

# THE WILD CASCADES

THE JOURNAL OF THE NORTH CASCADES CONSERVATION COUNCIL    SUMMER/FALL 2012



## In This Issue

- 3 **President's report** — Karl Forsgaard
- 4 **North Fork Snoqualmie update** — Rick McGuire  
**Green Mountain lookout must be removed** — Thom Peters
- 5 **Proposed motocross project on the Mountain Loop Highway** — Bruce Barnbaum
- 6 **NCCC Actions, May – September 2012**
- 8 **DNR Snoqualmie Corridor plan taking shape** — Mike Town
- 9 **American Alps update** — Jim Davis, president, American Alps
- 10 **"A sense of betrayal" in the Yakima Plan** — Karl Forsgaard
- 13 **Charismatic minifauna: North Cascades Pika Project report, 2012** — Phil Fenner
- 15 **On the outside looking in** — Tom Hammond
- 17 **New Wilderness! and NCCC work party** — Karl Forsgaard
- 18 **NCCC joins appeal against Enloe Dam rebuild**  
**Membership application**
- 19 **Heli-skiing company gives new meaning to "cut and run"**

COVER: *Mt. Shuksan and Mt. Baker from summit of Ruth Mountain.* — PHILIP FENNER PHOTO

---

## The Wild Cascades

---

*Journal of the North Cascades Conservation Council*

EDITOR: Anne Basye

EDITOR EMERITUS: Betty Manning

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

Printing by EcoGraphics | Pat Hutson, Designer

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

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

*The Wild Cascades* Editor

[wildcascades@northcascades.org](mailto:wildcascades@northcascades.org)

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 half 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, the Wild Sky Wilderness and others. Among its most dramatic victories has been working with British Columbia allies to block the raising of Ross Dam, which would have drowned Big Beaver Valley.

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

**North Cascades  
Conservation Council  
P.O. Box 95980  
University Station  
Seattle, WA 98145-2980**

**NCCC Website  
[www.northcascades.org](http://www.northcascades.org)**

## NCCC Board

PRESIDENT

**Karl Forsgaard**

BOARD CHAIRMAN

**Patrick Goldsworthy**

VICE PRESIDENT

**Tom Hammond**

TREASURER

**Tom Brucker**

ASSISTANT TREASURER

**Athena Pangan-Hammond**

INTERIM CO-SECRETARIES

**Marc Bardsley**

**Philip Fenner**

OTHER BOARD MEMBERS

Bruce Barnbaum

Polly Dyer

Charles Ehlert

Dave Fluharty

Anders Forsgaard

Kevin Geraghty

Ed Henderson

Fayette Krause

Dave LeBlanc

Betty Manning

Carolyn McConnell

Rick McGuire

Thom Peters

Mike Town

Laura Zalesky

Phil Zalesky



Founded in 1957  
SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

## The President's Report Summer/Fall 2012

It took me 20 years to climb Pyramid Mountain. East of Glacier Peak Wilderness, the nine-mile trail starts high (over 6,000 feet) and stays high, with Lake Chelan and the North Fork Entiat River far below. On our first visit, my sons were too young to hike (or be carried) more than the first couple miles, but we had views of Pyramid from open ridge-top meadows of lupine and paintbrush. Every few years I returned for a day hike, but I postponed backpacking the whole trail because of ground-truthing needs elsewhere in the Entiat/Mad River country. Pyramid remained a goal, so it was good to finally reach it this year.

I was brought to this place by a motorcycle club's lawsuit challenging the trail's closure to their machines. NCCC and allies intervened in the lawsuit in 1992 to support the Forest Service decision, and we wrote some powerful arguments that the federal courts adopted. The Ninth Circuit's North Entiat decision is still the leading case in the U.S. on use conflict between motorized and non-motorized users, and it has been cited in over 500 other reported court decisions. It's taken 40 years for the agency to implement the Nixon-Carter Executive Orders on off-road vehicle (ORV) use on federal lands. The current Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest Travel Management Plan process will determine which roads and trails will be open to motorized use, and which trails will not (i.e. ATVs, motorcycles, and 4x4s on trails, or not).

The Forest Service said the Entiat-Mad River roadless area (including Pyramid) is highly suitable for addition to the adjacent Glacier Peak Wilderness, and I agree. But ORV interests will oppose such protection, while seeking to entrench ORV use in as many places as possible.

Further south, in the Yakima water process, several former allies launched a National Recreation Area proposal this year that would statutorily lock in ORV use in large portions of this Forest, undermining the pending Travel Management process and setting a horrible precedent.

On this summer's Pyramid Mountain trek my friends and I thoroughly enjoyed each other's company, the clear weather, and spectacular views of peaks in all directions. There were also many reminders of the challenges NCCC faces in Yakima. It was a perfect place for reflecting on how to meet those challenges.

*Karl F. Forsgaard*  
Karl Forsgaard

# North Fork Snoqualmie update

By Rick McGuire

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) conducted a public meeting in June regarding the proposed “Black Canyon” hydroelectric proposal on the North Fork Snoqualmie River a few miles north of North Bend. If built, the project would divert much of the flow of the North Fork above what is generally known as “Ernie’s Canyon” to produce a small amount of hydroelectric power.

At the June meeting FERC solicited input from the public on the proposed project. Opposition was widespread, and no one but the project developers said anything in favor of it. A number of whitewater kayakers were outspoken against the proposal, which would remove most of the water

from the very challenging but increasingly popular kayaking route through the gorge.

The Black Canyon proposal flies in the face of a number of protective designations on the North Fork. The Northwest Power Planning Council has classified it as a “protected area” and much of the river reach that would be dewatered is within the Mt. Si Natural Resource Conservation Area (NRCA). The project proponents made the interesting argument that the river “abuts” the NRCA. Considering that the beds of all navigable rivers are state property, and that kayakers regularly navigate the river, their position that the river is outside the NRCA seems unlikely to prevail. The Washington Department of

Natural Resources (DNR) takes the view that the river is state owned and within the NRCA.

Several people at the meeting asked why FERC is even considering this proposal, given that it would go against so many existing protections for the North Fork. There was no real response from FERC. It seems unlikely that FERC could license a project within a state-protected area. But the mere fact that this meeting was held and that FERC seems to be taking the proposal seriously is cause for concern. NCCC will continue to monitor developments and do what it can to keep this stretch of the North Fork Snoqualmie flowing freely.

---

## Green Mountain lookout must be removed

By Thom Peters

In March 2012, U.S. District Judge John Coughenour ruled in favor of Wilderness Watch in its lawsuit against the U.S. Forest Service, and ordered the agency to remove the recently constructed Green Mountain lookout from Glacier Peak Wilderness. The court ruled that removal of the new structure is the appropriate remedy for the Forest Service’s violations of the Wilderness Act and NEPA, the National Environmental Policy Act.

At Green Mountain the Forest Service illegally allowed use of mechanized and motorized equipment in the Glacier Peak Wilderness to construct a new “fire lookout” building after having removed the remains of the former “historical” lookout seven years earlier. The undisputed facts are that the Forest Service used more than 65 helicopter flights, power tools and jackhammers, new massive concrete footings, and all new wood for the foundation, wall studs, rafters, floor joists, and more. The court ruled that the agency “egregiously erred” in its actions.

In response to the ruling, U.S. Representative Rick Larson introduced a bill in Congress (H.R. 6039) to amend the Washington State Wilderness Act of 1984 to allow the illegally constructed lookout to remain on Green Mountain. This would effectively overturn the court’s ruling, and would set a terrible precedent for our National

Wilderness Preservation System. North Cascades Conservation Council opposes this bill, and believes that the court made the correct decision in this case, based on the many Forest Service violations of law, including failure to notify the public of its plans or conduct any environmental review of the lookout project. Federal courts have concluded that historical preservation, at least with respect to man-made structures, is not a valid purpose of the Wilderness Act.

With or without a lookout structure on its summit, Green Mountain offers spectacular views of many mountains in all directions.

### Similar removal of Chelan Butte lookout from its original site

If the Green Mountain lookout were to be moved down into the Darrington area, it could be utilized as a west-side “Forest Fire Interpretive Center” attraction. This would provide benefits to the local community and the general public:

- A local economic boost from tourism traffic.
- Educational opportunities as a point of visitor contact and interpretation of Forest Service and fire detection history, including the role of fire on the landscape.

