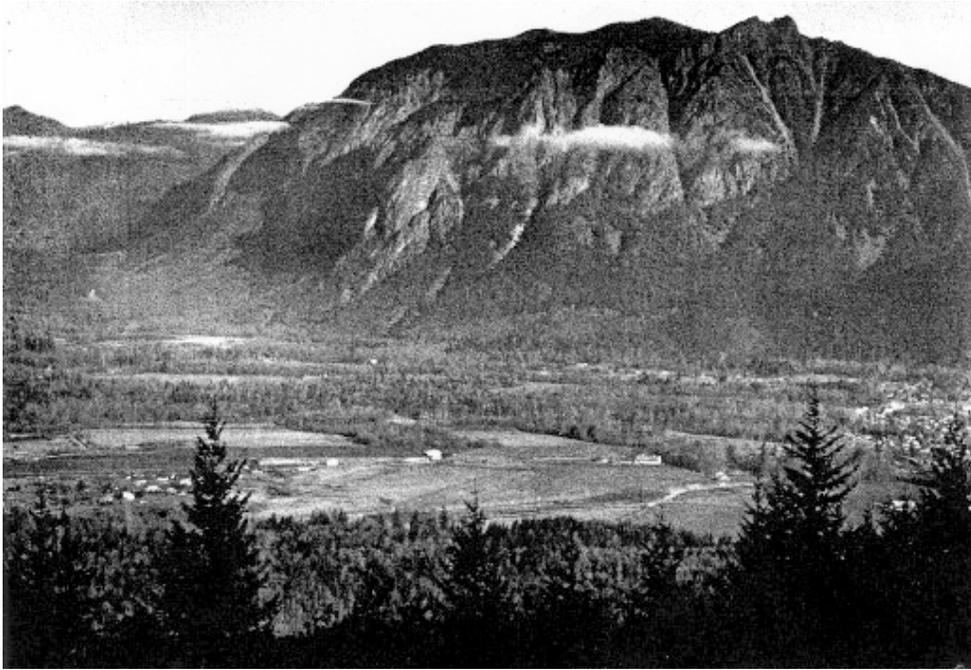
For a park with a \$10 million budget, Mr. Laitner said that he had lost "about \$800,000 in purchasing power" and that it had happened under Democratic and Republican administrations.

Olympic's budget is down more than \$200,000 from last year. Mr. Laitner said he agreed with a recent report on the frayed condition of his park by the National Parks Conservation Association, a protection group established in 1919 whose director, Tom Kiernan, is a former political appointee of the first President Bush.

The Roosevelt elk who chew on alder shoots nearby have not been drawn into the campaign. They were named for Theodore Roosevelt, the Republican president who first established a national monument here in 1909 to protect them. But it was his Democratic cousin, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who designated the national park here in 1938. In that sense, the elk are bipartisan.

WHY SI?

KEVIN GERAGHTY



Mt. Si from Rattlesnake Mountain. [In the era of the “North Bend infamous stoplight,” where U.S. 10 merged from 4 lanes to 2 lanes before U.S. 10 became I-90.]

It’s Mother’s day, a pleasant Saturday, and it’s relatively quiet at the Mount Si trailhead. About 200 cars wait in the trailhead parking lot. On many other spring weekends the cars fill the 300-car lot and overflow onto the shoulders of the Mount Si road. The hiker population today, assuming one or two people per car, is about 300 people. One way to think about that figure, starting up the trail, is that in the three or four hours it will take to walk up and down the mountain, one will see every one of those 300 people at least once. That would amount to well more than one person a minute if they appeared in an even stream. However one meets them, it’s enough people that the trail habit of greeting people begins to break down, replaced by the urban sidewalk convention of avoiding eye contact. The view from the Si Haystack, the nominal objective of all this climbing and descending, is big and sweeping but no longer very contemplative. One of the 1970’s Manning-Spring *Footsore* guidebooks, out of print, contains a now startling picture of fields and woodlots in a rural North Bend valley. Nowadays, by contrast, one’s attention is drawn powerfully to the human hive on the valley floor: to freeway, shopping malls, and housing developments, which collectively send up a mechanized white-noise hum. There may be a certain slow-motion drama in this view of the exurban development wave breaking on the resistant reef of public lands, but it doesn’t really fit the traditional notion of an ideal hike, any more than the crowds do.

There are plenty of people out there who dislike and avoid the “I-Si” experience. But plenty more seem to like it just fine. Indeed, they seem to like it better all the time, since over the last decade usage growth on this trail has far outstripped local rates of population growth.

