

# THE WILD CASCADES

WINTER - 1987



J. V. E.

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

DAVE FLUHARTY

The President says WRITE! PLEASE!

This issue of The Wild Cascades highlights the good and the bad aspects of two management plans that will chart the future for the North Cascades National Park, Ross Lake National Recreation Area and Lake Chelan National Recreation Area. The last General Management Plan, done in 1970, had major flaws that must be corrected.

At recent public meetings held by the National Park Service, those supporting management designed to protect the North Cascades Complex were outnumbered by special interests who wanted to build more roads for access, increase the recreational use of the Stehekin airstrip, and stop federal acquisition of private lands at Stehekin and in Ross Lake National Recreation Area, all to promote new growth. All of these issues, and more, are important to N3C members who worked so hard to get the Park established in 1968, almost 20 years ago.

Even the National Park Service needs to hear strong criticism on some of its recent policies. Who would have thought that we would have to protect the Park from the National Park Service? The National Park Service must be reminded of its duty to protect the North Cascades from development. Resources such as firewood, sand and gravel should not be given away.

We need letters, and we need them NOW. The National Park Service needs to hear our support for its proposals for ecosystem management, wilderness protection and for elimination of proposals for a Ruby Mountain Tramway and a road to Roland Point. The National Park Service needs to hear, loud and clear, that we want the resource give-away STOPPED. They need to hear that the noisy and dangerous airstrip at Stehekin has to be eliminated.

N3C members have been faithful and effective advocates of preservation in the North Cascades for more than 30 years. NOW is the time to use all of our expertise and love for this area to defend its future. NOW is the time to write and to get your friends to write. Warm up for your holiday card writing by sending a letter, NOW, to

John Reynolds, Superintendent  
North Cascades National Park Service Complex  
2105 Highway 20  
Sedro Woolley, WA 98284



# THE GOOD, THE BAD & THE UGLY

GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN  
NORTH CASCADES NATIONAL PARK COMPLEX  
REVIEWED BY BOARD OF  
NORTH CASCADES CONSERVATION COUNCIL

At its November eighth meeting, the Board of Directors of the North Cascades Conservation Council reviewed the Draft General Management Plan for the North Cascades National Park Complex. At this meeting, the Board adopted the following positions on the major issues described in the National Park Service's Draft General Management Plan (pages noted and underlining ours).

## THE GOOD

1. The National Park Service is commended for proposing

(a) "...management of the entire NPS complex, including the national recreation areas, would be directed toward strengthening and enhancing the wilderness character of the North Cascades..."

(b) "...management of the NPS Complex, (in coordination) with the management of lands under jurisdiction of the U.S. Forest Service, Seattle City Light, British Columbia Parks...to protect the natural values of the North Cascades ecosystem, especially the threatened and endangered plant and animal species whose habitats extend across political boundaries..."

(c) "...to British Columbia Parks, that the two agencies study the establishment of an international park on both sides of the boundary..." and

(d) "...that a study be undertaken to determine the feasibility of designating the North Cascades as a world biosphere reserve..." (pages 23 and 64).

It was the intent of the N3C, which was also shared by Congress, that the North Cascades National Park be designated as a "wild park". There would be no additional roads built and there is specific prohibition of the construction of a road down Bridge Cr. into the isolated Stehekin Valley or along the east bank of Ross Lake from the North Cascades Highway into Canada. Furthermore, as the N3C and the Canadian R.O.S.S. (Run out the Skagit Spoilers) Committee were fighting successfully to prevent Seattle from raising Ross Dam, a goal of ultimately creating an international park was conceived. This subsequently became a goal of the Skagit Environmental Endowment Commission in its objective of preserving and enhancing the natural and recreational values of the U.S. and Canadian Skagit River drainage upstream from Ross Dam, as a consequence of the agreement not to raise Ross Dam.

2. The National Park Service is commended for recognizing that essentially all of the Park, most of the two national recreation areas, and lands down to 125 feet above Ross Lake are "suitable for wilderness". However, the Park Service has taken a weaker, non-confrontational stand by recognizing that the lower Thunder Creek drainage, the Big Beaver Valley, and the shoreline of Ross Lake up to 125 feet above the lake are "suitable for potential wilderness" (page 54, map).

The N3C believes all these lands, which incidentally are now being managed as wilderness, should be recognized as equally suitable (not just potentially) for wilderness and so proposed to Congress. Wilderness should come down to the full-pool roadless shore lines of Ross, Diablo, and Gorge Lakes, to the southern bank of the roadless stretch of the Skagit River, to the road rights of way north of the Skagit River and south of Ross Lake.

3. The National Park Service is commended for recognizing that "...the Ruby Mountain area, lower Thunder Creek drainage, Big Beaver Valley, and the area south of the Skagit River, between Thunder Arm and Copper Creek, may more appropriately be included in the North Cascades National Park than in the Ross Lake National Recreation Area..." (page 54).

The Ruby Mountain area was originally excluded from the Park to allow for construction of a tramway, which is no longer being proposed. The N3C has always opposed this tramway as not being economically feasible and being a major scenic degradation. Similarly, lower Thunder Creek and Big Beaver Valleys were excluded from the Park to allow for future hydroelectric developments by Seattle City Light. However, since Seattle agreed with British Columbia not to raise Ross Dam and since the Thunder Creek diversion dam was dependent upon a High Ross Dam, these two projects are no longer active.

4. The National Park Service is commended for its proposal that "...Ross Lake will continue to be managed as a roadless and primitive area without road access or major recreational facilities (except at Hozomeen)...for a remote, secluded boating experience and shoreline camping...there will be no public vehicle access to the south end of the lake..." (pages 29,30).

The N3C has always opposed construction of a road from the North Cascades Highway to a proposed major campground at Roland Point. These two projects, as viewed from the highway, would be a major scenic degradation and an intrusion into a natural wilderness setting. Also, the impact of large numbers of motorized boats being launched from a Roland Point campground, or from a highway to Ross Dam road, would destroy the unique and remote experience of an increasing number of canoeists and the relatively few who rent low-powered fishing boats from the Ross Lake Resort.

5. The National Park Service is supported in its proposals to "...exclude any new roads, tramways, other major visitor facilities...not expand the Stehekin docks to accomodate increasing houseboat use...not grant commercial permits for houseboat rentals at Stehekin..." (pages 29,30).

The N3C has always opposed construction of the Price Creek tramway, north of Mt. Shuksan, the Arctic Creek tramway, from the west shore of Ross Lake between Big and Little Beaver Creeks, and the Ruby Mountain tramway. All of these would be major wilderness incursions completely inconsistent with a "wild park".

6. The National Park Service is supported in its intention to "...oppose approval of licenses (for small-scale hydroelectric projects within Ross Lake National Recreation Area) that do not adequately mitigate individual and cumulative effects on...aquatic, terrestrial, cultural, scenic, and recreational resources, including potential impacts on threatened, endangered, and other sensitive wildlife species, such as bald eagles, grizzly bears, wolves, and spotted owls..." (page 39).

Two small-scale hydro projects, on Thornton and Damnation Creeks, are currently being considered by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). Movement of the boundary between the Park and the Ross Lake NRA, southward, or designation of this area as Wilderness would eliminate the threat of these two projects.

7. The National Park Service is supported in its proposals for "...several additional short trails designed to give North Cascades (Highway) travelers the opportunity to explore the variety and grandeur of the North Cascades...an interpretive boardwalk trail at Happy Flat...to make it possible for (handicapped) visitors to enter the dense forest environment...a (loop) trail segment extending from the Hozomeen (campground) to Desolation Peak and (the mouth of) lightning Creek...completing the trail system from Stehekin to Mount Baker (reconstruction of historic trail from Ross Dam along the southern shores of Ross Lake to Panther Creek)...a new (Stehekin) Valley trail approximately 11 miles long to be constructed from the Stehekin landing to High Bridge...and a 3-mile trail from the Cascade River road to the historic Gilbert cabin" (pages 26, 29, 30, 35,36).

The N3C considers trails to be an effective means for leaving the influences of the mechanical world in order to truly experience the natural environment. However, many trails should be developed for hiker use only, with horse use excluded, and other areas should remain trailless. Such areas include the Cascade Pass Trail and the south slopes of Ruby Mountain.

8. The National Park Service is supported in its plan for "...a research project on the complete effects of stocking (with exotic fish) (more than 240 natural lakes...all of which were originally barren of fish) which is underway...and preparing a fisheries management program..." (page 39).



The N3C is opposed to the artificial fish stocking of naturally fishless, high elevation lakes as being an activity whose effect is to violate the natural ecosystem that is best preserved in our national parks.

9. The National Park Service is supported in its plans to "...survey the habitat and population of the northern spotted owl whose existence may be affected by (logging) activities around the NPS boundaries...assist in the interagency effort to determine habitat quality (for the grizzly bear) within the ecosystem..." (page 38).

10. The National Park Service is supported in its "...long-term objective to restore the shoreline between the (Stehekin) landing and the head of Lake (Chelan) to natural conditions and to make it available to the public for lakeshore recreation" (page 35).

11. The National Park Service is supported in its preparation of a draft Land Protection Plan (for Lake Chelan National Recreation Area) which "...identifies parcels with high priorities for protection...the plan considers a number of methods for protecting resource values, including land exchange, acquisition of conservation, scenic, or agricultural easements, as well as fee-aquisition from willing sellers..."

#### THE BAD

12. The National Park Service is criticized for its proposals to "...maintain the 23-mile Stehekin Valley road...at its current length, width, and Character..." and to "...retain the Cascade River road to its existing (parking area) terminus..." (pages 26,35).

The N3C proposes that the current 23-mile Stehekin road be maintained as follows: Only the lower 4 miles, between the Stehekin landing and Harlequin Bridge, should have a paved surface; the next 12 miles, to Bridge Creek, followed by the 2.5 miles to Park Creek, should be kept primarily in a single-lane unpaved condition with shuttle bus use in the summer; and the last 4.5 miles, between Park Creek and Cottonwood, should be discontinued as a road and allowed to revert to a trail, with parking at Park Creek.

The N3C further proposes that the National Park Service study how best to eliminate the scenic scar of the Cascade River road parking terminus, inherited from the Forest Service. Options for vegetative screening, relocation, and shuttle bus use should be explored.

Adoption of these suggestions would enhance the quality of the experience for both the day visitor to Cascade Pass as well as the hiker traveling between the Cascade and Stehekin River Valleys.

13. The National Park Service is strongly criticized for "...considering private utilization of sand, gravel, and building stone by residents of Stehekin Valley to be an appropriate use of the Lake Chelan National Recreation Area..."

The N3C is slightly encouraged to note that the Park Service, however, will study and analyze environmental and community-related impacts of alternative actions ranging from no removal of sand, gravel, or rock to regulations to allow removal under certain conditions. The N3C believes these materials should be imported from outside the Lake Chelan NRA.