- Wheelchair accessible trails and signage.
- Instead of only a few thousand hardy annual visitors, everyone would have an opportunity to see and experience a lookout, since it would be accessible year around for people of all ages and physical abilities.
- The new Green Mountain lookout building would be preserved.
- The Wilderness Act would maintain its integrity.

On the east side of the Cascades, the Forest Service similarly relocated the Chelan Butte lookout, which was built by the CCC in 1938. It had not been staffed since 1984, and was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1990. In 1996 it was moved to its new location at the Columbia Breaks Fire Interpretive Center about a mile north of Entiat, Washington on the west side of US Highway 97, and the Chelan Butte lookout is now the only lookout in the state that is handicap accessible. Its website address is: <http://www.columbiabreakswildfire.com/index.html>.

# Proposed motocross project on the Mountain Loop Highway

by Bruce Barnbaum

Traditional outdoor recreation along the Mountain Loop Highway could be severely impacted if Snohomish County issues a permit for construction of motocross racing tracks on 80 acres of land, four miles east of Granite Falls.

Motocross project proponents, under the project name MXGP, previously had a small motocross track in Monroe that was closed down for zoning issues. They tried opening another track in Maltby but were stopped by citizen opposition, and because the site was already designated for toxic clean-up by EPA. Their next step was to have Snohomish County Ordinance 07-137 written for the Granite Falls site with little public knowledge.

The Granite Falls motocross project description shows three major competition racing tracks. On racing weekends there could be as many as 40 races per day with 40 riders per race, totaling as many as 1,600 motorcycles racing on a single day.

Traffic along the Mountain Loop Highway could be backed up dramatically during each major racing event. This could impede traditional recreationists from reaching their desired trailheads or campsites.

The noise from the racing motorcycles would reverberate throughout the valley and up onto Green Mountain Ridge and

Mt. Pilchuck. Hikes to popular destinations would be accompanied by the buzz of racing motorcycles and ATVs in the distance. A 25-foot-high noise-attenuating berm is planned for the site perimeter. It would require 550,000 cubic yards of fill dirt. Plans call for construction of that berm over a period of 15 years (not prior to the start of any on-site racing) and always “depending on availability of fill material.”

The project is located atop a County designated “critical aquifer recharge area,” raising the issue of aquifer contamination by gas, oil, and other toxic surface spills from racers’ motorcycles and spectator vehicles parked atop the aquifer. Eighty acres of trees would be cut down and replaced by the motorcycle tracks, resulting in a large net increase in greenhouse gas emissions from the site.

The Mountain Loop Highway is a designated National Scenic Byway between Granite Falls and Darrington draws over 250,000 people annually. It features some of the most popular hiking trails in the North Cascades, (Mt. Pilchuck, Lake 22, Big 4 ice caves), kayaking and canoeing on the Stillaguamish River, as well as birding, photography and picnic sites – traditional outdoor recreation at its best. All of these

recreational opportunities could be negatively impacted by the motocross proposal.

The Granite Falls motocross proposal first surfaced in 2007, after the Snohomish County Council passed Ordinance 07-137, specifically written to allow the motocross racing tracks at the Granite Falls site. Nobody living in the vicinity was informed of the ordinance. After the proposal surfaced, a group of opponents coalesced.

The Mountain Loop Conservancy has successfully fought the motocross project for five years. During that time, Snohomish County Planning and Development Services Department (PDS) has granted the project one extension after another, despite its failures to timely submit necessary studies. In May 2012, the County Health Department wrote that it could not recommend permitting the project due to intractable problems with proposed sanitation facilities at the site. However, we remain concerned that PDS could still recommend permitting the project. Should it do so, appeals will be filed, entailing a county hearing. Legal counsel and expert testimony do not come cheaply. If you wish to contribute to help with this legal battle, please send your tax-deductible check to Mountain Loop Conservancy, P. O. Box 1097, Granite Falls, WA 98252. NCCC supports the Conservancy in this battle.



*Hiker on Pyramid Mountain with Glacier Peak, Mt. Maude, Seven Fingered Jack, Mt. Fernow and Cardinal Peak.*

— KARL FORSGAARD PHOTO



# NCCC Actions

MAY –  
SEPTEMBER  
2012

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



## EXPANDING, ESTABLISHING, AND PROTECTING WILDERNESS AREAS

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

- Signed a letter supporting designation of the 3559-acre Thunder Creek Potential Wilderness Area as part of the Stephen M. Mather Wilderness Area of the Ross Lake National Recreation Area (and we are happy to report that the area did become Wilderness).
- Signed a letter responding to the Skykomish Ranger District's process to review subsurface lands around the Wild Sky Wilderness nominated for leasing for exploratory drilling for geothermal development, and calling for protection of specific natural resources in the area.
- Joined 18 Washington groups in opposing HR1505, the Hastings Land Use Bill, which would undermine basic protections for our National Park System in order to "secure" US borders.
- Signed a letter opposing HR 2578, the omnibus bill that included HR1505.
- Signed onto Statement of Joint Principles for protecting National Parks.
- Sent letter supporting King County acquisition of Buse development rights at the gateway to the Middle Fork Snoqualmie River valley.



## PROMOTING ENVIRONMENTALLY SOUND RECREATION IN WILD AREAS

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

- Led coalition of conservation organizations providing critical input to Yakima Water Plan proposal to create two new National Recreation Areas with statutorily mandated off-road vehicle use in the Teanaway and Manastash-Taneum basins of Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest.
- Attended public meeting at REI with Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest officials regarding roads and access to trailheads.
- Contributed \$1400 toward mapping of Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest Wilderness recommendations submitted to the Forest Service on behalf of NCCC, Sierra Club and Alpine Lakes Protection Society for use in the OWNF Forest Plan Revision and Travel Management processes. Also wrote in support of Washington Wild's grant request for future Cascades Wild mapping.
- Participated in monthly planning meetings of State Department of Natural Resources committees for Naneum Ridge, Reiter, and Snoqualmie Corridor.



## PROTECTING OLD-GROWTH TREES AND PROMOTING RESPONSIBLE FOREST MANAGEMENT

*Why it matters: like real estate, they're just not making ancient forest anymore. We seek to restore watersheds and fisheries damaged from decades of heavy logging and road building and protect significant forests from degradation.*

- ✓ Attended meeting with Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest officials on forest plan revision, roadless areas, and travel management.
- ✓ Joined 27 Washington conservation, recreation, hunting, fishing and religious organizations in a letter expressing concern about the impact to the integrity of national protections for roadless areas by HR 1408, the Sealaska Bill.
- ✓ Commented on proposed logging in the Finney Adaptive Management Area of the Mount Baker Snoqualmie National Forest.

### Bumping Lake advocacy

- ✓ Continued advocacy against the proposed new Bumping Lake dam.
- ✓ Signed a letter from Friends of Bumping Lake, putting pressure on the organizations that are pushing the destructive Yakima Workgroup plan to flood the forests at Bumping Lake.
- ✓ Helped develop agendas for conservation community meetings around the lands component of the Yakima Plan.
- ✓ Co-authored an op-ed in Ellensburg Daily Record in response to its series of articles on the Yakima Plan.
- ✓ Helped organize the second annual Sierra Club Bumping Lake campout in September, hosted by Friends of Bumping Lake.



## PROTECTING WILDLIFE AND HABITAT

*Why it matters: from microscopic fungi to top predators, the wilderness ecosystem's living members are interdependent, so keeping viable populations of each species is essential to preserve the ecosystem for future generations.*

- ✓ Joined Sierra Club, Columbia Bioregional Education Project, the Center for Environmental Law and Policy, and American Whitewater in appealing the State Department of Ecology's issuance of a permit for Okanogan P.U.D.'s Enloe Dam project on the Similkameen River.
- ✓ Signed a multi-group letter commenting on the proposed Black Canyon Hydroelectric project on the North Fork Snoqualmie River and attended a June presentation by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.
- ✓ Continued to fight to get non-native fish out of the high mountain lakes in the North Cascades and restore native ecosystems to the NCNP by supporting the High Lakes Fishery Management Plan.