Economists have a concept called “revealed preference”. The idea, essentially, is that one can figure out what matters to people — what they really want — from the choices they make. The choices people make in the Si vicinity suggest that a lot of them don’t mind crowds that much. If they did, they wouldn’t be hiking there. Indeed, one might ask if some hikers do not actually prefer crowds. Is Si some sort of mountain paseo where the pleasures of seeing and being seen are paramount? Does fear of the wild, or fear of predatory people, lead some to seek out populated trails for reassurance? These may be widespread motivations, although randomly accosted Si hikers generally will not acknowledge them, or admit to a preference, rather than mere tolerance, for crowded trails. But people do not necessarily appreciate their own motivations. One can read into Si the essential contradiction between peoples’ romantic belief that they are rugged autonomous individuals, and their actual herd-like behavior, particularly in situations where they are a little anxious or unsure of themselves.

Crowd affinity may explain part of what goes on at Si, but it certainly can’t adequately explain usage trends. An educated guess is that

use of this trail has doubled in the last decade while King County’s population has grown by something like 15 per cent. It’s unlikely that we have become more fond of each other’s company over that interval. It is possible, however, that we have collectively gotten more hooked on convenience. Si is close, it’s exhaustively documented, and it doesn’t have to be looked for or thought about. And variations on “it’s convenient” are probably the most common answer to “Why are you hiking at Si?”

Another reason that Si usage growth has outstripped the county’s overall population growth over the last decade may be some subtleties of that growth. The county may have grown by 15 per cent, but the more rural, eastern parts of the county have grown by more. The I-90 corridor has probably grown fastest of all, 25 to 30 per cent over the last decade. To the burgeoning populations of the Sammamish plateau, Issaquah, Snoqualmie, and North Bend, Si is particularly convenient. For the rest of us, the general clogging up of transportation corridors has made all hikes less convenient, including Si, but in relative terms, Si has almost certainly gotten more. I-90 remains the least congested, most reliable east-west travel corridor.

Although Si may be an extreme case, it’s part of a larger pattern of shifting usage. In the last decade, as the state’s, and our local population, has climbed by 15 to 20 per cent, visitorship to Washington’s deep backcountry — approximated by statistics such as permitted overnight backcountry “visitor-use nights” in the North Cascades National Park Complex — has been essentially flat (the peak year for North Cascades “backcountry use nights”, to date, is 1981). Day hiking use has been going up. Day use at more accessible hikes like those along the I-90 corridor has been going up far more. We are, in short, seeing a proportional shift in usage toward the low-commitment, the quick, the convenient. This probably should not be a surprise. The emerging social habit of overscheduled, distracted busyness is not confined to our working lives. Si, the quintessential fast-food hike, fits well with this culture of multi-tasking and its necessary corollary, the prizing of convenience at the expense of competing values.

Like it or not, that’s the way things are going. For those of us who still manage to spend some time in the backcountry, it’s nice to know that despite the inexorable growth in Puget Sound populations, there will still be valleys, high basins, and summits that nobody visits from one year to the next. Species sensitive to human disturbance also benefit from this growing tendency of human visitors to cluster predictably in fairly small portions of the overall landscape. As for Si and other such “con-

Managing wild lands — the Supreme Court Decision

venience hikes”, well, they’re still hikes, and not to be despised; it’s a rare person who never, ever, under any circumstances eats fast food.

The Mount Si trail was extensively rebuilt about ten years ago, but the cumulative impact of many feet is apparent in beaten-up trail tread which has sagged downhill in spots by as much as four or five feet. This downhill creep, not uniform, is retarded by anchor features like tree trunks and logs, leading to scalloped trail and unplanned adverse grades. To put it plainly, the trail needs work. Think of a zone of convenience, containing wildland trails with trailheads within an hour’s travel of metropolitan populations. The physical decay of the Mount Si trail is emblematic of the challenges facing such trails. Treadwear increases with usage. Trails that fit the convenient trail profile probably need to be constructed to different, higher capacity standards because they are going to be very heavily used. The agencies responsible for trail construction in the zone of convenience —the Si neighborhood being the premier example —appear to understand this. The Cedar River Watershed’s new Rattlesnake Ledge Trail and the Forest Service’s new Bandera-Mason Lake trail, both I-90-freeway exit trails close to Si, are highly engineered trails replacing unengineered “natural” trails. There are people who don’t like these new trails, regarding them as heavy-handed mini-roads, but the design decisions probably reflect an appropriately defensive appraisal of the pounding these trails will be subjected to.

The phenomenon of convenience zone hiking has implications not only for how we should design and maintain trails, but for where we should put new ones. It’s hard to argue with the idea that a prospective trail which will be used by 20,000 hikers a year is a better choice, and a better investment, than one which will attract only a thousand. This leads pretty directly to the conclusion that the convenience zone is the proper place for new trails. One should not make the mistake of assuming that the purpose of building such new convenience zone trails is to reduce crowding. That’s like trying to build away freeway congestion: a theoretical possibility, but in practice the cars just seem to appear magically to fill up additional freeway lanes. No, it’s really about giving people a few more convenient choices. Lovers of uncrowded trails know that they are to be found only in relatively inconvenient places.