THE UGLY

14. The National Park Service is to be condemned for its "...preferred alternative, in the Stehekin Firewood Management Plan, of firewood removal from 1-acre woodlots managed on an 80-year rotation..." (pages 35,53).

The N3C is strongly opposed to cutting green trees, or the few remaining dead trees, on public land for firewood and recommends that firewood or other fuel (oil) be imported from outside Lake Chelan NRA.

15. The National Park Service is to be condemned for proposing that "...Stehekin airstrip will be retained as an emergency landing strip...maintained by the State of Washington under permit from the National Park Service. Recreational use of the strip will not be encouraged..." (page 35).

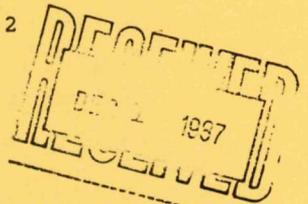
The N3C considers the Stehekin airstrip to be the worst scenic scar in the entire North Cascades National Park Complex. The Park Service inherited this scenic blight, as it did the Cascade Pass parking lot, from the U.S. Forest Service, which built it for firefighting. The use has recently increased from 200 to 500 landings per year, almost exclusively for recreational purposes. As the first superintendent of the North Cascades National Park stated, "Someday that strip must go, as it does not belong on National Park land." The N3C believes that the Park Service should immediately take steps to permanently close the airstrip and revegetate the clearing.



# A LETTER FROM STEHEKIN

(This urgent emergency letter appeared in our mailbox - Ed.)

November, 1987 Stehekin Emergency Committee Letter # 2



Dear Friends of the Stehekin Valley,

As most of you now know, the National Park Service has issued its Plan for firewood management in the Valley. It calls for the clear-cutting of live trees on a "woodlot" basis for the private benefit of residents and their businesses. The Regional Director has signed a finding of "no significant environmental impact". This is despite the overwhelming adverse response from you, one the Park Service itself tabulated as 80.4% favoring the immediate halt of firewood cutting on federal lands. Even this is an understatement, since letters advocating alternatives not developed by the NPS were counted and written statements from such organizations as the North Cascades Conservation Council, the Sierra Club, the Audubon Society, the National Parks and Conservation Association, and the Washington Wilderness Coalition were tabulated as single letters. The finding of "no significant impact" of clearcutting within the National Park Complex further flies in the face of the Charter establishing the Complex, which bans "developments [that] significantly impair public recreation and conservation of the scenic, scientific, historic, or other values contributing to public enjoyment".

The Superintendent has stated that there is no process for an administrative appeal.

Now the General Management Plan for the Park Complex and the Draft Land Protection Plan for the Lake Chelan National Recreation Area have been released. These cover a variety of topics and are much less than clear. Included are a number of excellent items, most notably a general statement that the North Cascades should be regarded as an ecosystem that encompasses federal lands under stewardship of agencies other than Park Service as well. This deserves far more in the way of specifics than it is given in the General Management Plan.

Unfortunately, the Plans also carry some very alarming features:

1. The Plans provide for "community development", a euphemism for increased population and buildings, effectively a doubling. This is to be accomplished by the creation of an extensive "community development subzone" in a highly ecologically sensitive area of the Valley where presumably visitors do not venture. It is at best a cosmetic idea and at worst the blueprint for a form of urbanization. Further, the NPS gives no thought to inevitable increased demands for wood, electricity and services this would create. The appropriate course for the Park Service is to limit growth rather than to chart new ways to increase it.

2. The Plans wisely provide for the acquisition of lands from willing sellers. However, the detailed Draft Plan on this is selective on an unclear basis. Thus, land and buildings along the lakeshore and close to the main road would be acquired but those equally conspicuous along the Lake near the River mouth would not. These are supposedly "appropriate". The acquisition process would further feature swaps of land within the Valley, substituting houses in the development zone for those close to the River or main road. This is an odious precedent since the NPS should by no means alienate any land it now holds. Moreover, the proposal to swap land would encourage additional building by providing buildable lots in place of unbuildable ones. The Park Service must not engage in any program of land swapping.

3. The General Management Plan is ambiguous regarding the emergency airstrip, the worst scar on the Valley. It designates the strip as "non-public use" despite a large and documented increase of usage.. The Plan makes no recognition of the increase of noise from low-flying aircraft in the Valley, the record of five deaths from crashes at the strip, or the fact that a new airline now flies from Seattle to Stehekin in amphibian aircraft. Can it be long until commercial flights will land at the strip? The Plan proposes to continue general use of the airstrip. It must be closed immediately.

4. The Plan discusses the possibility of Wild and Scenic status for the River but relegates the idea for study "in 10 to 15 years". It is difficult not to see this as an effective denial of the objective. The River should be studied for Wild and Scenic or Scenic designation immediately, before further degradation can occur. The Plan also speaks favorably of protecting wetlands, but the specifics of the Draft Land Protection Plan are inconsistent.

5. The General Management Plan is presented with only an Environmental Assessment rather than a full Environmental Impact Statement and the Draft Land Protection Plan is presented with neither. These are stunning omissions for documents which purport to guide the region's course well into the next century.

The array of plans thus fails in crucial respects. In effect, it would write-off substantial parts of the Valley. The Plans are not consistent with each other and are in different stages of adoption. Considering that the Lower Valley is little more than four and a half square miles, the "sacrificial areas" are a looming disaster.

At a time when the Secretary of the Interior has raised the possibility of restoring at great cost another valley, the Hetch Hetchy, ravaged in a gross historic error, it is startling to see Park Service plans to do what is contemplated in the Stehekin Valley.

Letters of protest are urgently needed.

The Stehekin Emergency Committee:

Harvey Manning and Grant McConnell, co-chairs, David R. Brower, Patricia Goldsmith, Betty Manning, Max Mehlman, Jane McConnell, Jim McConnell

# NORTH CASCADES NATIONAL PARK COMPLEX AND SAND AND GRAVEL COMPANY

## URSUS

"Here, take a look at this." MST lobbed a manila folder in my general direction and then leaned back into the sofa, his feet up on the coffee table. His muddy boots were drying in front of the fire; his pack dripped rain where it had been propped against the drapes.

MST's friend, Jasper, was lying in the corner curled around a six pack of Grizzly Bear Beer. He was studying a series of official-looking pamphlets, one of which had the National Park Service insignia on the cover. He waved, a big grin on his shaggy face. Jasper's a naturalist. One of his works, Jasper's Treatise, was perhaps the most important underground environmental document of the 1970's. In it, Jasper was the first to discover that rangers scraped their knuckles on the ground when they walk. This unusual gait allowed trained observers to recognize ranger sign by the furrows that the knuckles create next to the footprints.

Jasper was also the first to report that there are two species of ranger. The species that lives in National Forests is a herbivore that consumes large tracts of forest. The most reliable sign of this species is the clearcut. The second species lives in National Parks and is a carnivore that destroys other carnivores. The most reliable sign of its presence is the absence of bear, cougar and wolf tracks. However, increasingly in recent years, Jasper found the National Park species leaving other signs: Roads, airstrips, woodlots, and sand and gravel pits. Jasper knew ranger sign and in his treatise he taught others to recognize it. Perhaps for this reason, Jasper's Treatise has never been published. In fact, it is generally accepted that any publisher wanting to print Jasper's Treatise is a candidate for institutionalization.

"What's this?" I bent over to pick up the package.

"The National Park Service has released its Draft General Management Plan for the North Cascades National Park Complex," MST replied. "Jasper and I are preparing our responses."

I knew this was trouble. MST had just returned from a trip to Yellowstone National Park after a twenty-year hiatus. While relaxing and touring the geysers, he found himself face-to-face with a freeway interchange, apparently constructed to celebrate the National Park Centennial. The bears were in mass graves, remnants of the National Park Service purges. MST came back boiling higher than Old Faithful and set forth into the North Cascades to see if he could detect traces of Yellowstone policy in his home stomping grounds. The look in his eyes told me he wasn't happy with the Draft General Management Plan.

I tried to divert him. "Mort, it looks like a real good plan to me. Look here on page 7. They really seem to think that the national parks have suffered from roads and commercialism and they want to avoid that in the North Cascades."

"Look, Pollyanna. When I got off the boat in Stehekin, the first thing I saw was a huge sign that said:

LAKE CHELAN SAND AND GRAVEL COMPANY  
a subsidiary of the  
National Park Service

Does that sound like a group that's giving up roads and commercialism?"

"Did you protest?" Jasper asked.

"Yeah. The ranger said that he felt Stehekin rock was a renewable resource. He expected another glacier to drop a replacement load any day now."

"Pretty much the same thing happened to me when I protested the firewood store that the National Park Service set up in Stehekin," Jasper replied.

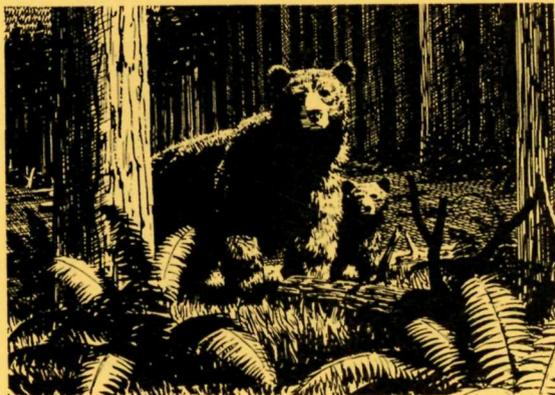
"But the rangers are really concerned about protecting the land," I said. "Just look at all the trouble they've taken to assure that Cascade Pass isn't loved to death."

Jasper howled with laughter, "If they were really concerned about Cascade Pass, they'd limit access rather than perpetuating that eyesore parking lot. Hell, one of their own options calls for closing the road at Mineral Park and turning it into a trail. Sure as shooting, that would protect the Pass a lot better than building a second parking lot and ferrying more people up when the first lot is filled. This is ranger sign at its worst: Roads, airstrips and parking lots to make everything easier to reach. Then they write a bunch of regulations, litter the backcountry with National Park Service billboards posting the regulations and hire a cohort of morons to enforce the regulations that wouldn't be necessary if they hadn't promoted easy access in the first place. Bureaucrats at work."

"You guys are just too cynical," I said, trying to shift their interest to their favorite topic. "Why, look here on page 38, they're even talking about recovery efforts for the North Cascades grizzlies--although they are concerned that it would require a public awareness program."

"The only awareness program would be for the rangers. Have you hiked in the North Cascades recently? The campsites are designed specifically to encourage bear-man encounters. They've been constructed on the same disasterous mode as Yellowstone. The damned firepits are within ten feet of the tent sites so that you get to sleep with the food odor of every camper in the last two weeks. Hell, two times out of every three, they've constructed the site so that if you use the available food-hanging trees, your grub will be suspended above your own nose. Don't kid yourself. All this talk about grizzlies in the North Cascades is just a smoke screen. Just look at the National Park Service track record with the grizzly to see how long the species will survive in the North Cascades."