***Give to NCCC through the Combined Fund Drive***

State employees from Colfax to Forks and Anatone to Blaine—including employees of the University of Washington—can now contribute to NCCC through the state Combined Fund Drive! To contribute, designate your Combined Fund Drive donation for NCCC.

# DNR Snoqualmie Corridor plan taking shape

by Mike Town

The Washington Department of Natural Resources' (DNR) "Snoqualmie Corridor" planning effort is finishing an active summer of investigation into new trail and recreation opportunities on the 53,000 acres of DNR-managed lands comprising the Snoqualmie Corridor. I represent NCCC on the 17-member committee of interested citizens helping DNR with this task in these areas north and south of I-90 from Issaquah to east of North Bend.

Recreation demand is guaranteed to be high in these areas close to Seattle. Moving west to east, the areas being looked at include the following.

## Tiger Mountain

This heavily used area with many trails is not a main focus, as it has already been the subject of past planning efforts, but the committee is seeking ways to connect it with areas farther east, particularly the Raging River area.

## Raging River

Most of these 10,000 acres located southeast of Highway 18 were recently acquired by DNR. It is a "blank slate" in terms of recreation, without any trails. Logged twice and laced with old logging roads, it is still an attractive area, with plenty of room for hiker, bike and horse trails, and mostly free from clay and other unstable soils that are a problem in some other areas. The Raging River is a tributary of the Snoqualmie River, joining it just above Fall City. It has no barriers to anadromous fish, with salmon and steelhead ascending it virtually to the headwaters.

One challenge here will be to integrate trails and recreation with future timber cutting. Direct access will also be needed, since existing roads from Highway 18 could never accommodate heavy use. Fortunately there is plenty of relatively flat land near Highway 18 where a large trailhead could be built when Washington State Highways has the funds to move ahead with plans to rebuild the highway. Current plans call for a new bridge with entrances and exits at Holder Gap (aka Tiger Summit) and a new interchange at the junction of Highway 18 and I-90. In the interim, main access to the Raging will be from the existing Rattlesnake Mountain trailhead at Snoqualmie Point Park.

Ideas for developing the recreational potential of this large area include loop

trails from the Rattlesnake Ledge area at its southern end, connecting through to Highway 18, and following along the Raging River. Spur trails might be built in spots down to the river itself. The Raging is geologically unusual in never having been glaciated, with parts of the river flowing directly over bedrock, something not often seen in Cascade rivers. Other new trails could climb to views atop Taylor Mountain and connect with existing horse trails beginning at King County's Taylor Mountain Forest area.

## Rural Lands

Mitchell Hill and other scattered DNR parcels located north of I-90 and west of Snoqualmie Ridge have almost no easy public access, and many have user-built trails from neighboring residential areas. DNR is looking at some of these lands to provide trail connection corridors to and from other areas, and also how to effectively manage them for sustainable timber production.

## Mt. Si/Middle Fork NRCAs

Probably the best known of these lands to readers of *The Wild Cascades*, the Mt. Si and Middle Fork Snoqualmie Natural Resource Conservation Areas (NRCAs) comprise over 20,000 acres of land centered on Mt. Si and the lower Middle Fork Snoqualmie valley. The area also extends into part of the South Fork Snoqualmie watershed.

The Middle Fork Snoqualmie is one of the best-known conservation success stories in the Cascades. Twenty years ago it was a tangled mix of public and private ownerships plagued by shooting, dumping and vandalism. A concerted effort by conservationists, with NCCC playing a major role, managed to turn that situation around, transforming what was once Washington's most notorious mountain slum into a natural gem.

The Middle Fork was the subject of a pioneering planning effort in the mid 1990's, and much has changed for the better. Ownerships have been consolidated, with almost all the lower valley now under DNR management. In 2009, Washington Public Lands Commissioner Peter Goldmark signed an order designating the new Middle Fork NRCA and expanding the Mt. Si NRCA. The two NRCAs comprise the largest extent of protected lands close to the Seattle metropolitan area.

New trails are being considered in a number of places. The geology in much of the lower valley is challenging. Large areas of unstable clay soils make it difficult to put trails, and especially trailhead parking areas, in certain places. But the clay is confined to the lowest elevations, and most upslope areas are well suited to trails.

The Mailbox – Granite Creek – Dirty Harry's country offers some of the most exciting trailbuilding possibilities. DNR is decommissioning and converting the old Granite Creek road to trail to provide access to Granite Lakes. Loop trails could be built to connect Granite Creek with the new trail that DNR is building to the summit of Mailbox Peak, which stands above the intersection of the Middle and South Fork valleys. On the South Fork side, a low-elevation trail loop could be built to Dirty Harry's Balcony, a view promontory overlooking the South Fork valley (and so named by NCCC's Harvey Manning.) Above the Balcony viewpoint, trails could ascend to Dirty Harry's Peak on the Middle – South Fork divide, and follow that divide ridge west to connect with the new Mailbox trail. A downslope trail on the lower southern flanks of Mailbox could turn it all into a big loop, walkable from one trailhead.

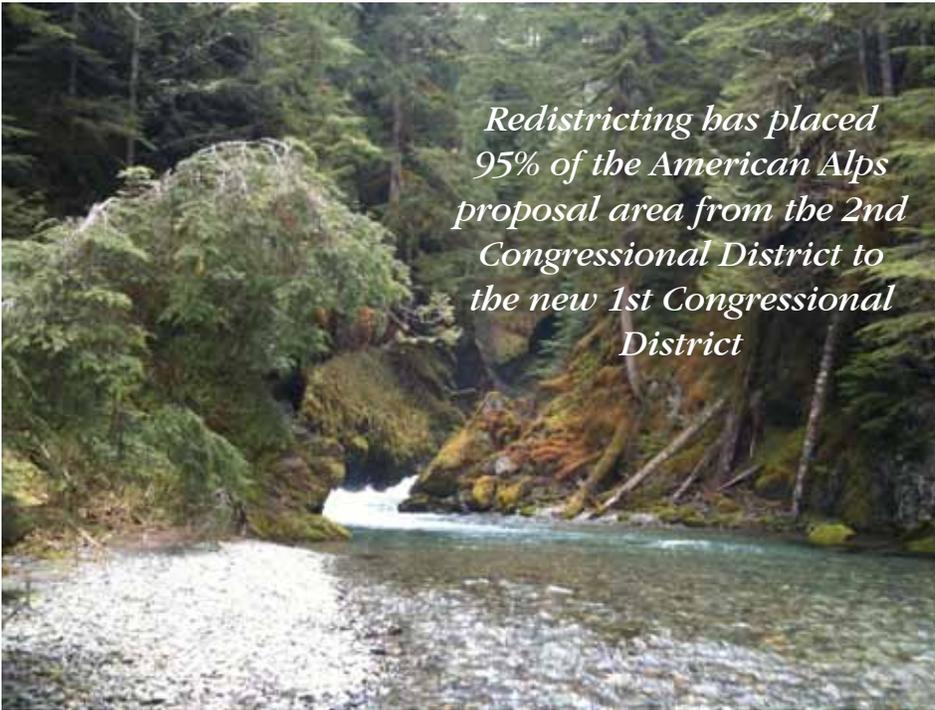
Other trails here could ascend to the splendid high-elevation views from 5800' Cloudcatcher Peak and also connect to Granite Lakes. Few other close-by areas in the Cascades offer such an array of interesting hiking destinations. Lakes, tarns, rock gardens, heather meadows, flower meadows, and both low and high elevation viewpoints could all be reached via new trails in this area. An additional attraction is that the topography lends itself well to building loop trails which could start and finish from the same trailhead, with no need for car shuttles. Just about all hikers agree that loops are more interesting to hike than a straight out-and-back. Three or more hiking loops could possibly be built here, all of them accessible from either the Mailbox trailhead or a new trailhead on the South Fork side at Ollalie State Park.