Salt Lake Tribune

June 16, 2004

It could well be argued, as it was well argued by Utah environmental groups, that judicial micromanagement of America’s wild lands is preferable to no management at all.

The fact that a unanimous Supreme Court Monday rejected that contention, at least in one case, does not mean that Utah’s federal lands are all well managed. It does mean that any failure to do so belongs at the feet of the Bureau of Land Management, the Bush administration and Congress.

And that is where the fight to defend wilderness land from the loud and destructive toys known as off-road vehicles (ORVs) should be taken.

It is even possible that, by taking a particular kind of lawsuit out of the toolkits of both the tree-hugging Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance and the ear-splitting Utah Shared Access Alliance, Monday’s ruling will increase the chances that the other branches of government will actually do their duty.

Not that there is much history behind that hope.

As Justice Antonin Scalia pointed out, the 3.3 million acres of Utah land that were officially identified as wilderness study areas (WSAs) have remained in that legal limbo since 1991. None of that land, much less the millions more acres that activists and Clinton administration officials wanted to add, has won either congressional designation as wilderness or been awarded any other permanent designation.

SUWA and its allies were understandably frustrated that the BLM had done too little to protect WSAs from, among other things, growing numbers of ORV invasions that could degrade certain areas enough to disqualify them from permanent wilderness status. So they sued, arguing that the federal Administrative Procedure Act empowers courts to order a federal agency to do something specific to carry out its duties.

The 10th Circuit Court of Appeals agreed with SUWA. But the Supreme Court ruled otherwise.

The justices noted that the BLM was not to blame for the “scarce resources and congressional silence” that limit its actions. Besides, the court ruled, if federal agencies had every action, and every inaction, reviewed in court, they’d never get anything done.

That burden now removed, if only temporarily, it is time for some real management.

Such personages as Sen. Orrin Hatch, who needlessly belittled SUWA’s attempts at wilderness protection as micromanagement, should realize that it is the lack of real management that pushed SUWA to act. Hatch should join Gov. Olene Walker’s efforts to really protect more Utah wilderness, conceding some space to incompatible activities such as ORV use, and get those plans approved by Congress.

Otherwise, we’ll all be back in court. But it won’t be the courts’ fault. Or the environmentalists’.

NEW ON THE TRAILS

Failure to invent the wheel was not, say cultural anthropologists, due to the stupidity of indigenes on the southern tip of South America. The weather there always came at them sideways. Walls were enough. However, peoples of other continents are baffled by the high civilization attained in the Americas without the wheel.

Cities and highways certainly could not have flourished as they did without the device described in the 19th century as “a wheel at one end and an Irishman at the other.” Music hall stages celebrated the two-wheel, two-person vehicle that carried Daisy on one seat, looking so sweet.

In the millennia since wheel-free explorers and their dogs crossed the land bridge from Siberia, the stay-behinds invented chariots, coaches, wagons, tin lizzies, 4x4s, roller skates, skateboards and —of course— the street bike, the touring bike, the “mountain bike.” Also, mainly for circus clowns, the unicycle.

New on today’s extreme scene is mountain unicycling or “municycling.” The choice milieu is the rugged “single-track” favored by downhill mountain bikers. Pioneer John Foss runs a web site, *unicycling.com*. The 2003 North American Unicycling Championships in Minneapolis drew 350 riders. Each summer since 2001 the Moab MUniFest has been staged on Utah slickrock. Fans say the sport is “where mountain biking was 20 years ago.”

Draft Off-road Vehicle Rule Well-Intentioned, but Largely Ineffective

Proposal Must be Significantly Strengthened to Address Growing Threat

Washington, DC – **Conservation, recreation, hunting and other groups across the country today called proposed rules issued by the USDA Forest Service for off-road vehicle use on America's National Forests well-intentioned, but largely ineffective. While the proposal is a small step forward, it needs significant strengthening.**

Although some of the proposed changes are positive, they alone will not solve this growing problem. Oddly, while Forest Service Chief Dale Bosworth has identified unmanaged off-road vehicle use as one of the greatest threats to National Forests, the proposal frequently highlights the importance of "enhancing" opportunities for off-road vehicle recreation rather than creating a better balance between this small use and the many other uses of National Forests.