"Mort, be careful," Jasper pitched in. "Say things like that and the first thing you know, the North Cascades will be covered with those stupid iron bars for hanging food that the rangers put up all





over Olympic National Park. But you're right, I'm afraid. If conservationists want bears in the North Cascades, they'll have to fight the Park Service tooth and nail. They're just bureaucrats, and they don't want anything wild enough to cause a scene."

"Actually, the National Park Service has a dismal record of wildlife management in general, not just with grizzly bears," Jasper went on. "Just look at Mt. Rainier National Park, for example. According to a recent paper in *Nature*, 32% of the species historically present in Mt. Rainier have become extinct; most of them disappeared from under the noses of the Park rangers who were supposed to protect them."

"You guys are too hard on the Park Service. They're really trying to learn from their mistakes and to work with outside researchers who have expertise beyond that contained in the National Park Service. Look here on page 5 where it says that they're going to create a research center in cooperation with universities and other agencies to study the North Cascades. That will provide a sound basis for managing the Park Complex." I was trying to drive a wedge between MST and Jasper. Although they agreed on most things, they disagreed on the vital issue of whether rangers were capable of learning from past mistakes. MST felt not, but Jasper thought yes, although he admitted that such learning occurred slowly and could best be measured in geologic time.

"I s'pose," MST said, looking unconvinced. "But you'll excuse me if I remember that Yellowstone had a research program in the 1960's and the rangers threw the researchers out whenever they disagreed with National Park Service policy. How can we assure that the North Cascades Park won't suffer the same fate as Yellowstone?"

"Why don't you two write and tell the Park Service what you like and don't like about their proposal? Maybe the Park Service has learned and doesn't want to repeat the mistakes of Yellowstone, but needs public support."

Jasper stretched. "I think you're right. We should attend the hearings and support wilderness designation for the Park. We need to take an active role in the management of the North Cascades. Conservationists were too complaisant about Yellowstone and we lost a lot there. Let's ride herd on the Park Service to be sure it lives up to its fine words about Wilderness and wildlife in the North Cascades."

Mort still looked unconvinced. "I'll write," he said, "but it's a little distressing that the Park Service can't distinguish between a National Recreation Area and a Sand and Gravel Company without the help of the N3C."

# DRAFT

# GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

NORTH CASCADES  
NATIONAL PARK

ROSS LAKE  
NATIONAL RECREATION AREA

LAKE CHELAN  
NATIONAL RECREATION AREA

## PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR THE PLAN

A general management plan (GMP) is needed to guide resource management and recreational use of the national park and recreation areas and to provide for the compatible continuation of the unique lifestyles in the Stehekin Valley, where recreation services and residential and agricultural uses predated the establishment of Lake Chelan National Recreation Area. The GMP replaces a master plan approved in 1970 that outlined a management philosophy and proposed development for the new park. Since then a number of issues have been raised that indicate a need to reevaluate the management emphasis in the 1970 plan. Also, the current planning effort addresses a number of issues related solely to the Stehekin Valley and the Stehekin community.

The GMP looks at the park and recreation areas together, recognizing that they are parts of a single natural ecosystem and recreational complex where visitors frequently cross the unit boundaries. Other regional lands are also parts of this system. The NPS complex is bordered on the west, south, and east by lands administered by the U.S. Forest Service, large tracts of which are designated wilderness. Across the international boundary to the north are a park, a recreation area, and forestlands administered by the province of British Columbia. The use and management of the adjacent wilderness areas are generally similar to the use and management of the NPS complex. The British Columbia park and recreation area provide a wide range of recreational opportunities that supplement the opportunities available at North Cascades. The remaining surrounding lands are managed to sustain consumptive resource uses as well as recreational use.

The major planning issues are described below.

### VISITOR USE ISSUES

North Cascades is a young park that postdates the systemwide initiatives that produced the roads, visitor centers, and commercial development in the other large national parks. Before North Cascades was established, extraordinary efforts were made to bring people into the parks and to get them in touch with their natural legacy, which as a result has become deeply ingrained in the culture of the nation. It could be argued that the broad public constituency supporting existing parks and new park initiatives would not exist if many people had not been able to experience first hand the scenic grandeur and natural wonders preserved within the national park system.

In the process of opening parks to people, however, a number of parks began to suffer from too much success. Many people started to question the advisability of improving access and providing urban comforts.

Because North Cascades is a young and relatively undeveloped park, it provides an opportunity to examine and debate its values to today's local

and national constituencies. Is its inherent inaccessibility its greatest asset? Or should the extraordinary scenic grandeur and magnificent water gateways be more accessible to a wider spectrum of the visiting public?

Many of the visitor use issues described below relate to these two points of view. The issues involve only those locations that have already been developed or that were identified for possible future development in the 1970 master plan. The remainder of the park and portions of the recreation areas were included in the 1970 wilderness recommendation to Congress and are being managed according to NPS wilderness policies. These lands are not available for development.

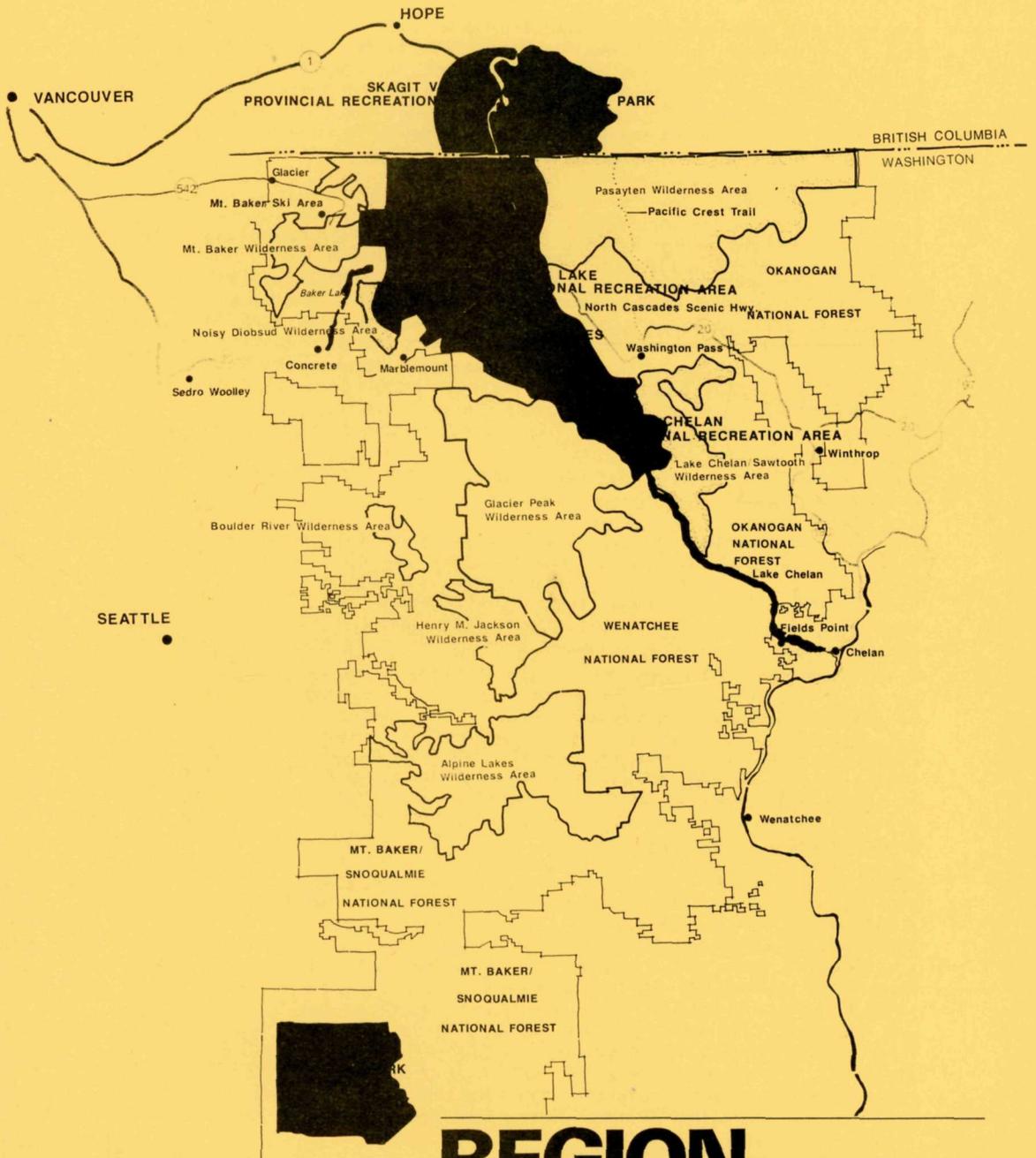
#### Opportunities for Day Visitors along the North Cascades Highway

The North Cascades Highway (Washington Highway 20) offers a spectacularly beautiful scenic drive from Sedro Woolley to Early Winters. As pastoral valley landscapes give way to majestic mountain and lake scenery, travelers become increasingly aware of the inherent wildness of the North Cascades. The highway traverses Ross Lake National Recreation Area. The only road through the North Cascades, it is traveled by more than 90 percent of its visitors. Many people drive through and never get out of their cars, and some are not aware that they are traveling through a unit of the national park system. Many miss the abundant points of interest and the scenic beauty within a few steps of the pavement.

The need to provide visitor information, develop interpretive themes, and support recreation in the highway corridor was identified in the 1984 North Cascades "Statement for Management." Recognizing that it would be 5 to 10 years before a major general management plan could be programmed and implemented, a development concept plan was undertaken to guide the development of facilities to help meet the immediate needs of visitors. That plan, which was approved in the spring of 1986 and is now being implemented, calls for visitor information to be provided at Sedro Woolley, Marblemount, and Newhalem, and for interpretive and day activity sites at numerous locations along the highway and at the terminus of the Cascade River road.

Information and Interpretation. Currently visitors are generally on their own in planning their trips and experiencing the park and recreation area environments. For many people this opportunity for self-reliance and discovery is a major part of the attraction of the North Cascades. They can get the backcountry information they need at the NPS station in Marblemount, the joint USFS/NPS stations at Glacier, Sedro Woolley, and Chelan, and other USFS offices. Some visitors, however, have expressed an interest in receiving more information and interpretation. The interpretive exhibits proposed in the 1986 development concept plan for the North Cascades Highway corridor will help visitors learn about the various environments traversed by the highway; however, even with these facilities in place there still will not be an opportunity for visitors to get an inspirational and educational overview of the special values of the North Cascades.

Easy Access to a High Mountain Overlook and Ross Lake. Some of the most spectacular sights in the park--the high mountain vistas of the Picket Range and Eldorado Peaks--are not revealed from the highway. Only visitors who drive the 22-mile gravel road to Cascade Pass or the 20-mile gravel road to Harts Pass in Okanogan National Forest, or those who hike into the backcountry, can currently enjoy the mountains, glaciers, and subalpine environments at close range. The 1970 master plan proposed tramways in several locations to provide access to the high country. Because of their high cost and controversiality, no tramways have been built; however, the Ruby Mountain tramway is still being discussed by some of the public and warrants reevaluation in the current planning.