NCCC has long believed that the days are numbered for many if not most of the poorly built, decaying logging roads in the Cascades. New, more accessible trails need to be built in locations that are not

*Continued on page 17*

# American Alps update

By Jim Davis, president, American Alps



*Redistricting has placed 95% of the American Alps proposal area from the 2nd Congressional District to the new 1st Congressional District*

The American Alps Legacy Proposal is an initiative to complete the conservation vision for the North Cascades National Park. Many special places were left out when the National Park and adjacent wilderness areas were established in the 1960s and 1980s. Ancient forests, pristine rivers and streams, core wildlife habitats, and magnificent mountains still remain unprotected by park or wilderness status. The American Alps Legacy Proposal will add 237,702 acres to the North Cascades National Park.

Outstanding leadership is being provided for the American Alps campaign by an Advisory Committee including Jim Wickwire, Peter Jackson, Dan Evans, Gordon Orians, Polly Dyer, Art Kruckeberg, Estella Leopold, John Miles, Mike McCloskey, Jim Whitaker, Peter Morrison, Brock Evans, Norm Winn, Wyatt King, and John Roskelley.

The list of organizations and businesses supporting the American Alps Legacy Proposal continues to expand. Supporting groups now include five local Audubon Chapters, the Washington Native Plant Society, Washington Environmental Council, North Cascades Conservation Council, Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs, Mountaineers Foundation, Mount Baker Club, Issaquah Alps Trails Club, Conser-

vAmerica, Mazamas, Spokane Mountaineers, Olympic Park Associates, Olympic Forest Coalition, Alpine Lakes Protection Society, and Chuckanut Conservancy. More than three dozen businesses in Whatcom and Skagit Counties have signed a support letter recognizing the economic,



*Protecting wild areas will provide opportunities for future generations to enjoy the American Alps.*

*Pristine streams are threatened by hydropower development in the American Alps*

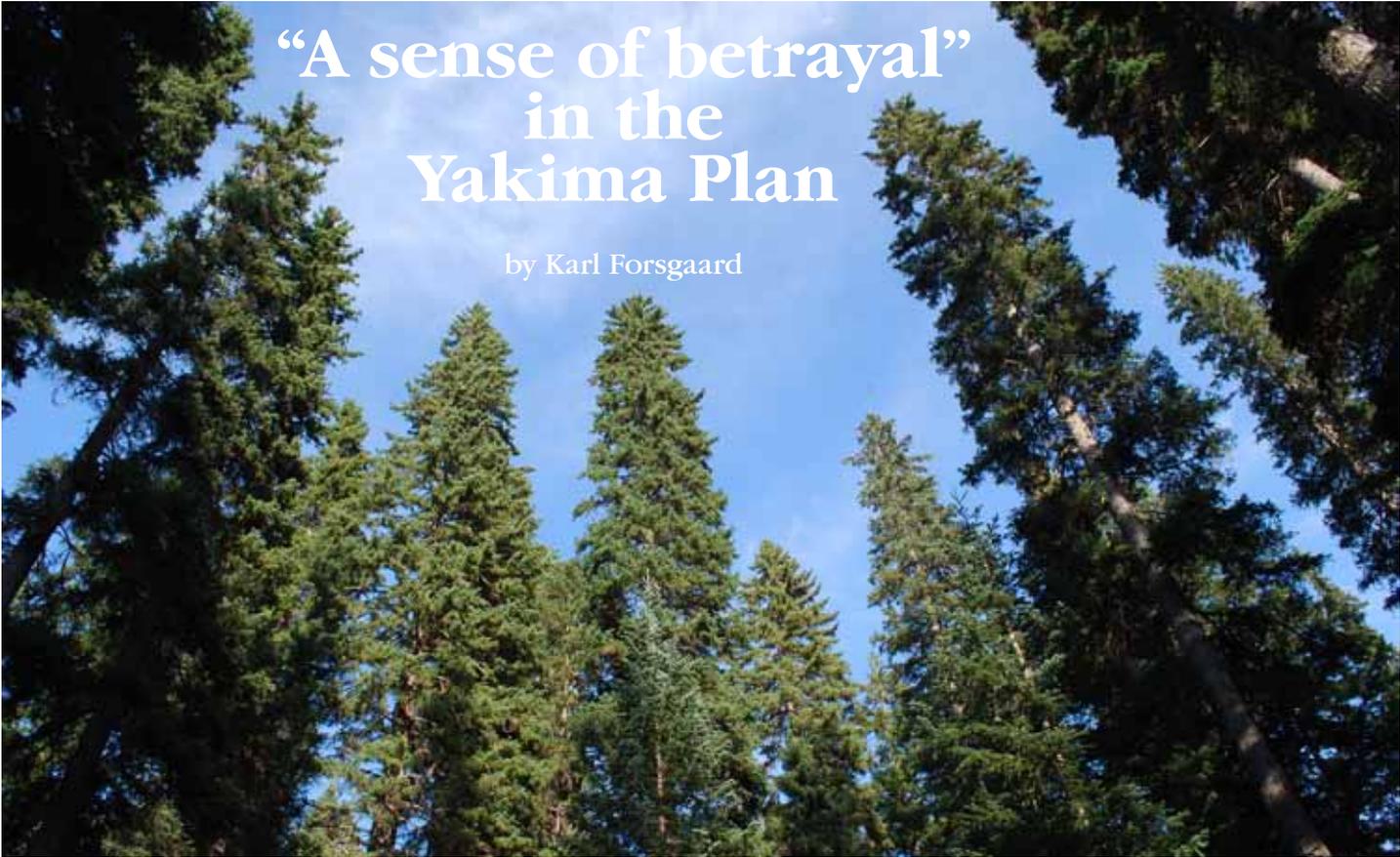
recreation, and conservation benefits of the American Alps Legacy Proposal.

Senator Cantwell continues to express strong interest in the American Alps Legacy Proposal. We are working with her staff to identify and address important stakeholder issues. Unfortunately, congressional redistricting has thrown American Alps a big political surprise this year. Until now, we have been working with Congressman Larsen in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Congressional District. Redistricting has now placed 95% of the American Alps proposal area in the new 1<sup>st</sup> Congressional District, with the remaining 5% moving to Congressman Reichert's new district. Major action on American Alps is on hold until after the November 2012 election, when we will know who the new representative will be from the 1<sup>st</sup> Congressional District.

American Alps outreach is not on hold. We are requesting meetings with major candidates in the new 1<sup>st</sup> Congressional District to brief them on the American Alps Legacy Proposal. Significant newspaper coverage of American Alps continues, including "Big plans proposed for a little-used jewel" by Lynda V. Mapes in the September 2 *Seattle Times*. We are working to further strengthen local business and conservation/recreation group support for American Alps. We have had several meetings with tribal representatives and expect many more before the end of the year. We are also offering tours of the American Alps proposal area.

For more information (including access to the American Alps Legacy Proposal, the American Alps Biodiversity Report and the American Alps Economic Benefits Report), visit our website at [www.americanalps.org](http://www.americanalps.org) or call 360-296-5159.

We expect to make a big push for American Alps legislation in the spring of 2013. Please join us in this important conservation effort.



# “A sense of betrayal” in the Yakima Plan

by Karl Forsgaard

In the Spring 2012 *TWC*, we reported on criticism of the proposal for motorized National Recreation Areas (NRAs) in the Upper Yakima, Teanaway, Manastash and Taneum basins of Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest, north and south of I-90 in Kittitas County. The NRA proposal would legislatively dedicate 41,000 acres to “backcountry motorized” use, i.e., off-road motorcycles, ATVs and 4x4s on trails, and snowmobiles traveling cross-country.

The NRA proposal came from a subcommittee of the Yakima “Workgroup” convened by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and Washington State Department of Ecology to promote construction of two new dams in the Yakima Basin, including a dam that would drown and destroy more than 1,000 acres of ancient forest at Bumping Lake. With an estimated cost of up to \$5 billion, the Yakima Plan is the largest project in the State of Washington since WPPSS.

## Objections to the NRA proposal

The Yakima subcommittee published the NRA proposal and its map without consulting dozens of conservation organizations working in this geography, and without even consulting the National Forest’s Cle Elum Ranger District that

manages almost all of the land in the proposed NRAs. When the NRA proposal was published in January, the Cle Elum District Ranger had not yet seen it.

The NRA proposal was not mentioned in the Yakima water plan’s Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), but it was published the day after the DEIS public comment period closed, and then it was incorporated into the Final EIS, so the public was denied an opportunity to comment on it, in violation of the National and State Environmental Policy Acts.