To ensure necessary and common-sense protections for public land, wildlife and other recreational users, the Forest Service must include additional measures

in the final rule. The most important of these include:

- Within two years, designating roads and routes that are appropriate for off-road vehicle travel. At the end of this period, such use could only occur on designated roads and routes;
- Designating roads and routes based on a full and public analysis of the site-specific environmental impacts and user-conflicts;
- Immediately barring use of all unauthorized, renegade routes; and
- Authorizing off-road vehicle use only to the extent that effective monitoring and enforcement are annually funded and implemented.

Inclusion of a timeframe in regulation for completing route designation is even more important in light of following statement in the proposal: "The proposed rule would have no effect on the ground until designations of roads, trails, and areas are completed at the field level, with opportunity for public comment." **In spite of the seriousness of the threat, the Forest Service refuses to make any firm commitment to starting and completing route designation in a reasonable period of time.**

The Forest Service is proposing several policy changes that would be beneficial if effectively implemented on the ground. These include:

- Prohibiting cross-country travel by motor vehicles except under limited circumstances;
- Authorizing ATV and dirt bike use only on roads and off-road vehicle routes specifically designated as open for such use; and
- Enabling law enforcement officers to issue citations more easily.

Last year, Forest Service Chief Dale Bosworth identified unmanaged recreation, particularly off-road vehicle use, as one of the greatest threats to America's National Forests. He described a litany of adverse impacts to the land, wildlife and other visitors and highlighted the proliferation of unplanned – or renegade – dirt bike and all-terrain vehicle (ATV) routes that crisscross many National Forests. Since then, Chief Bosworth has also stressed the urgent need to address this problem: "This is not an easy issue to tackle, but if we wait a day, a week, or even a year, the impact on the land and the issue surrounding this problem will become even harder to deal with. We need to address the issue now."

"The Forest Service has taken a small step forward today," said Scott Kovarovics, Director of the Natural Trails and Waters Coalition. "The proposed rule is a start, but it must be significantly strengthened by including a two-year timeframe to designate routes and immediately prohibiting use of renegade ATV and dirt bike routes."

The proposed rule is available today on the Forest Service's website at: <http://www.fs.fed.us/recreation/programs/ohv/index.shtml>. Publication of the proposal in the *Federal Register*, expected in the next several days, will begin a 60-day public comment period. Comments can be submitted to the Forest Service via the following:

U.S. MAIL:

Proposed Rule for Designated Routes and Areas for Motor Vehicle Use

c/o Content Analysis Team
P.O. Box 221150
Salt Lake City, Utah 84122-1150

EMAIL:

trvman@fs.fed.us

House votes to allow snowmobiles in parks

SEATTLE TIMES
FRIDAY, JUNE 18, 2004

WASHINGTON — The House voted yesterday to let snowmobiles continue using Yellowstone and Grand Teton national parks.

The chamber, by 224-198, beat back an effort to ban the vehicles by lawmakers who said the machines cause pollution and noise,

and pose a danger to the parks' wildlife. Democrat Adam Smith and Republican George Nethercutt did not vote; otherwise, all Washington state Democrats voted for a ban and all Republicans voted against it.

Snowmobile advocates — backed by snowmobile manufacturers and tourism interests — said a ban would devastate the local economy around the parks,

which lie mostly in northwestern Wyoming. They also noted that new snowmobiles are cleaner and quieter than older models.

The issue has mushroomed into a legal dispute that federal courts have yet to untangle.

... We need your help to recruit a few more people to read *The Wild Cascades*, provide funds, and help spread our message ...

Flora of the Wild Sky Wilderness

BY PHILIP ZALESKY

{Editor's Note: This article has been excerpted because of space limitations. For the complete text go to the NCCC website: northcascades.org}

Retired University of Washington professor Arthur Kruckeberg, noted botanist and geobotanist, describes the geo-botanical agents creating the evolution of plant life in his recent book, *Geology and Plant Life: The Effects of Landforms and Rock Types on Plants*.

Kruckeberg states that land forms interfacing with rock types provide the diversity creating the basis for plant evolution.

In a lecture for North Cascades Institute's Naturalist Retreat at Sun Mountain Resort, Kruckeberg said he would bet a flat world, which he calls "surface homogeneity," would demonstrate a planet with nothing other than sand and bacteria. Or, as he more delightfully questions, "Would life in any degree of diversity have evolved on a global billiard ball?"

The closer we get to the border of Canada with its geologic jumble of mountains the greater would be the number of unusual plants. Isolation, rock-type soils, and stress, according to Kruckeberg, in the higher, rugged, treeless terrain in the north plays an evolutionary role in creating new species... These uncommon and rare plants prevail in the mountains of the Wild Sky Wilderness. . . .