# REGION

**NORTH CASCADES NATIONAL PARK  
 ROSS LAKE NATIONAL RECREATION AREA  
 LAKE CHELAN NATIONAL RECREATION AREA**

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR / NATIONAL PARK SERVICE



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The 1970 plan also proposed a road from the North Cascades Highway to Roland Point, which would make the Ross Lake shoreline easily accessible to highway travelers. The only road access to the lake now is the 39-mile gravel road from Hope, British Columbia, to Hozomeen, just south of the Canadian border. People wishing to visit the lower end of Ross Lake must take a boat to the head of Diablo Lake, then be transported or walk the ½-mile road to the top of Ross Dam.

#### Cascade Pass Roads

The North Cascades high country is penetrated by two gravel roads, one approaching Cascade Pass from the west (the Cascade River road) and the other approaching the pass from the east (the Stehekin Valley road). The top of the pass remains accessible only by foot, but by using the Cascade River road and the Stehekin Valley road to enter and leave the area, visitors can make the trip from one side of the pass to the other as a day hike. Because of the road access and because the scenery is spectacular, Cascade Pass is one of the most popular visitor destinations in the national park. Some people believe the Cascade River and Stehekin Valley roads should be maintained at their present lengths to continue to support this unique visitor experience. Others believe the roads should be pulled back from this fragile high-mountain area to reduce the impacts caused by heavy use.

The 1986 development concept plan proposed to retain the Cascade River road and trailhead, providing that, if visitor demand increased beyond the capacity of the existing parking area, parking would be provided approximately 2 miles west and visitors would be shuttled to the trailhead. However, it was understood at the time the plan was approved that this was an interim proposal pending the completion of the GMP.

#### Recreational Boating Opportunities

Boating is enjoyed in many parts of the NPS complex and the surrounding region. Lake Chelan, which is accessible by highway at its lower end and served by marinas near Chelan and a small marina at Stehekin, is popular for powerboating, waterskiing, lakeshore camping, and houseboating. Over the past few years the number of houseboats on Lake Chelan has been increasing. The Port of Chelan estimates that within 20 years there will be a demand for moorage sites for an additional 150 houseboats in Chelan, and a plan has been proposed for their development. The Stehekin docks can currently accommodate approximately 35 boats; however, the docks are not designed to moor houseboats. Only a few houseboats currently travel to the head of the lake, but the number will undoubtedly increase if the Port of Chelan projections are realized. In determining whether or not to accommodate the increasing demand for houseboat mooring facilities, the National Park Service must consider the benefits to boaters and how increased marina activity would affect the character of the Stehekin landing and the experience of other visitors. The National Park Service must also consider the protection of lake waters from sewage and petroleum wastes.

Ross Lake, which is less accessible than Lake Chelan, is used by fewer people and offers a different kind of recreational boating experience. The use of powerboats on Ross Lake is generally confined to the northern end, near the boat launches at Hozomeen, and is associated with fishing. The lower end of Ross Lake is used primarily by canoeists and fishermen who rent small motorboats from the concessioner at the Ross Lake Resort. Arrangements can also be made with the concessioner to have small private boats transported from the head of Diablo Lake to the top of Ross Dam. A less used but second possible route for getting small boats onto the lower end of Ross Lake is to walk down a steep trail from the North Cascades Highway. The trail is difficult, but some people get canoes and kayaks to the shore by that route. A road from the North Cascades Highway to Roland Point would make Ross Lake easily accessible for

powerboating. Some people would like the lake made more accessible, and others would like it to remain remote and secluded for a different kind of recreational boating that is not available at any other major lake in northwestern Washington. The National Park Service must also consider what effects increased access might have on natural resource values. The Washington Department of Wildlife is concerned about any action that would increase the fishing pressure on the unique natural Ross Lake fishery.

#### Hozomeen Visitor Services

British Columbia Parks is constructing additional camping and other visitor facilities just north of the border. The National Park Service must continue to coordinate its plans for visitor services with the plans of British Columbia Parks to ensure that the visitor facilities are compatible and to avoid unnecessary duplications.

#### Stehekin Visitor Experience

One planning concern is the lack of adequate information for short-term visitors about how they can best utilize their time. Several recreational options are available to short-term visitors: a concessioner-operated shuttle bus ride to Rainbow Falls, a ½-mile self-guiding nature trail, exhibits and slide programs at the NPS visitor center, a historic cabin, small speciality shops, lunch, or a lakeshore walk. Visitors are often not aware of these options when they arrive at Stehekin.

There are several problems with the NPS visitor facilities in Stehekin. First, the visitor center exhibits are out of date and worn, and they do not adequately support the interpretive program. Second, the North Cascades Lodge, which is an NPS concession providing rooms, a restaurant, and a general store, is unattractive and poorly laid out, which makes it inconvenient for visitors and inefficient to manage. Third, hikers currently have to share the valley road with vehicles because there is no trail provided for their use.

The state of Washington maintains a small landing strip in Stehekin under the terms of a special use permit granted by the National Park Service. The Federal Aviation Administration has designated the landing strip as "not open to the public," and the Washington Aeronautics Commission classifies it as a "nonpublic use having emergency or landmark value." In spite of its nonpublic status, there were about 200 landings on the strip in 1986, most to transport visitors to the national recreation area. About five Stehekin residents use the strip for access. No emergency landings have been documented. Public opinion is sharply divided as to whether the airstrip should be upgraded for legal public use, retained for emergency landings only, or removed.



Lake Chelan, from photo by Manning

Laura Dawson Nov. 19, 1977

## RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ISSUES

### Natural Resources

The park and recreation areas are parts of the North Cascades ecosystem, which crosses many political boundaries. This ecosystem is managed for a variety of uses, and its resources are critical to the vitality of the Pacific Northwest.

The North Cascades are susceptible to stress from burgeoning regional development. Potential effects on environmental quality include air pollution from Puget Sound and British Columbia (and ultimately from a developing Olympia-to-Vancouver I-5 corridor). Lakes within the North Cascades are poorly buffered and thus particularly sensitive to acid deposition. Other potential effects associated with increased population growth include greater demands for recreational opportunities and facilities, hydroelectric energy generation, and natural resource extraction for timber and minerals.

The GMP establishes the guiding principles for preservation of resource values within the park and recreation areas and summarizes the specific management actions outlined in a separate "Resource Management Plan," which is maintained by the park staff and updated as necessary to address immediate and long-range objectives.

### STEHEKIN COMMUNITY ISSUES

The overriding issue related to Stehekin is the need to establish a common understanding that can perpetuate the community values recognized by Congress in 1968 while protecting the scenic, scientific, and historic resource values of the valley as a base for public outdoor recreation (walking, hiking, horseback riding, camping, rafting, and canoeing).

In 1968 when Congress created Lake Chelan National Recreation Area, it recognized that a community had existed for more than 80 years in the Stehekin Valley. Congress provided for the continuing existence of the community and for community residents to continue using certain public resources for community purposes. However, Congress placed some limitations on the character of future use by authorizing only

such management, utilization, and disposal of renewable natural resources and the continuation of such existing uses and developments as will promote or are compatible with, or do not significantly impair, public recreation and conservation of the scenic, scientific, historic, or other values contributing to the public enjoyment. (1968 act establishing the park and recreation areas)

In 1968 the local economy of the Stehekin community was largely based on tourism and recreation. All businesses either directly served tourists and recreation seekers or supported other businesses that did. The community was essentially a self-sufficient and self-contained economic and social unit. The primary ties to the outside world consisted of the boat and floatplane companies, county regulatory and maintenance activities, the post office, and a single employee of the U.S. Forest Service.

Since 1968 several changes have taken place. The National Park Service has purchased about 1,200 of the 1,700 acres of private land. The number of businesses in the valley has about doubled. Electrical power generation has been introduced. The number of permanent residences has increased from about 15 to about 34. There are now nine NPS employees living year-round in the valley. One of these transferred from the Forest Service, and one took over the county's road maintenance duties. Summer employment and vacation residential use have grown.

Private businesses at the landing have become NPS concessions. A barging and pile-driving business recently established in Stehekin operates on the entire lake. Tourism has increased between 300 and 400 percent, from about 10,000 visitors per year to between 30,000 and 40,000 per year.

The pioneer lifestyle of Stehekin, still very evident in 1968, has been altered by electric power, the increased population, the increased visitation, and greater reliance on down-lake services. There is an increased opportunity for economic productivity in the valley, both to serve tourists and recreationists and to serve community members. The kinds of new businesses show signs of economic diversification. The National Park Service hires more seasonal employees to provide services to the public. Also, there is a continuous demand for more homesites, both permanent and vacation, and residents and visitors enjoy a greater variety of community activities. There is also an increased demand for use of natural resources such as firewood, sand, gravel, rock, and topsoil.

#### Community Development

Since the establishment of the national recreation area, the Stehekin community has doubled to approximately 75 year-round residents. The population increases to about 175 in the summer. There is concern about the potential effects of continued growth, which could significantly change the character of the community and place unacceptable demands on resources. There is another concern that the National Park Service will purchase private lands and eliminate the private land base needed to sustain a viable community. Some residents believe that NPS regulations unduly interfere with their lifestyles and opportunities to earn income. Yet these residents live within an area set aside by Congress for enjoyment by the American people. Thus, personal and public values come into conflict.

There are approximately 500 acres of private land in the Stehekin Valley, all under the zoning jurisdiction of Chelan County. The National Park Service has limited control over uses of private lands or the level or type of development, unless the uses are determined to be incompatible with the purpose of the national recreation area.

#### Utilization of Public Resources

In the past, the National Park Service has granted permits to Stehekin residents to take firewood, sand, gravel, rock, and topsoil from public lands in Stehekin Valley. The utilization of renewable public resources and nonleasable minerals was authorized by Congress and recognized in the NPS compatibility standards. Firewood is a renewable natural resource, and its use is authorized under section 402 (a) of the act establishing Lake Chelan National Recreation Area. Sand, gravel, and rock are nonleasable minerals, and their use is authorized under section 402 (b) of the act. However, topsoil is neither a renewable resource nor a nonleasable mineral, and its use is not allowable under legislation.

The enabling legislation for Lake Chelan National Recreation Area and four other recreation areas within the national park system authorized the secretary of the interior to allow removal of leasable and nonleasable minerals after a finding of no adverse effect and the promulgation of appropriate regulations.

Until such time as regulations are promulgated to cover sand, gravel, and rock, they cannot legally be removed from Lake Chelan National Recreation Area. This will have adverse effects on valley residents.