In the nine months since the NRA proposal was published, its authors have not apologized for any of this, nor have they promised to do anything differently in their future work on public lands legislation. In other words, the supporters of the NRA proponents are encouraging them to continue following this new model of behavior, even though it harms our conservation community, poisoning relationships for years to come.

The Final EIS says the NRAs would “attract more users,” i.e., more off-road vehicles (ORVs) into the headwaters. ORVs have a well-documented history of detrimental effects on soils, water, fish and wildlife habitat. They also degrade recreational experiences for other users and drive them away. It is absurd for the NRA

*Bumping Lake ancient forest near Cedar Creek. — KARL FORSGAARD PHOTO*

proponents to assert that the NRA designations and consequent increased ORV use would improve the quality of fish habitat or improve the recreational experience of the non-motorized majority of recreational users of the National Forest.

The Cle Elum District Ranger continues to object to the NRA proposal for many reasons, including:

- lack of District capacity and resources to manage the NRAs, to the detriment of the rest of the District
- difficulty of obtaining reliable adequate funding
- lack of user advocacy for this designation as a critical need
- lack of opportunity for public comment on the NRA proposal.

The NRA proposal would statutorily lock in ORV use, and the Forest Service would lose its administrative authority to close trails or areas that become seriously damaged by ORVs. The NRA proposal would set a horrible national precedent for public lands legislation, and a horrible national precedent for trails. And once it

enters the legislative process, any legislative proposal can morph into something far worse than whatever the Yakima Workgroup drafts. Kittitas politicians have made it clear that they want the NRAs to lock in ORV use, and one of the sponsors admitted that ORV lock-in is the whole point of the NRA deal.

We urge the Yakima Plan supporters to take the trail-by-trail ORV designations out of the Yakima Plan and keep them in the National Forest processes where they belong. Keep them administrative and amendable, not statutory and locked in. Avoid setting a horrible precedent.

*With an estimated cost of up to \$5 billion, the Yakima Plan is the largest project in the State of Washington since WPPSS.*

### **Surprise, surprise: supporters include some big-name conservation groups**

In addition to the negative impacts on habitat and quiet recreation, what's really alarming about the NRA proposal is that it did not come from ORV advocacy groups (who may not yet know about it), but from organizations historically associated with conservation – organizations with words like “Wilderness,” “Rivers,” “Wildlife” and “Trout” in their names. In March 2012, NCCC was among 26 conservation organizations, including Sierra Club and Audubon, that signed a letter objecting to the NRA proposal. Another letter from three more conservation organizations said that the NRA proposal “undermines” existing Forest Service processes. A supporter of the Yakima Plan acknowledged that the NRA proposal had “raised tension and mistrust” in the conservation community. The existence of this real “sense of betrayal” was communicated to other groups who were still undecided, but the undecideds were undoubtedly the target of political arm-twisting, and at least two more groups have decided to support the Yakima Plan.

In June, the Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust board of directors voted to support the goals of the Yakima Plan, declining to table it to allow more time to conduct due diligence and fix process defects. The Greenway support letter says



“we are impressed” with the Yakima Plan proposal and that it is “an extraordinary achievement in compromise and collaboration.” Only one Greenway Trust board member voted against signing this letter.

In July, the Washington Trails Association staff and board also voted to support the Yakima Plan. WTA’s letter says “WTA is saddened by the inundation of trail miles and flooding of old-growth forest that will be caused by raising Bumping Lake,” referring to the giant trees along Bumping Lake Trail #971 that would be inundated under the Plan that WTA now supports. WTA’s letter says WTA wants to advocate for hikers, but it doesn’t explain why WTA needs to support the Yakima water plan in order to advocate for hikers.

Some have said they needed to support the Plan in order to be “at the table,” citing the adage that “you’re either at the table or on the menu.” They were wrong, because plenty of conservation organizations, including NCCC, are now at the table while refusing to support the Plan.

### **NCCC helps avoid review process limited to those who agree**

In August, the Yakima Plan proponents’ website linked a video of Governor Christine Gregoire being interviewed by the Yakima Herald newspaper about the Yakima Plan. She states “We have a Plan...We have *everybody* agreed. That’s unprecedented. ... Everybody now is on the same page. That’s never happened. ...If we can’t go as a group ... then we give a ready excuse to the Legislature and Congress to say no. So, [if] we stay united, we succeed. [If] we divide yet again, we will get nothing, and

*Canoeists on Bumping Lake with Nelson Ridge and Mt. Aix. — KARL FORSGAARD*

that’s what’s happening around the West.” In other words, to obtain \$5 billion to build the dams, the proponents must convince Congress that there is no opposition to their Yakima Plan, and they will say “we have everybody agreed” even when Sierra Club, Audubon and 27 other organizations did not agree.

Also in August, the sponsors of the NRA proposal issued invitations to many conservation organizations in Washington to participate in a series of meetings with a professional facilitator (Ross Strategic) funded by BuRec and Ecology on behalf of the Workgroup. The facilitated meetings are reviewing the lands component of the Plan, i.e. they do not directly deal with the proposed dams. The main discussion topic in the lands component is the NRA proposal, but the sponsors’ invitations omitted *half* of the 26 organizations that had signed the March letter objecting to the NRA proposal.

The meeting invitations also required that participants “*have agreed that they are supportive of the overall purposes and intent of the Yakima ... Plan.*” In a subsequent “clarification” message, the sponsors were still requiring “*support in order to participate.*” NCCC and allies objected that these provisions were overbroad and ambiguous, as the Plan EIS is about 900 pages long, endless arguments could be made about what overall “purposes and intent” are contained in the Plan, and the

*Continued on page 12*

## “A sense of betrayal” *continued from page 11*

sponsors’ “support” requirement could be interpreted as a barrier to participation by advocates with legitimate concerns about the Plan. It was unfair and counterproductive for the sponsors to seek a purported resolution of this controversy by requiring participants to take what could be interpreted as an oath of loyalty to the Plan in order to even be heard. In their “clarification” message, the sponsors put our word “controversy” in quotation marks, implicitly denying the existence of a controversy (since controversy would disprove that “everybody agreed”). However, the sponsors ultimately abandoned their attempt to require Plan support from participants, and the facilitated meetings began in September attended by many who do not support the Plan.

We believe the facilitated meeting process should be open and transparent. Because of the controversy about the Plan, and due to past concerns about Plan process, NCCC and allies asked for information on how the meetings will be facilitated, including copies of any contracts or memoranda or instructions or direction from BuRec or Ecology relating

*NCCC supports  
an open, transparent  
process that allows  
supporters and opponents  
to review all aspects  
of the Yakima Plan.*

to the facilitator’s work. The sponsors (and Ross) refused to provide such information, even though BuRec and Ecology are using public money – taxpayer dollars – to pay Ross as facilitator of the meetings.

### **Pushing the envelope on the agenda**

In September the facilitated meetings began, and the facilitator asked participants to submit topics for discussion. NCCC and allies submitted several topics, some of which the facilitator agreed to cover, such as the Sierra Club/NCCC/ALPS proposal for new Wilderness in this National Forest, and how to define limits on ORV use. However, other proposed discussion topics were deemed by the BuRec-funded facilitator to be “outside of the scope of this process,” including:



*Bumping Lake hikers in ancient forest  
near Cedar Creek. — KARL FORSGAARD  
PHOTO*

- lack of opportunity for public comment on the NRA proposal
- reasons why it would be better to take the ORV designations out of the Yakima Plan and leave them in the National Forest travel management and forest planning processes where they belong
- ways that ORV designations in the Yakima Plan would set a bad precedent and negatively impact future lands protection efforts in Washington and nationally
- risks of negative changes to proposed legislation during the legislative process
- past policy statements of The Wilderness Society et al. opposing statutory mandates for ORV use in lands legislation.

In stating that these topics “will not be discussed” and “I will not be considering them as I assist the Workgroup,” the facilitator also wrote that some of our proposed discussion topics “have not been worded in the spirit of developing advice.” We disagreed with that characterization, because all of these topics are worthy of advice to the members of the conservation community, including advice on how to avoid setting a bad precedent. The sponsors and their facilitator may not want to talk about it, but that does not mean it is not advice.