Three local botanists, Elroy Burnett, Bob Hubbard, and Mildred Arnot, have hiked extensively around much of the Wild Sky with an eye toward identifying the plants and understanding the plant communities. All three have done inventory work for the Forest Service and National Park Service. They have also worked with Washington State Parks to put together a list of plants (over 300 species) found around the area of the Index Town Wall, a scenic cliff and rock climber destination located above Index town. The Town Wall was recently incorporated into a 1300-acre new state park called "Forks of the Sky State Park."

. . . . Nowhere in this area, they believe, have so many species of plants been so thoroughly identified as the Index Town Wall (500'–2000') This they completed in 1994 while working on the creation of a state park on the western outskirts of the city. . . . On the Index Town Wall and adjoining hillsides the vascular plants, sedges, grasses, and lichens being identified have been numerous. They have keyed out 129 species of flowers, 14 species of trees, 5 species of vines, 26 grasses, 12 ferns, 51 species of mosses, and 171 species of lichens. . . .

In an interview with Hubbard in Index he had these comments about diversity from the North Fork Skykomish valley floor beyond Index:

"Where it is uniformly forested, you'll also find less diversity in plant communities under the trees; it is the diversity of site conditions which creates and maintains a diversity of plant species. Under dense conifer stands there may be no green plants on the forest floor at all, due to the deep shade. Under mixed conifer/deciduous stands more light penetrates, and more plants can take advantage of it. Under deciduous stands like alder or maple forests even more sunlight penetrates, and a veritable hodgepodge of plants can find good living conditions.

". . . In meadows, along roadsides and river gravel bars, the sunlit environment is friendly to even more plants, the ones which can't make it in partial shade. It is the harshest environment which seems to have the most rare and endangered plants: the acidic bogs, the thin, rocky soils of high elevations, and nutrient-challenged soils of certain rock types, such as serpentinite. Forest cover — even the botanically-diverse forest cover of old growth — tends to "round off" environmental extremes . . . Very few of the state's rare and endangered plants are specifically associated with old-growth forests, when compared to marginal or harsh habitats."

The elevation from 500 feet to 2000 feet is generally considered the Western Hemlock Zone. From the town of Index itself and up the North Fork Skykomish River the trees are mostly second growth but 80-year-old stands can predominate. In the North Fork a population of Alaska yellow cedar is found at an unusually low elevation (600 feet) near the mouth of Lewis Creek. At the same elevation an occasional grand fir and spruce can be spotted. Western hemlock abounds with Douglas fir, but Pacific silver fir is the most likely true fir to be found. Douglas fir groves are quite large and ancient in the old-growth forest between Troublesome Creek and Garland Hot Springs. One Douglas fir after coring was found to be about 700 years old and another near Silver Creek cored out at 800 years of age. Large and monstrous old western red cedar are found in this old forest. . . .

Throughout the Wild Sky, one may come across a number of plant species of interest, including the Gnome plant (*Hemitomes congestum*). Finding this species involves luck.

Never listed as a rare plant, it has been placed on the state of Washington monitor or watch list. Found deep in coniferous forests, Gnome plant is the only plant in its genus in western North America. It is sometimes confused with Fringed pinesap (*Pleuricospora fimbriolata*) which is also found in similar heavy-shaded habitats. . . .

Kruckeberg pointed to one fern by a trail in the Teanaway, Shasta holly fern (*Polystichum lemmoni*), which is exclusively found in the Pacific Northwest only on serpentinite. Asked how this fern could be found so widespread, Kruckeberg pointed out that airborne spores do the trick. To this he states Beijerinck's Law "Everything is everywhere, but the environment selects." This fern regenerates from the spores, and as he noted, so do a couple of other ferns regenerate on serpentinite. These, however, can be found on other soils, too. The answer as to why and how endemic floral seeds spread and regenerate on serpentinite from distant places is still unanswered.

. . . . Avalanche paths are common throughout the Pacific Silver Fir Zone and the Mountain Hemlock Zone. Travelling through these on the Barclay Lake to Eagle Lake trail, one can find a number of sunlight-loving plants. These vertical gashes of non-forested vegetation with their dense thickets of Slide alder (*Alnus sitchbensis*) will usually have associated plants such as vine maple, huckleberry, serviceberry, and thimbleberry. On talus slopes and around outcrops Oregon boxwood (*Pachystima myrsinites*), Mountain huckleberry (*Vaccinium membranaceum*), Alaska huckleberry (*vaccinium alaskaense*), Small flowered penstemon (*Penstemon procerus*), Cinquefoil (*Potentilla gracilis*), Phlox (*Pblox diffusa*), Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*) and the often weedy Pearly everlasting (*Anaphalis margaritacea*) may occur.