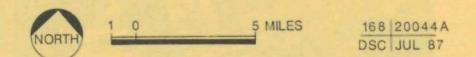


- 1 MARBLEMOUNT VISITOR/RESEARCH/EDUCATION/BACKCOUNTRY CENTER
- 2 COPPER CREEK TAKE-OUT
- 3 PICKETS OVERLOOK
- 4 GOODELL CREEK CAMPGROUND
- 5 NEWHALEM CAMPGROUND
- 6 SEATTLE CITY LIGHT / NPS INTERPRETIVE CENTER
- 7 GORGE DAM OVERLOOK
- 8 PYRAMID LAKE LOOP TRAIL
- 9 GORGE LAKE OVERLOOK
- 10 GORGE LAKE PICNIC AREA
- 11 DIABLO LAKE RESORT
- 12 COLONIAL CREEK CAMPGROUND
- 13 DIABLO LAKE OVERLOOK
- 14 THUNDER KNOB TRAIL
- 15 COLONIAL CIRQUE TRAIL
- 16 THUNDER ARM LOOP TRAIL
- 17 THUNDER CREEK-HAPPY FLATS TRAIL
- 18 ROSS DAM TRAILHEAD
- 19 HAPPY FLAT TRAIL AND OVERLOOK
- 20 ROSS LAKE FLOATING RESORT
- 21 HAPPY FALLS TRAIL
- 22 HAPPY CREEK INTERPRETIVE LOOP TRAIL
- 23 CASCADE PASS TRAILHEAD
- 24 GILBERT'S CABIN TRAIL
- 25 THORNTON LAKES TRAILHEAD
- 26 EAST BANK TRAILHEAD

- 1 GMP PROPOSAL
- 2 FROM APPROVED 1986 DCP
- BOUNDARY
- MAJOR HIGHWAY
- - - ROAD PAVED OR GRAVEL
- ..... TRAIL

# HIGHWAY CORRIDOR VISITOR ACTIVITY SITES

ROSS LAKE NATIONAL RECREATION AREA  
 UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
 NATIONAL PARK SERVICE



### Stehekin River Management

Public and private development along the Stehekin River has raised the question of the appropriateness of erosion- and flood-control measures. This issue pertains only to federally owned portions of the riverbank unless work done on private land would have adverse effects on public land.

The National Park Service has constructed a dike along a public portion of the river to protect Company Creek Road from eroding. In the absence of this protection, the road, which serves more than half the residences in the valley, would continually wash out and periodically be closed. Some private landowners have requested additional erosion- and flood-control structures on public lands, stating that they are necessary for the adequate protection of private properties downstream. Erosion- and flood-control structures on public lands are controversial because they inevitably intrude to some degree on the natural riverbank scenery, can affect other public or private lands downstream, and have the potential to degrade riparian and aquatic habitats. People disagree about whether or not these impacts are acceptable and whether or not these structures are effective over a long term.

### BOUNDARY ISSUES

When the national park and recreation areas were established, three areas that would otherwise have been included in North Cascades National Park were included instead in Ross Lake National Recreation Area to allow for possible future uses under consideration at that time. The first area was lower Thunder Valley, which was excluded to allow for Seattle City Light's planned hydroelectric development on Thunder Creek. The second was Ruby Mountain, which was excluded to accommodate a possible visitor tramway to the top of Ruby Mountain and to allow for hunting. The third area was Big Beaver Valley, which was excluded from the park to allow for the planned eventual raising of Ross Lake. These areas were excluded from the NPS wilderness recommendation to Congress for the same reasons.

The Ruby Mountain boundary issue is closely associated with the GMP issue of the Ruby Mountain tramway. The other boundary issues depend on the current status of Seattle City Light's plans for hydro development on Thunder Arm and in Big Beaver Valley.



# PARK SERVICE

## PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

### INTRODUCTION

The following plan views the park and recreation areas as parts of a larger North Cascades ecosystem and recreational complex located in a socioeconomic region that stretches from Tacoma to Vancouver, British Columbia, and from the West Coast to the eastern slopes of the North Cascades Range.

As one of several agencies and organizations responsible for managing the resources of the North Cascades, the National Park Service proposes to preserve the wild character of the national park and recreation areas and to help visitors gain inspiration, knowledge, and recreation from their visits to the mountains. This management of the NPS complex will be coordinated with the management of lands under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Forest Service, Seattle City Light, British Columbia Parks, and others to provide visitors with a comprehensive overview of the region, to offer a variety of interrelated visitor experiences, and to protect the natural values of the North Cascades ecosystem, especially the threatened and endangered plant and animal species whose habitats extend across political boundaries.

As part of the regional approach to management, the National Park Service proposes to British Columbia Parks that the two agencies study the establishment of an international park on both sides of the boundary. It also proposes to that agency and the U.S. Forest Service that a study be undertaken to determine the feasibility of designating the North Cascades as a world biosphere reserve.

### VISITOR USE

Here in the midst of one of America's great wild natural areas, the National Park Service proposes to encourage and assist visitors to enter their surroundings, to temporarily detach themselves from their cars, radios, and other property, and to become recreational participants rather than spectators. This goal will apply wherever visitors are in the park or recreation areas--whether they are hiking in the backcountry or picnicking next to a roadside stream. For those wishing to explore the backcountry on their own, information will be available at sites convenient to major trailheads. For the 90 percent of all visitors who stay within the North Cascades Highway corridor, a series of interpretive and recreational sites will allow glimpses into the backcountry and encourage travelers to stop and spend some time in the environments they are passing through. Within the boundaries of the park and recreation areas, the development needed to facilitate visitor use will be kept small in scale to avoid distracting visitors with imposing structures, crowds of people, and vehicle traffic.

On the west side of the mountains, the National Park Service will provide an inspirational introduction to the North Cascades intended to help visitors form an appreciation for the natural world they are entering. All other interpretation will be dispersed to locations where visitors can view the mountains and lakes, walk through the forests, and visit the sites of human activities.

## NORTH CASCADES HIGHWAY CORRIDOR

The National Park Service will continue to cooperate with the State of Washington and the U.S. Forest Service to provide a scenic driving experience and comprehensive information to visitors traveling through the North Cascades region. Information will continue to be provided at both ends of the corridor, in Sedro Woolley and at Washington Pass and Early Winters.

An inspirational and informational introduction to the North Cascades will be accomplished at a new visitor center in the vicinity of Marblemount, west of the Cascade River road. A center in this area will be well situated at the point where the majority of visitors, traveling from the coast, begin the climb into the mountains. Many people stop in Marblemount to eat, gas their cars, or buy groceries for their trip. A center in this vicinity will also serve travelers to Cascade Pass before they turn off the highway onto the Cascade River road.

Given the plans for development of Early Winters as a winter recreation area, it is possible that an expanded interpretive center at that location might eventually offer a similar introductory experience for visitors entering the North Cascades from the east.

As mentioned in the "Issues" section of this report, the provision of day activity sites along the North Cascades Highway and at Cascade Pass was the subject of a development concept plan approved in 1986. That plan calls for interpretive waysides to be incorporated with recreational facilities at the Cascade Pass trailhead, the Copper Creek take-out, the Pickets overlook, the Goodell Creek campground, Newhalem, the Gorge Dam and Gorge Falls overlooks, Happy Flat, and the Ross Lake east bank trailhead. The GMP endorses the proposal of the 1986 development concept plan to retain the Cascade River road to its existing terminus. This trailhead serves one of the most popular trails in the park and provides an opportunity for a relatively short (3½-mile) hike to an outstanding high-mountain viewpoint. During peak use periods when visitor demand exceeds the capacity of the existing parking area, overflow parking will be accommodated approximately 2 miles to the west and shuttle service will be provided to the trailhead.

The National Park Service will continue to cooperate with Seattle City Light in its operation of an information center to tell the story of public power and flood control at Newhalem.

The activity sites included in the approved development concept plan will be supplemented by several additional short trails designed to give highway travelers the opportunity to enjoy and explore the variety and grandeur of the North Cascades. A trail to Happy Falls with an interpretive wayside at the historic millsite and a 3-mile trail from the Cascade River road to the historic Gilbert cabin will help visitors understand how the North Cascades have affected the people who have sought to live in this remote region. Interpretive trails to Thunder View and Colonial Cirque will help tell the stories of the mountains and their environments. Recreational and interpretive opportunities for handicapped visitors will be improved by a 2-mile-long handicap-accessible trail around Thunder Arm. Trails from Pyramid Lake to Colonial Creek (2 miles) and from Colonial Creek to Happy Flat (approximately 7 miles) will further expand day hiking opportunities and complete the trail system from Stehekin to Mount Baker.

The GMP purposefully excludes any new roads, tramways, or other major visitor facilities because they would be inconsistent with the goal for visitor use: to encourage and help people enjoy their natural surroundings free from the distractions of mechanized equipment and imposing structures.

Ruby Mountain (previously proposed as the site of an NPS tramway) would not be successful, because views from Ruby Mountain are frequently obscured by clouds.

Several large lakes in northern Washington with settings similar to Ross Lake (Baker Lake, Diablo Lake, Lake Wenatchee, and Lake Chelan) all have easy road access and substantial boat-launching facilities. Because Ross Lake, as the single exception, is relatively inaccessible, it provides a different kind of recreational opportunity, one geared primarily to small boats and canoes and offering greater solitude and wilderness. To protect this opportunity, which does not exist elsewhere, Ross Lake will continue to be managed as a roadless and primitive area without road access or major recreational facilities.

#### RECREATIONAL BOATING

The recreation areas will continue to be managed to offer a variety of boating opportunities for visitors with nonmotorized and motorized boats.

Access to the Skagit River will be improved by expanding the boat-launching facilities at Goodell Creek campground and by adding a parking area at Copper Creek. Both of these developments were proposed in the 1986 development concept plan.

Ross Lake will continue to be managed for a remote, secluded boating experience and shoreline camping. Boat launches will be maintained at Hozomeen, but there will be no public vehicle access to the south end of the lake. As now, people will be able to have their boats taken up Diablo Lake by the Seattle City Light boat and hauled up to Ross Lake by the Ross Lake Resort "taxi," rent fishing boats from the Ross Lake resort, or carry their boats to the water down a steep 1-mile path from the North Cascades Highway.

On Lake Chelan the four boat-in campsites at Flick Creek will be relocated to Four-Mile Creek, which is a more protected and attractive site. Another four to six boat-in campsites will be provided on Riddle Creek. The Stehekin docks will not be expanded to accommodate increasing houseboat use because of the potential for marina development to change the character of the Stehekin landing. No commercial permits will be granted for houseboat rentals at Stehekin for the same reason.

#### HOZOMEEN

Hozomeen is a quiet eddy between recreation corridors to the north and south. It retains the feeling of a simpler time and place with fishing as the primary pastime. Hozomeen will remain a semiprimitive area with facilities for boat launching and camping. Visitors will receive information about the range of recreational opportunities available in the region at a new information station that will be jointly operated by the National Park Service and British Columbia Parks on the Canadian side of the border.

A new lakeshore trail will lead from the new information station to the lower campground units fronting the shoreline. In addition to improving pedestrian circulation, this trail will offer a pleasant day activity for nonboaters. Several interpretive waysides will be placed along the trail. Another trail segment will extend along the shore of Ross Lake from Hozomeen to Desolation Peak and Lightning Creek. This trail will complete a loop configuration for hikers in this area.