These facts (and many more) strongly suggest that the Yakima Plan supporters and their facilitator are seeking to neutralize opponents of the Plan and its NRA proposal by gathering their comments without changing anything significant in the Plan and its NRA proposal. Nonetheless, some opponents are providing their

comments in the hope of making the bad precedent less bad. A Plan supporter admitted that from a wildlife habitat perspective, it would be “untenable” to continue the current level of ORV use on the lands proposed for NRAs, let alone increase it as called for by the Plan.

In October, the facilitated meetings will pursue more detail in subgroups that were being organized as we went to press, on such topics as recreational uses, boundaries, Wild & Scenic River designations, and connecting with ORV advocates.

Despite the depressing picture that emerges from the many betrayals in this story, there are still good things to celebrate. The giant trees of the Bumping Lake ancient forest are still there to be enjoyed, and perhaps someday WTA will change its mind about protecting Bumping Lake Trail #971. Dozens of Sierra Club and NCCC members spent a glorious weekend there in September at Sierra Club’s annual campout, hosted by Friends of Bumping Lake at the Maykut family cabin, which would be inundated by the proposed new dam. We are grateful to the veteran conservationists in the 29 organizations who signed letters in March about the NRAs, and the 1,500 citizens who sent DEIS comment letters opposing the new dams, and the unknown others who have resisted political arm-twisting and refrained from supporting the Plan and its proposed dams and NRAs.



## CHARISMATIC MINIFAUNA: North Cascades Pika Project report, 2012

By Phil Fenner

**B**rowsing for outdoor opportunities, I found that North Cascades National Park (NCNP) and North Cascades Institute (NCI) sought volunteers to help with a “Pika Project” in the Park this summer. Turns out the little pika (*Ochotona princeps*) is in peril in much of its range due to climate change and its extreme heat sensitivity. It’s considered a “bellwether species” for global warming, since it does not survive long above about 77° F. The project sounded challenging, so I joined them for a few days of bushwhacking, fording, scrambling and seeking signs of these elusive little rabbit relatives.

You’ve probably heard it said that people only seem to care about the more charismatic megafauna—the bears, elk, deer and others that are only the largest and least numerous members of the mountain biome. Pikas are so tiny it’s hard to call them megafauna. But these “charismatic minifauna” are in some trouble.

According to wildlife research biologist Jason Bruggeman, who leads the project with NCNP biologist Roger Christophersen, the pika is already considered extirpated from a portion of its Great Basin range, and may suffer the same fate here if warming trends continue. It was considered for listing as threatened, but for now is only “under study” in the Cascades until more is known about their populations.

Compared to other areas, the North Cascades Pika Project is only in its infancy, this being only the fourth year that the

study has been underway. Funding is a constant challenge, so volunteers are pretty much its life blood. And speaking of challenges, I’m one of those hikers with a fondness for going beyond the end of the trail, who enjoys the occasional river ford and bushwhack. Well, this trip cured me of my urge to get wild for a while. I came back bruised and scratched and beaten-up, but happy to have helped and have met some really interesting, wonderful folks. If you’re interested in doing some serious “citizen science” and/or contributing much-needed funds to our Pika Project, please contact NCI, or the NCNP office in Sedro-Woolley and ask for Roger.

Many of the Pika Project missions are day trips, but I signed up for one of the longer ones, down Bridge Creek from Rainy Pass, then up a tributary, the North Fork of Bridge Creek. The scenery is really exceptional in the North Fork valley, with Mt. Goode, the second-highest non-volcanic peak in the Cascades, right there along with Storm King on the west side of the valley. The trail and campsites are in great shape thanks to recent NCNP maintenance efforts.

Day One was the long hike in to base camp on the North Fork, carrying radios, data loggers and their covers, GPSs and printed maps and survey books atop our backpacking gear. The goal was to locate four or five “patches” where temperature loggers had been installed on talus slopes known to be pika habitat, and install recharged loggers for another year’s

monitoring. A pair of the little sealed metal units is put in each spot, one on a surface rock under a set of wind and sun shields that look like a stack of inverted plastic pie pans, tied to the rock they sit on, and the other dropped about 24” into a nearby gap between boulders, where it’s cooler. That combination gives biologists the most useful temperature info about the surface and in the deep shade, where the pika are likely to be in the summer. As long as we could find exactly the same locations, the new readings would be consistent with those taken in prior years and the data would be useful. Any variation of sensor locations would leave the study results open to criticism, which in these days of climate research—well, let’s just say there’s no room for any “benefit of the doubt” in that field!

Getting to some of the locations was tough. Day Two the crew was on a huge talus fan across the North Fork from camp. My arrival was delayed the previous evening as I’m not used to “speed hiking” with a full pack, and I camped lower down as it was getting dark. I didn’t catch up with the crew till midway through Day Two, when I spotted them at the top

*Continued on page 14*

---

*Pika* — JASON E. BRUGGEMAN, PH.D. PHOTO Dr. Bruggeman is a wildlife research biologist and owner of Beartooth Wildlife Research, LLC; [www.beartoothwildlifere-search.com](http://www.beartoothwildlifere-search.com); [jbruggeman@frontiernet.net](mailto:jbruggeman@frontiernet.net).

## Pika Project

*Continued from page 13*

of the talus across the valley. By radio I heard they had already placed the loggers and done the surveys in that area, so I could explore around the rest of that afternoon and meet them back at camp, which I was happy to do. The scenery up there in North Fork Meadows is stunning. (Find the photos at <http://tinyurl.com/pikaproject>). Any significant off-trail travel, though, was met with intense brush. This is not Spider Meadow!

The next day I joined another trek into the brush to a talus across the North Fork down the valley below camp, and there I got to experience the whole ordeal (um, I mean, adventure)! Climbers are used to crashing through vine maple, slide alder, and mountain juniper thickets, then hopping around on huge boulders in full sun on a hot afternoon—all with a rack of hardware on their backs. For more average hikers like me, “it ain’t no picnic!” Using voice calls something like chimpanzees (“woot, woot!”) we kept rough track of each other as we clambered through the incredibly dense jungle. Other crew members would disappear in a matter of minutes in the foliage. I just had to “woot-woot” my way back to them. Finally we broke out into the open talus, where I felt like I was on a giant stair-climber in a dutch oven. But we found the locations, secured the loggers in place well enough to hold over the winter, we hope, and surveyed the taluses for pika presence.

Pikas leave scat and “haypiles,” and make a distinctive call, which are considered “detections,” and when you see the actual animals of course that’s also a “detection.” These are all tallied on a count sheet and ultimately you end up with an estimate of relative pika abundance in each patch that can be compared with prior years. The scat is about the size of BBs. The haypiles are pretty obvious. I saw plenty of evidence but failed to have any direct sightings. Maybe I’ll have some direct sightings next year. Certainly I’ll have a much better idea of what I’m in for! You should do this yourself! Call NCI and they’ll give you the link to their project calendar so you can choose a weekend or week that works for you. Roger is the greatest guy you’ll ever go into the back-country with. NCNP is very fortunate to have him as scientist and team leader. The other group members on my trip were great fun to be out with and very motivated.

Roger told me that data gathered here for the last three years suggests that pika



*Above: North Fork Bridge Creek Valley*

*Left: Roger Christophersen, NPS biologist, anchors a data logger.*

—PHILIP FENNER PHOTOS



numbers may have recently decreased as much from the recent longer, harder winters as from higher summer temperatures. In a situation reminiscent of some of the early wolf population research in Denali National Park, the numbers might reveal short-term fluctuations that hide long-term trends. Until at least 10 years of surveys are complete, we really won't have enough history to show a trend. Continued surveys are necessary, even as funding becomes tighter. Current funding may not be adequate for replacements of any hardware that fails. Also, having the volunteers needed to install and retrieve the loggers and survey the talus fields is crucial. Your donations and volunteering can make all the difference. In future issues of *TWC*, we hope to share some commentary from Roger himself. His current “Resource Brief” for NPS is available here: <http://www.nps.gov/noca/naturescience/upload/Pika-Resource-Brief-2011.pdf>.