Water-loving herbs such as members of saxifrage family, Yellow willow-herb (*Epilobium luteum*), Monkey flower (*Mimulus guttatus*), and Bluebells (*Mertensia paniculata*) occur along the edges of Eagle Lake and undoubtedly other lakes. These plants may be seen on the bog area east of Eagle Lake along with grasses and low shrubs, willow, Labrador tea (*Ledum groenlandicum*), and Bog laurel (*Kalmia microphylla*). Here, too, one might find Arrowleaf groundsel (*Senecio triangularis*), Elephant head (*Pedicularis groenlandica*), Marsh marigold (*Caltha biflora*), Arnica (*Arnica latifolia*), Shooting stars (*Dodecatheon jeffreyi*), Foam flower (*Tiarella trifoliata*) and Trillium (*Trillium*

ovatum). . . .

In the Subalpine Transition Zone, severe conditions affect all the plants including mountain heather species, spiraea, lupines, penstemon, and alpine grasses. These have been known to evolve biotic mechanisms for the severe life conditions. This is consistent with Kruckeberg's theory on effects of landforms and rocks on plants. . . .

In the high meadows of Heybrook Ridge west of Gunn Peak 60 species of blooming plants and 95 total species of plants were found. This is a great variety of flora to find on any single day's hike. This represented a climb of 3,000 to 4,000 feet out of the bottom of Barclay Creek valley.

The growing season up here is short and to survive many plants adopt a low cushion-like form. Dwarfism is another strategy for coping with the cold. Many plants have evolved tiny leaves and tiny flowers. Tolmie's saxifrage (*Saxifraga tolmiei*) provides a good example. In this same area within the understory, dominating are members of the sunflower, rose and heather families. This is a place where we may find Bear grass (*Xerophyllum tenax*). . . .

. . . Heather is found in the subalpine zone a thousand or more feet below the summit of Gunn Peak. White Mountain heather *Cassiope* (*Cassiope mertensiana*) dominates in some places and Pink Mountain heather (*Phyllodoce empetriformis*) in others. Early after the spring melt, Trilliums (*trillium ovatum*), Spreading phlox (*Pblox diffusa*), and Davidson's penstemon (*Penstemon davidsonii*) sprawl in abundance about this alpine garden as well as white flowered Sitka valerian (*Valeriana sitichensis*).

Some of the subalpine beauties within the Mountain Hemlock Transition Zone are Alaska harebells (*Campanula lasiocarpa*), Mountain artemisias (*Artemisia trifurcata*), and various members of the sunflower family. While Elephant's head (*Pedicularis groenlandica*) is also found near streams at lower elevations, its close relative Bird's-beak lousewort (*Pedicularis orinthobryncba*) with its purple upper lip is typically found at high elevations. For some reason Glacier lilies (*Erythronium grandiflorum*) have been found in only one isolated spot in the Wild Sky Wilderness on Ragged Ridge near the Kromona Mine.

. . . . Other flowers to look for among the

many in the subalpine zone include Sitka valerian (*Valeriana sitichensis*), Common harebell or Bluebells-of-Scotland (*Campanula rotundifolia*), Alpine lupine (*Lupinus lepidus lobbii*), Fleabane (*Erigeron peregrinus*), Cliff paintbrush (*Castilleja rupicola*), Windflower (*Anemone occidentalis*), and one of the more common flowers of the subalpine zone, Diverse-leaved cinquefoil (*Potentilla diversifolia*). Kruckeberg informs us that there are 50 species of lupine in North America. . . . Two other common denominators of the alpine are Partridge foot (*Luetka pectinata*), a low mat-like plant, and the wide ranging Sitka Valerian (*Valeriana sitichensis*). Alpine speedwell (*Veronica wormskjoldii*) has been found in the high alpine meadows and rocky slopes.

The proposed Wild Sky Wilderness provides a diversified mosaic and cornucopia of plant life. The discoveries and words related here in no way attempt to be definitive. As Kruckeberg would point out, plants persist and evolve in just this type of discontinuous array of mountainous landforms we find in the Wild Sky Wilderness.

Wilderness designation the last hope

RICH LANDERS
THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW
JUNE 17, 2004

Inland Northwest land conservation groups are putting their best hiking boots forward this summer to promote roadless areas and celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Washington State Wilderness Act.

Much more surprising, however, is the pioneering step that Fifth District Congressman George Nethercutt says he's taking into the realm of wilderness advocacy.

Wilderness is the nation's ultimate land preservation insurance policy. No roads can be built in official wilderness areas and no motorized or mechanized equipment are allowed, including chainsaws and bicycles.

Hikers, horse packers, rafters and tourism agencies are among the millions who have recognized the value of wilderness, a value that continues to grow as the nation's population expands and elbow room becomes scarce.