- FOUND SUITABLE FOR WILDERNESS IN 1970
- FOUND SUITABLE FOR WILDERNESS IN 1987
- FOUND SUITABLE FOR POTENTIAL WILDERNESS IN 1987
- PRIVATE LAND
- ROAD
- PARK BOUNDARY

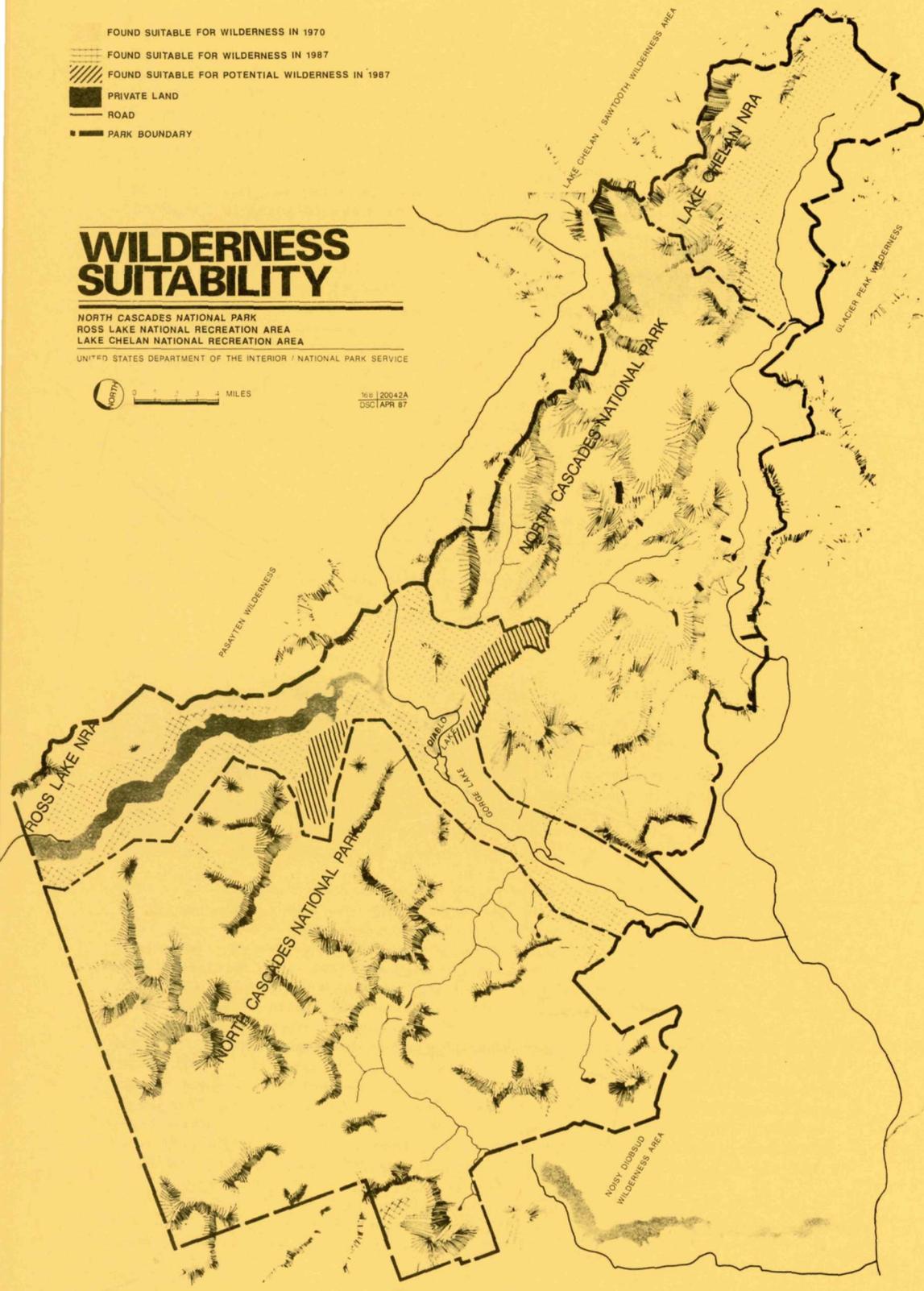
# WILDERNESS SUITABILITY

NORTH CASCADES NATIONAL PARK  
 ROSS LAKE NATIONAL RECREATION AREA  
 LAKE CHELAN NATIONAL RECREATION AREA

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR / NATIONAL PARK SERVICE



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### STEHEKIN

Visitors bound for Stehekin will have several opportunities to obtain information about their trip. The National Park Service will continue to operate an information station in Chelan, where most boat and air service originates. It will also improve the unstaffed information station at Field's Point, where many passengers board the Lady of the Lake. A community-operated information station at the Stehekin landing is expected to provide the bulk of information needed by visitors disembarking from the boat. In addition, the National Park Service will continue to cooperate with the operator of the Lady of the Lake to provide on-board information through displays and brochures.

The Stehekin landing is the center of public activity in the valley and will be managed exclusively for public use. Private residential use of the landing area is not compatible with this plan. A separate development concept plan will guide the redesign of the landing and the North Cascades Lodge. The design will retain the small village atmosphere of the Stehekin landing and make the greatest amount of shoreline possible available for visitor use.

Additional demand for lodging will be met by private landowners. The National Park Service supports the use of private property to provide compatible and necessary public services and recreational opportunities for visitors.

The participation of the members of the Stehekin community in providing for recreational use at Lake Chelan National Recreation Area is an integral part of the visitor experience. As in the past, recreation provides an important source of income to residents of the Stehekin Valley. Services offered by the community to visitors also add to the variety of recreational opportunities available to visitors.

The shoreline between the landing and the head of the lake has outstanding recreational potential for visitor hiking and sightseeing. The long-term objective is to restore this area, which currently contains some private development, to natural conditions and to make it available to the public for lakeshore recreation.

The 23-mile Stehekin Valley road will be maintained at its current length, width, and character. Because of the narrowness and roughness of the road surface, speeds will be kept very low (between 5 and 25 mph) to allow travelers to relax and study their surroundings. The low speeds will also allow wildlife to safely use the road.

The shuttle bus will continue to operate during the summer season, and Rainbow Falls will continue to be a scheduled stop along the route. A new valley trail approximately 11 miles long will be constructed from the Stehekin landing to High Bridge to provide visitors with a variety of hiking experiences in the valley and access to various natural, cultural, and scenic resources without having to hike on the road. The trail will generally parallel the road and will allow views of the river wherever possible.

The Stehekin airstrip will be retained as an emergency landing strip unless it is declared as unsafe by either the Federal Aviation Administration or the Washington Department of Aeronautics. The airstrip will be retained in its present condition. The National Park Service has long-term concerns for air safety in the Stehekin Valley and its airspace and may in the future, after consultation with the Department of Aeronautics, consider closure if considerations warrant. Clearing limits will not be enlarged. The strip will be maintained by the state of Washington under permit from the National Park Service. Recreational use of the strip will not be encouraged.

## BACKCOUNTRY

The backcountry will continue to be managed in accordance with the approved "Backcountry Management Plan."

Manage the backcountry environment to conserve, maintain, or restore the backcountry resources and those ecological relationships and processes that would prevail were it not for human influences.

Strive for management techniques that will allow visitors unrestricted use of the backcountry.

Ensure maximum freedom of use without sacrificing the quality of the resource.

## **RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

### NATURAL RESOURCES

#### Summary of the Natural Resource Management Plan

The natural resource component of the "Resource Management Plan" is a compilation of the major resource problems, projects, and issues described in detail and listed in priority for base and special funding over a five-year period. The plan is updated annually as new information is gathered and projects are completed. The priorities for each year may be altered for various reasons. The issues currently considered of major importance are described below.

Rare/Threatened/Endangered/Sensitive/Indicator Birds. The North Cascades are home to and within the migratory range of numerous birds that are federally or state listed as rare or threatened. Of particular concern is the northern spotted owl, whose existence may be affected by timber harvest activities around the NPS boundaries. The National Park Service will survey the habitat and population of spotted owls in the complex.

Rare/Threatened/Endangered/Sensitive/Indicator Mammals. The North Cascades are home to several mammals that are federally or state listed as rare or threatened. Of particular concern is the grizzly bear, currently the subject of an interagency effort to determine the viability of recovery in the North Cascades.

Natural Fire Management, Fuel Reduction in Stehekin Valley. Natural fire has an important role in the east-side forest ecosystem found in the Stehekin Valley. Lightning-caused fire historically has maintained natural fuel loads, forest openings, and habitat variety. Fire suppression began with settlement of the valley in the early 1900s and has allowed unnatural fuel accumulations and changes to the forest structure. Man-caused or lightning-caused fire could now alter the forest structure and threaten human life and/or property. Planning for a fuel management and prescribed burning program will begin in 1987 for implementation in 1988.

Vegetation Impact Monitoring/Revegetation. Much of the backcountry use occurs in fragile alpine or subalpine ecosystems that are damaged by trampling and subsequent losses of vegetation and soils. Climbing and cross-country use are expanding into previously undisturbed areas. Efforts are underway to propagate and revegetate disturbed areas with native species grown in the park greenhouse.

Stehekin Firewood Management. The 1987 environmental assessment for the Stehekin firewood management plans calls for firewood removal from 1-acre woodlots managed on an 80-year rotation. The preferred alternative for the firewood management plan provides for an initial annual limit of 150 cords of wood, decreasing to an annual limit of 120 cords by 1992. The sustained yield after 80 years will be 98 cords.

Management of Natural Lakes. There are more than 240 natural lakes in the park and recreation areas, all of which were naturally barren of fish. Under a program of the Washington Department of Wildlife, many of these lakes have been and continue to be stocked with exotic fish (salmonids). Fishing in these lakes is a popular activity with special interest groups. A research project on the complete effects of stocking is underway, and the park plans to prepare a fisheries management program and environmental assessment.

Stehekin River Management.

Pressure continues to allow riprapping of federal land to protect private residences. The river has naturally meandered throughout the valley over time. The National Park Service will maintain a naturally free-flowing river while controlling the bank erosion only where necessary to protect public facilities. The National Park Service does not support the construction of small-scale hydroelectric structures on the Stehekin River. A river management plan will be developed. In 10 to 15 years the National Park Service will reevaluate the appropriateness of a wild and scenic river study for the Stehekin River.

Skagit River Management. More than 70 proposals for development of small-scale hydroelectric projects on the Skagit River are proposed at this time. Three of the projects are within Ross Lake National Recreation Area; the others are downstream from the recreation area. The Federal Energy and Regulatory Commission has authority to license small hydroelectric projects within the national recreation area. The National Park Service is concerned about the potential individual and cumulative effects of such developments and will require mitigating measures to protect aquatic, terrestrial, cultural, scenic, and recreational resources. Special attention will be given to the potential for impacts on threatened, endangered, and other sensitive wildlife species such as bald eagles, grizzly bears, wolves, and spotted owls. The National Park Service will oppose approval of licenses that do not adequately mitigate individual and cumulative effects on these resources.