I had enough food to take my time hiking out, which left a day for the sort of hiking I’m used to, with lots of sight-seeing and photography and relaxation thrown in. I even took the old PCT bypass up Bridge Creek from the “Fireweed” junction back to within 20 minutes of the highway on the last day. That’s a wonderful old back-trail, lightly used, going through a variety of forest and climate micro-zones, some typically west side, others more typical of the east side, and an area I really enjoy. An area, in fact, about half of which is outside NCNP! It’s always a shocker to see the NP signs as you hike this route and realize that the Park boundary is a mile or more from SR20... for some strange reason I find hard to comprehend! But I know the solution: [www.americanalps.org](http://www.americanalps.org)!

To contribute to the Pika Project, contact:

North Cascades National Park,  
360-854-7200

<http://www.nps.gov/noca/naturescience/current-research.htm>

Email: [Roger\\_Christophersen@nps.gov](mailto:Roger_Christophersen@nps.gov)  
North Cascades Institute, 360-854-2599  
<http://ncascades.org/signup/programs/citizen-science>

For more photos, visit <http://tinyurl.com/pikaproject>

More information: <http://www.beartoothwildliferearch.com/projects.htm>



## On the outside looking in

By Tom Hammond

**M**y mountaineering focus has changed over the past several years, due to injuries, evolving life priorities, and my involvement with conservation efforts on behalf of the North Cascades Conservation Council and the American Alps Legacy Project. I have made it a goal to visit lands outside federal recognition as National Park (Department of Interior) or USFS Wilderness (Department of Agriculture) designation. Usually this means lower-elevation mountains, places without a marquee name (with exceptions such as the Methow Mountains, Black Peak and others) that provide critical habitat and are important and impressive in their own right. This year, I studied maps seeking a place that lay outside the National Park boundary and the Pasayten Wilderness

and would be representative of the vast stretches of mountains and valleys that remain inexplicably unprotected. I found such a place closely south of Highway 20 in the Granite Creek trench, a place with no trail leading to it, no trailhead, some un-named 7,000' crags, and plenty of opportunity to learn more about the landscape.

One thing I know, and keep relearning, is that mountains, even small ones, are much bigger than we think they are, and much bigger than we are. After a classic North Cascade approach from the old-school handbook of mountaineering and route finding, I found myself atop a 6,570' crag, surrounded on all sides by magnificent forests, soaring peaks, tumbling glaciers and cascading waters. Yet I was on the Outside Looking In.

The three-part ascent took me first through a recent burn (not bad, most trees small diameter ponderosa and lodgepole pine), then lovely moss forest; the second through and up a steep, green hell of brush; and the third a spectacular ridge ascent on snow to a steep summit pitch. I should note I dubbed the steep brush "The Green Mastication", for it certainly filleted me and left me bloody and generally shredded. Ahh, going trail-less in the North Cascades! At points on both ascent and decent, I was literally swinging from tree to tree, brachiating like the alpine

*Continued on page 16*

---

*Ragged Ridge.* — TOM HAMMOND PHOTO

## On the outside looking in

*Continued from page 15*

hominid I am. Unlike other monkeys, I had 50 pounds on my back—an exercise in energy management, if you will. All the while keeping on a route that was as much dead-reckoning as it was following game paths. By the way, I don't flag routes—it makes it more fun on the way down/out!

At the summit, I found a tiny, postage stamp of a flat spot on a quickly diminishing cornice. I was very fortunate that cornice lasted the 50 hours I was there (two cycles of the sun). By the time I left, one corner of the tent was literally hanging off the edge. Not really dangerous, but it left little room for an encounter with larger wildlife. Speaking of: bear, cougar and goats/deer use this route as a pass-through in the range. I found direct evidence of cougar kills and goats/deer tracks, but never saw them (although I almost had two serious accidents on the drive home when deer jumped in the highway). It was a great camp—few bugs and when they showed up, so did a nice breeze. I had planned to climb an adjacent 7,200' peak, but chose to stay at camp in order to record and compare/contrast areas that are unprotected, proximate and adjacent to areas that are. As evidenced by my photos (see link below) the camp served as a delightful platform for my research.

I'll let the pics tell the story, but will note the Kimtah Glacier is spectacular! Indeed, the entire northern façade of Ragged Ridge is world-class alpine material: big icefalls, cirque glaciers cradled by jagged spires, tremendous relief and big forests. A full moon rising over the Methow Mountains each night was remarkable. The unprotected forests of the Granite Creek valley, with the obvious transition from wet west marine climate to dry east continental climate literally under my feet, was an awesome scene. The whole area, even the adjacent small mountains and forested valleys, had me wondering how so many mountains can fit in such a tight array. It also had me wondering about boundaries and borders.

So how is it that I was on the outside looking in? Is it because the mountains are too low to qualify for recognition? Places such as Cabinet Creek are amazing, productive and provide critical habitat for everything in the region, including us. The water pouring off our North Cascades literally powers our lives, and provides food and clean water. The fact that such vast ar-



*Granite Creek and Methow mountains.*

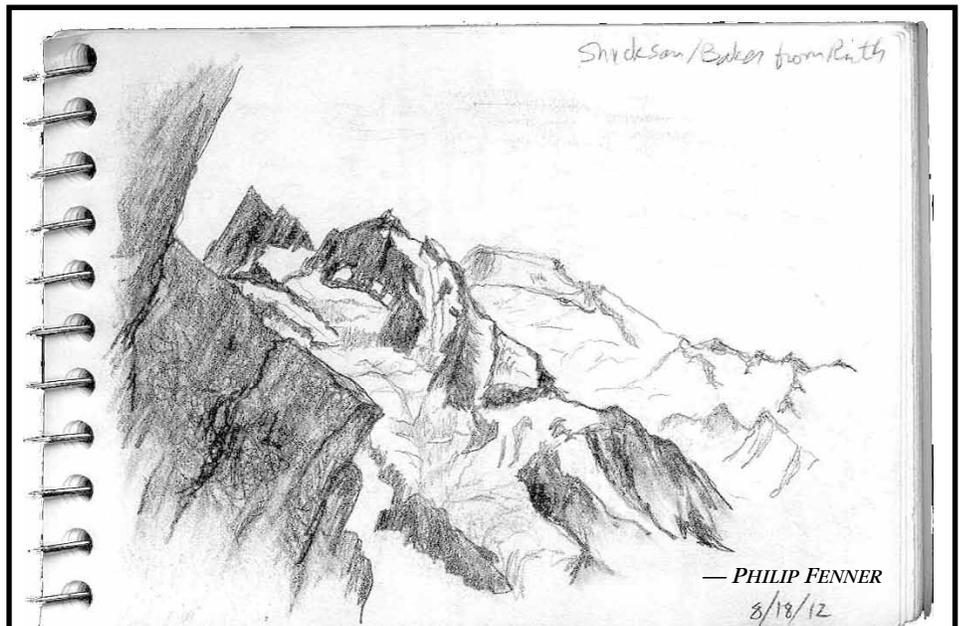
— TOM HAMMOND PHOTO

reas remain unprotected requires attention. Why aren't they protected, and how can we get them protected? These places are certainly worthy of recognition, and their best value is in keeping them pristine—for us now, and for generations to come.

You might note I haven't named the peak I was on—can you?

For more photos, visit:

<https://picasaweb.google.com/116543602651852680619/AmericanAlpsResearch12070406#>



You may remember past issues of *TWC* featured member-contributed artwork of Cascade mountain scenes like this. Also you may have noticed most photos in recent issues are from board members. We'd like to revive the art tradition and also see more member photos in *TWC*. If you'd like to submit your art or photography, please email us at [wildcascades@northcascades.org](mailto:wildcascades@northcascades.org). Thanks!

# New Wilderness! and NCCC work party

by Karl Forsgaard

In September 2012, the newest federal Wilderness in Washington State was created in Ross Lake National Recreation Area. Congress originally identified the Thunder Creek Potential Wilderness Area in the Washington Parks Wilderness Act of 1988, subject to Seattle City Light's existing interest in a potential hydropower project. The Potential Wilderness designation allowed the area to become Wilderness through an administrative decision upon removal of the non-conforming use. Seattle City Light determined that the hydro project is not economically feasible, and abandoned the project. The Ross Lake General Management Plan process supported implementing the designation, and Interior Secretary Salazar finalized it through a Federal Register notice. This 3,559-acre area within the Ross Lake NRA has now been added to the Stephen M. Mather Wilderness managed by the National Park Service.