Even though you've probably never seen a statewide Washington or Idaho travel brochure that didn't feature a photo of wilderness, the values are not just scenic.

Roadless areas contain some of the nation's best wildlife areas. Just as important, roadless areas often protect the upper watersheds that

assure the water quality for great fishing streams that run down through lowlands, both public and private.

"We say 'To it and not through it,' about traveling to such productive lands," said Scott Stouder of Trout Unlimited's office in Boise. "We have to save whatever's left. It's pretty simple."

Many sportsmen and conservationists would rather preserve roadless lands without designating them as wilderness. A roadless designation would maintain most of the protections while preserving the options to access by aircraft and bicycles and to maintain trails more efficiently with chainsaws.

President Bill Clinton, with the enlightened perspective of former Forest Service Chief Mike Dombeck (an avid angler), recognized these advantages by designating a "roadless" category designed to protect millions of acres of unroaded areas on national forests across the country.

The Bush administration barely unpacked its boxes in the White House before setting out to disarm the Clinton roadless rules.

That's why conservationists say they must campaign for wilderness, a category of protection that's much less susceptible to the shifting sands of politics.

The stakes are high. A Trout Unlimited study, for example, found that 74 percent of Idaho's

current chinook salmon habitat is in roadless acreage, along with 58 percent of the habitat for westslope cutthroat trout.

Washington's first wilderness areas — Glacier Peak, Goat Rocks and Mount Adams — were included in the Wilderness Preservation System created when Congress passed the original Wilderness Act in 1964.

The 530,000-acre Pasayten Wilderness was given official protection in 1968 and by the end of 1976 the Alpine Lakes, San Juan, Washington Islands and Wenaha-Tucannon wilderness areas had been protected, bringing the state's total to 1.73 million acres.

The 1984 Washington Wilderness Act, not perfect by any conservationists standards, emphasized important but somewhat less glamorous areas that had been identified but put on the shelf during the original rounds of wilderness debate.

The act, with the strong support of Rep. Tom Foley, D-Wash., was passed by Congress to secure another million acres of wilderness.

Incidentally, the Washington Parks Wilderness Act was passed four years later to designate wilderness within North Cascades, Olympic and Mount Rainier national parks, although these areas had essentially been protected by park status afforded decades earlier.

Eastern Washington got a little more attention in the 1984 legislation, which established

Wild Sky Update

the 33,000-acre Salmo-Priest Wilderness in the northeast corner of the state and a sliver of Idaho and the 7,140-acre Juniper Dunes Wilderness near Pasco.

Conservationists say considerably more area should be protected as wilderness to fend off development into remaining areas where nature is better off being left intact for the long-term health of forests, watersheds and wildlife.

Washington's 30 wilderness areas cover 4.3 million acres — less than 10 percent of the state's land area. Only 16 percent of the state's wilderness acreage is in Eastern Washington.

Since Foley was ousted, we haven't had the political backbone to even look into permanent protections for portions of the Kettle Range or Wenaha-Tucannon Wilderness additions.

Nethercutt, since being elected in 1994, has been even weaker on land preservation than he's been on his original campaign plank of supporting term limits. But he's become a born-again wilderness advocate now that he's in a campaign that requires some of those greenie Western Washington votes.

Joel Connelly, environmental writer for the Seattle Post-Intelligencer, acknowledged Nethercutt's new interest in May.

"Nethercutt has taken an apartment in Bellevue for the campaign, and is learning a Western Washington issue — conservation," Connelly wrote, noting that Nethercutt used a West Side visit to declare his support for a Wild Sky Wilderness Bill.

Sen. Patty Murray and West Side Democratic Congressman Rick Larsen introduced the Wild Sky Wilderness Act, which would establish 106,000 acres of new Washington Wilderness in the headwaters of the Skykomish River, a fabled whitewater run and steelhead stream.

But Nethercutt, who was a non-candidate two years ago, did not give support to Washington's first national forest wilderness proposal in nearly two decades.

Similarly, Nethercutt's new sympathy for wilderness does not go so far as to support the current bill that's already unanimously passed the Senate even though Rep. Jennifer Dunn, Washington's top Republican in Congress, was an original sponsor and former Republican Gov. Dan Evans is a staunch supporter.

"The Wild Sky Wilderness Bill is perfectly crafted with lots of local, state, and national support," said Chase Davis, Sierra Club spokesman in Spokane. "With Nethercutt's leadership, it could still pass this year. If he's serious about serving all the people of Washington State, he should co-sponsor the current bill."

Efforts to enact Washington's first new Wilderness area in 20 years have been continuing apace. The Wild Sky Wilderness act would protect 106,000 acres of mountains, forest, and salmon streams northeast of Seattle in the Skykomish area. The bill has twice passed the Senate, but has so far been unable to get through the House of Representatives, where the Resources Committee is chaired by Richard Pombo of California.