## PROPOSED MANAGEMENT ZONING

### NPS COMPLEX

Lands in the park and recreation areas have been zoned to indicate how they will be managed based on their natural or cultural significance, their suitability and need for park development, or their reservation for special use. A definition of each zone follows:

**Natural zone:** Lands and waters are managed to ensure that natural resources and processes remain largely unaltered by human activity. Developments are generally absent or limited to dispersed recreational and management facilities. Research natural areas are a special subzone within this zone. They are strictly protected for their scientific values.

**Historic zone:** Lands are managed for preservation and interpretation of cultural resources. Historic structures may be adaptively used for visitor or administrative activities.

**Park development zone:** Lands are managed to provide the development needed to support the desired visitor experience and the operation of the unit. Development that is nonhistoric or that significantly alters the natural environment is included in this zone, rather than in the natural or historic zone.

**Special use zone:** Lands and waters are used by other agencies or interests for purposes not permitted in the natural, historic, or park development zones.

### Management Zones

The Stehekin Valley Zoning map was derived by overlaying the Resource Values map on the Existing Conditions map. The majority of the valley floor was placed in the special use zone in recognition of the Stehekin community and its importance to the visitor experience in Lake Chelan National Recreation Area. Within this zone, all private properties developed to support public recreation and most other developed private properties were placed in a community development subzone. The exceptions were some private developed properties considered highly desirable for visitor use because of their locations along the shoreline of Lake Chelan or the Stehekin River. These properties, along with much of the undeveloped land in the valley, were placed in a public recreation/community use subzone. Some undeveloped private and federal lands were included in the community development subzone because, based on their locations in the midst of existing development, they were considered most suitable for future community development.

The floodway and wetlands of the Stehekin River were placed in the natural zone. It will be a long-term objective of the National Park Service to acquire private properties in these areas to protect critical floodplain and wildlife values. Most undeveloped federal lands in the national recreation area were included in this zone. Small-scale visitor facilities in natural areas, such as trails and campgrounds, were also included.

The Buckner homestead and the old Stehekin school were placed in the historic zone. It is the intention of the National Park Service to retain the historic character of these resources and interpret them to the public.

# EXISTING CONDITIONS

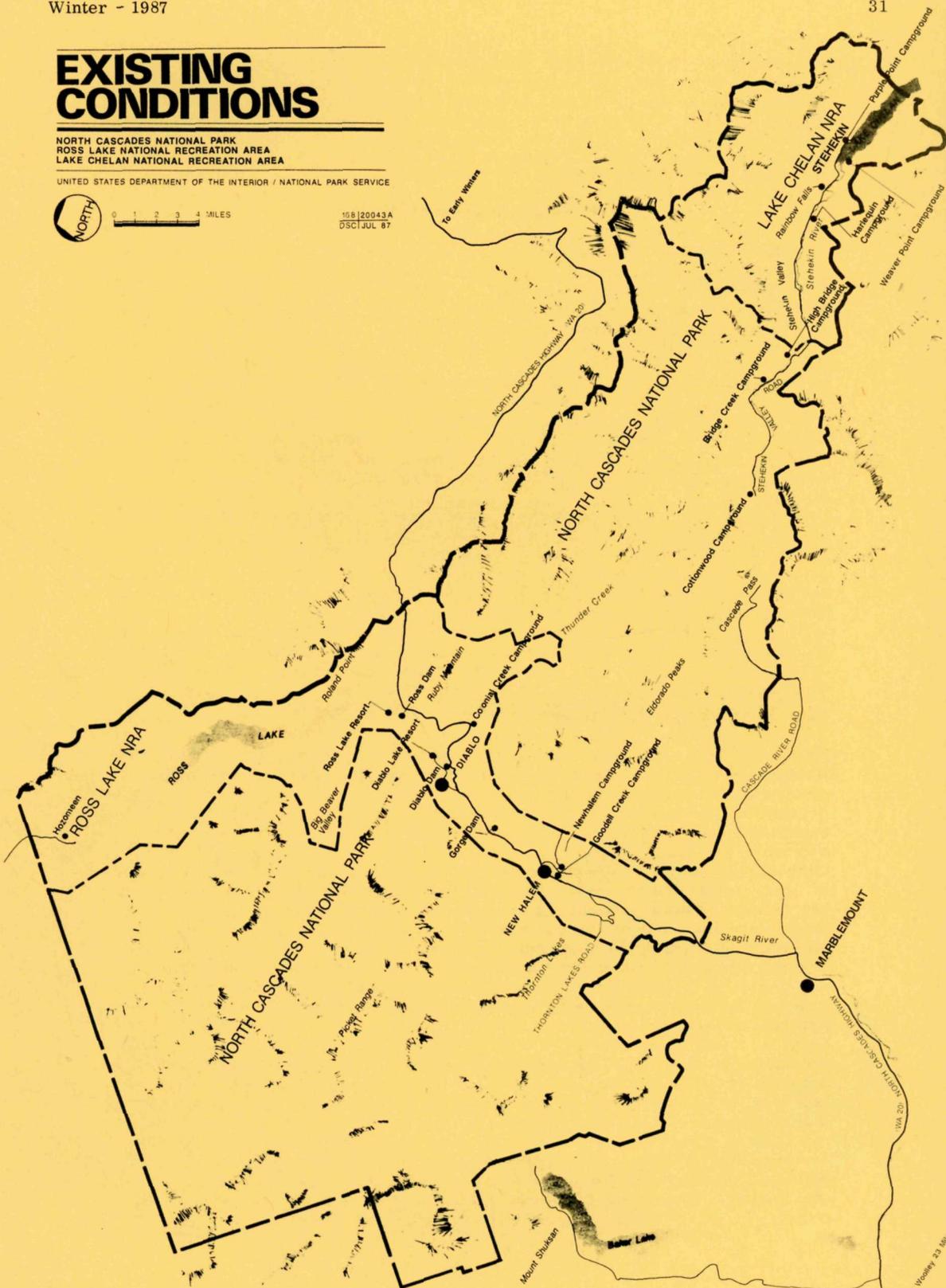
NORTH CASCADES NATIONAL PARK  
ROSS LAKE NATIONAL RECREATION AREA  
LAKE CHELAN NATIONAL RECREATION AREA

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR / NATIONAL PARK SERVICE



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NPS facilities were generally placed in the park development zone. However, NPS development anywhere within the 100-year floodplain (including both the floodway and the flood fringe) was placed in the natural zone. The long-term objective will be to relocate facilities currently inside the floodplain, which include the maintenance yard and several residences, to other federal lands in the park development zone.

## STEHKIN COMMUNITY

### COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The National Park Service supports the continuation of the Stehekin community as an integral part of Lake Chelan National Recreation Area. However, the Park Service also realizes that the community has been changed since 1968 by increases in population, visitation, and recreation use, and by the cumulative effects of those increases. The National Park Service will establish limits on development and resource use and on their location and duration to ensure that there are no significant adverse effects on the scenic, scientific, historic, and recreational values of Lake Chelan National Recreation Area. The Park Service will also actively support all state and local codes, laws, and regulations concerning development, construction, and environmental quality.

Lands included in the community development subzone will allow for an approximate doubling of community development. However, development will be directed away from sensitive scenic, scientific, historic, and other values that contribute to the character of the Stehekin community and to public enjoyment of Lake Chelan National Recreation Area. The National Park Service has prepared a draft land protection plan identifying parcels with high priorities for protection, based on their resource values and their current or potential uses. The land protection plan considers a number of methods for protecting resource values, including land exchanges and acquisition of conservation, scenic, or agricultural easements, as well as fee acquisition from willing sellers.

The NPS compatibility standards define the appropriate level of subdivision and recommend how buildings can be sited and designed to blend with their surroundings .

### RESOURCE UTILIZATION

Stehekin residents will continue to cut firewood from designated woodlots in the special use zone that will be managed for sustained-yield production. Establishment and use of these woodlots will be in accordance with a firewood management plan, which will specify locations, amounts, and appropriate charges for firewood cutting. Trees cut by the National Park Service to remove hazards or to clear development sites and rights-of-way (called administrative surplus trees) and driftwood from the lake will also be acceptable sources of firewood and will be covered in the firewood management plan.

The National Park Service considers private utilization of sand, gravel, and building stone by residents of the Stehekin Valley to be an appropriate use of Lake Chelan National Recreation Area so long as it does not have a significant adverse effect on the area's resource values. The NPS staff will study the historic and projected uses of sand, gravel, and rock taken from the Stehekin Valley and analyze the environmental and community-related impacts of several alternative actions. Alternatives will range from no removal of sand, gravel, or rock to the promulgation of a regulation to allow removal under certain conditions.

As part of the proposed assessment, the National Park Service will evaluate the possibility of importing the materials needed for federal construction projects and reclaiming the existing borrow sites. Alternative sources of sand and gravel may be more suitable for small-scale private use.

### **PARK, RECREATION AREA, AND WILDERNESS BOUNDARIES**

Based on current management strategies the Ruby Mountain area, lower Thunder Creek drainage, Big Beaver Valley, and the area south of the Skagit River between Thunder Arm and Copper Creek may more appropriately be included in North Cascades National Park than in Ross Lake National Recreation Area. The Ruby Mountain area was originally excluded from the park to allow for construction of a tramway, which is no longer proposed. The lower Thunder Creek drainage and the Big Beaver Valley were excluded from the park to allow for future hydroelectric development by Seattle City Light, but these are no longer active proposals.

Also, based on current management strategies, portions of Ross Lake National Recreation Area north of the Skagit River (see map) are suitable for wilderness, and lands down to 125 feet above Ross Lake are suitable for wilderness. The lower Thunder Creek drainage, the Big Beaver Valley, and the shoreline of Ross Lake up to 125 feet above the lake are suitable for potential wilderness.



## ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The first was a no-action alternative, designed to represent the existing conditions and compare them to possible future changes. This alternative also represents the minimum requirements alternative, since the park and recreation areas could continue to be managed as they are now without exposing visitors or resources to any harmful threats.

The next two alternatives were developed to stimulate discussion of the desired visitor experience: One would enhance the area's remote, wild character for visitors desiring a wilderness experience. The other would improve access and provide for a wider range of visitor activities.

The fourth alternative was developed by the Stehekin Community Council and represents their views about the management of the Stehekin Valley.

The draft GMP proposal contains elements from each of these alternatives.

A fifth alternative was submitted by Earth First. It differed from the other alternatives primarily in calling for the removal of the Ross Lake and Lake Chelan dams and the North Cascades Highway and the return of Stehekin Valley to a predam level of development. This alternative has not been assessed because the dams are outside the jurisdiction of the National Park Service.