To celebrate the new Wilderness, NCCC board members met with Park Service officials at Colonial Creek Campground, near the addition's boundary. Jack Oelske, Interim Superintendent of the North Cascades National Park Complex, spoke of NCCC board member Patrick Goldsworthy's Senate testimony before the Park was created, and "long term unrelenting advocacy for Wilderness" ever since. We are grateful to Seattle City Light for relinquishing its interest, and to the Park Service staff who acted on the opportunity.

After celebrating the new Wilderness, the NCCC volunteers moved to Diablo Overlook for a service project with National Park horticultural staff to re-vegetate the area with native plants. NCCC board members stayed in the area overnight and then conducted a board meeting at the Environmental Learning Center at Diablo Lake, thanks to North Cascades Institute.



*National Park Service officials and NCCC board members celebrating Thunder Creek addition to Stephen Mather Wilderness in October. — KARL FORSGAARD PHOTO*



*NCCC volunteer work party at Diablo Overlook. — MIKE BRONDI PHOTO*

---

## DNR Snoqualmie Corridor plan taking shape

Continued from page 8

at the end of long, rough, failure-prone logging roads. With road maintenance budgets shrinking and fuel costs rising inexorably, new opportunities need to be developed to allow more people to enjoy their public lands, and in places that won't

need expensive rebuilding after blowing out every winter. DNR has taken the lead in doing this with its Snoqualmie Corridor plan, developing a blueprint for a future of sustainable new recreation opportunities. NCCC is very happy to play a role, and

hopes that the Forest Service might take a similar approach someday.

# NCCC joins appeal against Enloe Dam rebuild

NCCC recently joined Columbia Bio-regional Education Project, the Center for Environmental Law and Policy, and American Whitewater in appealing a Washington state Department of Ecology (DOE) decision to grant a permit to Okanogan P.U.D. to move ahead with a project to rebuild Enloe dam on the Similkameen River about four miles west of Oroville. Built in the early 1900's, the dam has not produced power since 1958 because it was not economical to operate. If rebuilt, it would still not produce very much power, and would dewater Similkameen Falls, which is just below the dam.

Each of the Okanogan P.U.D.'s three previous attempts to rebuild the dam have failed because of poor economics and fish passage issues. The problems with rebuilding the dam are as daunting as ever, perhaps more so now that the Similkameen River trail runs along the river and the falls are one of its chief attractions. Rebuilding the dam would dry up the falls. Natural flows in the Similkameen range from averages of 7580 cubic feet per second in June to 500 cfs in September. The DOE certification that the groups are appealing would allow flows of 10 cfs—nothing more than a trickle.

Okanogan P.U.D. is supplied with plenty of low-cost power from the Bonneville Power Administration and there is absolutely no need for this or any other dam there. Several years ago the P.U.D. floated the idea of a dam farther up the Similkameen at Shanker's Bend, which would have flooded the Similkameen valley across the border into British Columbia. The P.U.D. didn't bother to tell anyone in Canada about its plans and word never really got out about its intent until NCCC raised the alarm. Needless to say, the Canadians weren't happy, and the proposal was dropped.

Shanker's Bend was never a serious proposal and the terrible economics of Enloe makes one wonder about it too. Okanogan P.U.D. appears to suffer from "dam envy." Unlike neighboring Chelan County P.U.D., it does not have a big dam of its own. Building a dam is a way to grow its bureaucracy and dispense large contracts to armies of consultants. P.U.D. managers in a place like Okanogan County are big fish in a small pond, and see dam building as a means of getting bigger. Never mind that electricity would become more, not less expensive if they manage to build a project like Enloe.

If Okanogan P.U.D. succeeds in rebuilding Enloe dam, it will not only destroy Similkameen Falls, it will burden its customers with debt. The costs of paying interest on that debt will mean higher electric bills for decades to come. But P.U.D. managers' salaries will likely increase, as will their prospects of landing well-paid positions with the consulting and engineering companies that they steered so much lucrative business to.

Rebuilding Enloe would be a disaster not just environmentally but economically. Fish don't need it, those who enjoy the beauty of Similkameen Falls don't need it, electricity users in Okanogan County don't need it. NCCC and its allies hope to see the remains of Enloe removed and the Similkameen River allowed to flow freely once again.

## NORTH CASCADES CONSERVATION COUNCIL



Be part of the leadership of a vibrant grassroots network of advocates for protection of unique lands, waters, plant life, and wilderness of the North Cascades.

Yes! I want to support North Cascades Conservation Council's efforts working on many fronts to establish new wilderness, defend our forests, support wildlife conservation and keystone species, and promote sound conservation recreational use.

If you love our great North Cascades wilderness as much as we do, support the NCCC with a generous IRS tax-deductible contribution in the amount of:

- \$10 Living lightly/student    \$30    \$50    \$100  
 \$250    \$500    \$1000    Other
- I would like to volunteer. Contact me.  
 Please send me occasional action alerts by email.

Contributions include membership and subscription to NCCC's journal, *The Wild Cascades*. NCCC is a 501 (c)(3) organization. All donations are tax deductible.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
Email \_\_\_\_\_

Send your check or money order and this form to:  
Laura Zalesky, North Cascades Conservation Council  
PO Box 95980, University Station, Seattle, WA 98145-2980  
You may also contribute online at [www.northcascades.org](http://www.northcascades.org)

# Heli-skiing company gives new meaning to “cut and run”

In our recent electronic newsletter, *The Catalyst*, we urged you to contact the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest headquarters to protest the actions of North Cascade Heli-Skiing (NCHS), which cut down at least fifty trees, several of them up to 275 years old, in the pristine headwaters of the Methow River high on the north side of Silver Star Mountain.

Reaction to this illegal cutting, which violated the USFS permit and NCHS's own operating plan, was swift. The Forest Service issued a notice of non-compliance to the company back in March, shortly after the first cutting was discovered (other cuttings were discovered by hikers in August). This was only the second time the Methow Valley Ranger District has ever issued a law-enforcement warning. News reports in the *Wenatchee World* and *The Columbian* generated a good deal of public outcry.

As *TWC* went to press, the Forest Service had placed NCHS on probation and warned that further violations could result in the termination of its permit. NCHS is now required to record the GPS location of every landing and turn the logs in regularly. NCHS's operating plan will also be reviewed annually instead of every five years. The company will have to pay for damages and restoration of the several sites where cutting took place. No fine has been set, but the U.S. Code, Title: 18, Chapter: 91, Section 1853 sets a maximum fine of \$1,000 per tree!

While NCCC is not opposed to responsible heli-skiing carried out within the terms of its permit and conforming to USFS rules, NCHS's violations are egregious. Please let the owners of NCHS how you feel about their disregard for stewardship of the land. NCHS claims to have taken this terrible action for “safety,” but modifying the landscape is unacceptable. If it is unsafe for NCHS to operate in a given area of the North Cascades, they should not be operating there!

Contact NCHS at PO Box 367, Winthrop, WA 98862 or [info@heli-ski.com](mailto:info@heli-ski.com). Comments to the USFS may be sent to the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest Headquarters at 215 Melody Lane, Wenatchee WA 98801 or use the contact form you'll find at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/contactus/okawen/about-forest/contactus>.



*The photographer counted more than 275 rings on one of the approximately 50 trees cut down by North Cascades Heli-Skiing.*

—MATT FIRTH PHOTO

## *Not getting your Catalyst?*

Almost 200 NCCC members have been receiving *The Catalyst*, NCCC's new email action alert. But without your email address, we can't send it to you!

If you would like to receive email notices of special events and opportunities for advocacy, please send your current email address to [wildcascades@northcascades.org](mailto:wildcascades@northcascades.org). We'll make sure you get in on the distribution list.

**THE WILD CASCADES**

Journal of the North Cascades Conservation Council  
Post Office Box 95980  
University Station  
Seattle, Washington 98145-2980

Non-Profit Organization  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
SEATTLE, WA  
PERMIT No. 8602

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



*Seven Fingered Jack and Mt. Fernow from Pyramid Mountain.*

—KARL FORSGAARD PHOTO