The proposed Wilderness is within the 2nd Congressional district, represented by Rick Larsen, sponsor of the bill. Supporters of the bill have tried to enlist the support of Spokane Republican Representative George Nethercutt, who is running for the Senate seat held by Patty Murray, also a sponsor of the Wild Sky bill. Nethercutt toured the Wild Sky area in April, and made some statements of support for the idea of a new Wilderness there. However, he also indicated that he would like to see some changes in the bill, speaking of "improving" it.

Since the bill which has passed the Senate already represents a carefully drawn balance be-

tween competing uses, with many areas excluded to permit snowmobile use, and for other reasons, this has raised some worries among bill supporters. Nethercutt is in a powerful position in the House, and he and Jennifer Dunn (a co-sponsor of the present bill,) could almost certainly get the bill through the House if they worked at it. The present bill which has passed the Senate contains significant areas of low elevation forest and salmon streams, unlike most existing Wilderness areas. Supporters of the bill are hoping that Nethercutt will use his considerable influence to get the Senate-passed bill through the House. Time is short, and it appears all too likely that the bill could fall victim to election year politics, in which case supporters will be back at it next year, and the year after if necessary. Enactment of a new Wilderness area is a long process, requiring patient work. Usually it takes many years, not a job for the easily discouraged. The Wild Sky supporters will keep at it, and won't give up.

—RICK MCGUIRE

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Be part of the North Cascades Conservation Council's Advocacy of the North Cascades. Join the NCCC. Support the North Cascades Foundation. Help us help protect North Cascades wilderness from overuse and development.

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Lawsuit filed urging recovery of grizzlies in North Cascades

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS
SEATTLE TIMES —
SATURDAY, JUNE 05, 2004

SEATTLE — Conservation groups sued the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service yesterday, urging the agency to implement a species-recovery plan adopted years ago for grizzly bears in Washington's North Cascades.

The lawsuit, filed in U.S. District Court, seeks to start the process of identifying recovery alternatives, which one day could include relocating bears from Canada, where grizzly populations are healthier, said Joe Scott, international conservation coordinator for the Northwest Ecosystem Alliance.

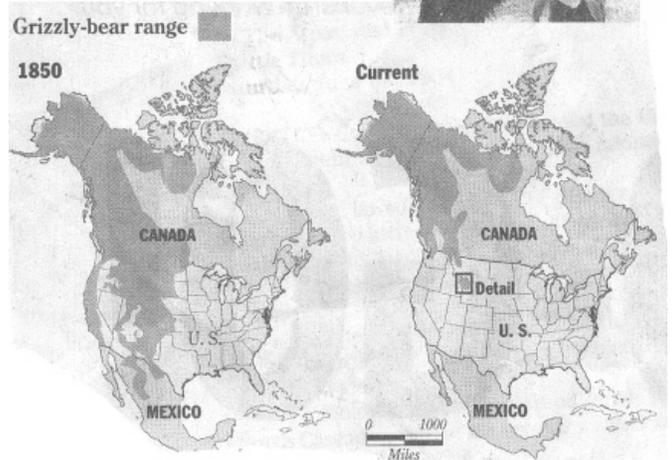
The lawsuit also seeks to change the North Cascades grizzlies from threatened to endangered — a move that would signify the bears are in danger of becoming extinct.

"These bears are literally fading away as we speak, and the process for restoring them will be long and arduous," said Bill Snape, chief counsel for Defenders of Wildlife. "All we want is for this process to start."

Biologists estimate that only five to 20 grizzly bears inhabit a 9,600-square-mile area in the North Cascades, one of six recovery zones established after grizzlies were listed as threatened in the lower 48 states in 1975.

Bear Territory

The grizzly bear's historic range has shrunk in the lower 48 states to a few pockets in the North



Doug Zimmer, a Fish and Wildlife spokesman, said he had not yet seen the lawsuit and could not comment on any specifics.

He blamed delays in the recovery plan on budget and staff shortages, saying, "If we had more money and people, we would do more."

"Certainly the public has a right to press us on these issues," Zimmer said. "But the combination of decreased funding and increased liti-

gation really has us between a rock and a hard spot."

Roughly 1,100 grizzly bears live in the lower 48 states, about half of them in Yellowstone National Park. Others live in the Selkirk Mountains, straddling the northeastern corner of Washington and the northern tip of the Idaho Panhandle, and the Cabinet-Yaak area of western Montana and northern Idaho.

THE WILD CASCADES

Journal of the North Cascades Conservation Council

Post Office Box 95980

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Seattle, Washington 98145-2980

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