### ALTERNATIVE A: NO ACTION/MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

#### Visitor Use

This alternative assumes that the existing programs and facilities offer a meaningful park experience for all visitors. As now, people could enjoy recreational activities ranging from mountaineering to vehicle camping. For visitors seeking to get away from highly developed settings but not prepared for the backcountry, Ross Lake, Lake Chelan, and Stehekin Valley would offer an intermediate experience. Visitors would be served by the existing backcountry information station at Marblemount, the Golden West visitor center in Stehekin, the information station at Newhalem, and regional contact facilities outside the NPS boundary. Once the approved development concept plan was implemented, day visitors would be able to explore a number of features and places along the North Cascades Highway. Complementary recreational and interpretive opportunities would be provided by the U.S. Forest Service, British Columbia Parks, and Seattle City Light.

#### Stehekin Community

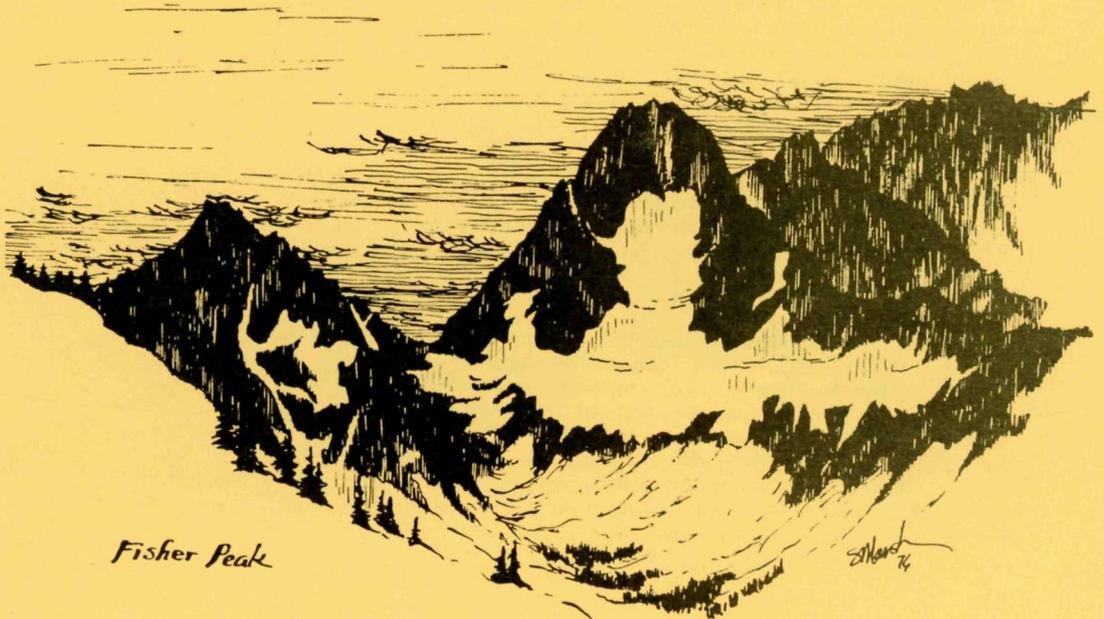
The Stehekin community would continue to develop under the Chelan County zoning regulations, which prohibit permanent structures and fill in the floodway but allow such development in the floodway fringe, subject to appropriate regulations. The National Park Service would acquire properties from willing sellers as funding allowed. Residents would be allowed to take firewood from designated woodlots, but the National Park Service would not allow the taking of sand, gravel, or building stone from public lands. Erosion- and flood-control activities would be allowed on private and public lands so long as they complied with all applicable local, state, and federal regulations and permits.

ALTERNATIVE B: ENHANCE WILDERNESS CHARACTERVisitor Use

Under this alternative management of the entire NPS complex, including the national recreation areas, would be directed toward strengthening and enhancing the wilderness character of the North Cascades. The alternative assumes that as one of three distinctive park areas in the region, North Cascades does not have to duplicate the visitor experience available at Mount Rainier and Olympic, where all people, regardless of age or ability can easily experience the scenic grandeur and varied environments of these parks. In contrast, North Cascades would offer visitors the chance to individually discover pristine environments and to experience the land without easy access or technological improvements. The interpretive focus of this alternative would be that man is a part of the environment.

The only new visitor facilities under this alternative would be those included in the approved development concept plan for the North Cascades Highway corridor and a joint information station on the Canadian side of the border at Hozomeen. As in alternative A, visitors would be served by the existing information stations and the visitor center in Stehekin.

Access would be more restrictive than it is now. The road to Thornton Lakes would be closed, and trailhead parking would be provided adjacent to the North Cascades Highway. The Cascade River road would be closed at Mineral Park or North Fork and converted to a trail from that point to the existing trailhead. The existing parking area would be restored to natural conditions, but the picnic facilities and interpretive signs would be retained. The Stehekin Valley road would be closed at Bridge Creek and converted to a trail from that point to Cottonwood, and the airstrip would be removed from the valley. In the Mount Shuksan area, the National Park Service would work with the U.S. Forest Service to pull back logging roads and restore natural conditions.



### Stehekin Community

It would be a long-term objective of the National Park Service to restore and protect the natural values of the 100-year floodplain of the Stehekin River by gradually removing development from the floodplain. A land protection plan would be prepared to specify which parcels would be suitable for development and which would eventually be acquired from willing sellers or exchanged for federal lands outside the floodplain. Residents would take firewood from designated woodlots, but private use of sand, gravel, and rock from public lands would not be allowed. Residents would not be allowed to undertake erosion- or flood-control activities on public lands. Such activities would be permitted on private lands so long as they complied with local, state, and federal regulations.

### ALTERNATIVE C: EXPAND THE RANGE OF VISITOR ACTIVITIES

#### Visitor Use

This alternative views North Cascades as a unique area of breathtaking scenic grandeur and diverse recreational potential where all visitors should have the opportunity, using extraordinary means of access if necessary, to view the vast expanse of sculptured peaks and silent glaciers in the national park and to enjoy the recreational potential inherent in the valleys, lakes, and rivers of the national recreation areas. Conceptually this alternative is similar to the 1970 Master Plan.

The North Cascades Highway corridor would remain the focus of interpretation. A major visitor center would be built on a previously disturbed site with dramatic views near the Whatcom/Skagit county line.

Several major developments would occur in the highway corridor. A new road approximately 9 miles long would be constructed from the highway to Roland Point, and the Ross Lake concession operation would be redeveloped on the point. The new development would include campgrounds, boat launches, and day use facilities, as well as lodging.

A tramway with a 5,180-foot vertical rise would be constructed to take visitors to the top of Ruby Mountain, where they could enjoy a remarkable high-mountain vista. In addition to the trails proposed in the draft plan, there would be a new foot/horse trail to the top of Ruby Mountain and a new trail along the west bank of Ross Lake from Big Beaver to the Canadian border.

The Cascade River road would be closed to vehicles at Mineral Park, but a regularly scheduled shuttle would provide access to the existing trailhead. The existing parking lot would be converted to a day use area with picnic tables and interpretive waysides. Adequate parking would be provided at Mineral Park.

New day use facilities near the Stehekin landing would include picnic tables, a children's rustic playground, and a swim beach. A boat shuttle would operate between the landing and Weaver Point. New boat-in campsites would be established at Four-Mile and Riddle creeks. The Stehekin Valley road would be graveled to Cottonwood. A new trail would parallel the road from the landing to High Bridge. The old trail to Rainbow Falls would be reestablished, including the bridge across the lower falls. The Stehekin airstrip would be lengthened and realigned to meet standards for public use.

### Stehekin Community

The Stehekin community would continue to develop under Chelan County zoning regulations. The National Park Service would discontinue the federal land acquisition program, and all existing private lands would remain in private ownership. Residents would be allowed to take firewood from designated woodlots, and regulations would be promulgated for the taking of sand, gravel, and rock from public lands in a manner that would not have significant impacts on the resources of Lake Chelan National Recreation Area. Erosion- and flood-control activities would be allowed on private and public lands so long as they complied with all applicable local, state, and federal regulations and permits.

### ALTERNATIVE D: STEHEKIN COMMUNITY COUNCIL ALTERNATIVE

#### Visitor Use

This alternative would result in more recreational development than the other alternatives. Trails and campgrounds would be improved, playgrounds to encourage family participation would be part of the plan, and swimming and fishing as well as boating would be featured. A boat shuttle would provide access to and from Weaver Point to service the Stehekin River trail. Day use opportunities would be expanded at the Stehekin landing by facilities such as a children's rustic (log construction) playground and a swimming area. The valley road would be improved to Cottonwood, and the Rainbow Falls shuttle bus tour would be continued, but its operation would be opened to bids. A campground and play area would be constructed away from the river.

This alternative also recognizes the necessity of maintaining community values in the Stehekin Valley. Maintenance of community values would require that citizens residing in the Stehekin Valley be able to become increasingly more responsible for providing visitor services in the Lake Chelan National Recreation Area. This alternative recognizes that Stehekin must be preserved as a way of life. It assumes that some visitors would be best served by less structured experiences, while others would be comfortable with a more structured approach to their visit. Choice is the underlying theme here.



The largely all-inclusive concession would be broken into economically rational parts to provide better service to visitors and residents and to provide livelihood for local residents (thus reducing population growth). The various activities (lodge, restaurant, transportation, store, etc.) would thus become separate. Competition by free enterprise for these now smaller concessions would be encouraged.

### Community

Residents within the Lake Chelan National Recreation Area are assured of continued use for personal removal and consumption of natural resources from federal lands (trees, water, sand, gravel, stone, and soil).

Uses of resources on federal lands existing immediately prior to the 1963 moratorium shall be continued.

Landowners are protected in their ownership by a "willing buyer/willing seller" policy as long as private lands are managed in a compatible manner.

Hunting and fishing will continue under the control of the state of Washington.



Chelan Mts. from Prince Gk. FEMA 9/50

# HAVE YOU RENEWED YOUR MEMBERSHIP?

The North Cascades Conservation Council needs your support. It is a non-profit, non-taxdeductible corporation. Membership in the Council includes subscription to The Wild Cascades magazine. This lively and informative publication is a must for anyone who wishes to know what is going on in Washington's North Cascades.

I wish to support the North Cascades Conservation Council. Enclosed is \$ for membership for \_\_\_\_\_ years.

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The North Cascades Foundation supports the non-legislative activities of the Council including legal and educational expenses. The Internal Revenue Service has ruled that any contributions to this non-profit Foundation are tax deductible under 501 (C) (3).

I wish to make a tax-deductible contribution to the Foundation to help protect the North Cascades' scenic, scientific, educational, wildlife, and wilderness values.

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Seattle, Washington 98145-0098

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WINTER - 1987

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### IN THIS ISSUE

President's Message p. 2  
The Good, The Bad, The Ugly p. 3  
A Letter from Stehekin p. 8  
NCNP & Sand and Gravel Company p. 10  
General Management Plan - NCNP p. 13

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