

THE WILD CASCADES

THE JOURNAL OF THE NORTH CASCADES CONSERVATION COUNCIL

Winter 2020



THE WILD CASCADES ■ Winter 2020

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COVER: *Anderson Creek near Mount Baker.* —JIM SCARBOROUGH photo

The Wild Cascades

Journal of the North Cascades Conservation Council

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THE NORTH CASCADES

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

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

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

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Founded in 1957
SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

THE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

WINTER 2020

I'm so very fortunate to be leading N3C at this particular time. It's anything but routine! The new challenges seem not to end, while old ones come back out of the woodwork. But I have the help and support of three past Presidents, a very dedicated board and best of all, members. As a member myself, then as a board member, it never dawned on me that I'd be asked to sit in the proverbial Captain's chair, especially at a time when the Klingons seem to be all around and those dilithium crystals are running near their max capacity! But all I have to do when wondering which way to steer our enterprise is take out some back issues of this journal and be inspired!

In June of 1994 board president Dave Fluharty was turning the helm over to Marc Bardsley, who sounded then a lot like I do now. "I ask for your moral support," he said, "The issues have not gone away, new ones are surfacing continually, and despite successes we must all chip in to protect the North Cascades." Bingo! Marc said it all right there. In the same issue under the title "Looking Back Into the Future," previous president Fluharty talks about some huge issues we were dealing with that have fortunately remained fairly well resolved since, including management of Lake Chelan NRA. Then he says he objected to the Park Service for cutting old trees on their Marblemount property, and the outrage he felt about discovering it. That one sure rang a bell with me! We're working to protect the high meadows of Cascade Pass and Sahale Arm from work done without any public notice, damaging the very resource that NPS stewards and says their project was intended to protect. A member tip was crucial there, as were personal observations and interactions with Park staff.

"Plugging away at nitty-gritty issues" is how Dave described N3C then, and that one rang a bell with me, too. We do a lot of it, and it can make all the difference in the long run. Being guardians isn't always a brief and spectacular type of situation. To paraphrase David Brower on environmentalism, we have to win over and over, while the opponents only have to win once. Since the last issue of *TWC*, N3C's been doing a bunch of plugging away on the four biggest topics you'll read about in this issue: the Skagit Hydro Project relicensing process, efforts to resist opening the temporary mine-cleanup road to Monte Cristo to the public, raising Park Service awareness of the impacts of its helicopter-aided work in Wilderness without public notice, and asking you to help motivate our State legislators to move to finally stop destructive suction dredge mining in our rivers.

As Dave said so aptly 26 years ago, "N3C continues to need old and newcomers to help carry the campaign. N3C has tremendous strengths—tapped and untapped—in its members." We have to keep our ears to the ground to get the earliest warning of new threats, and that's where you are indispensable. You are our eyes and ears, and more often than not these days, if we don't hear about problems early we can be shut out by shortened comment periods and other such efforts to weaken the citizen input provisions of NEPA, the very law that gives us influence over how our treasured lands are managed. So, keep the tips and offers of help coming to nccinfo@northcascades.org, thanks! And have a great Earth Day!

Phil Fenner
pbilf@northcascades.org



N3C Actions

OCTOBER 2019
to FEBRUARY 2020

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



DEFENDING WILD AREAS AGAINST DAMAGING INDUSTRIAL USES

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

- Continued public participation in the Seattle City Light Skagit Hydroelectric Power Relicensing. N3C board members have joined Steering Committee and Resource Workgroups meetings that met throughout 2019. (See page 8.)
- Submitted comments objecting to the categorization of the Bazooka Mine Exploration plan in the MBSNF as a Categorical Exclusion (generally maintenance, not requiring environmental impact study). The plan calls for road work on 7.4 miles of Forest Service Road 1775 at the western extreme of the Darrington Ranger District, south of Hamilton on State Highway 20, to excavate and remove about 50 cubic yards of quartz rock for processing off site.



EXPANDING, ESTABLISHING, AND PROTECTING WILDERNESS AREAS

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

- Submitted comments of the draft Final Report on the Mountain Loop Highway (MLH) Feasibility (Paving) Study, which clearly demonstrates that paving is not justified. (See page 19.)
- Cheered the US Army Joint Base Lewis McChord November 2019 EIS that scaled back its 2015 proposal to use a vast area of the North Cascades for helicopter training, including low-level flights and landings in Wilderness Areas day and night, year round. After a huge public outcry including scathing comments by N3C, the Army will limit its proposal to non-wilderness areas in southwest Washington. Outraged public action can lead to positive outcomes!
- Met with North Cascades National Park (NOCA) staff about the use of helicopters without public notice for construction projects in the Stephen Mather Wilderness Area.



PROMOTING ENVIRONMENTALLY SOUND RECREATION IN WILD AREAS

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

- ✓ Attended kick-off meeting sponsored by Washington Trails Association and Mount Baker Snoqualmie National Forest (MBSNF) on recreational access along the Mountain Loop Highway (MLH) from Granite Falls to Darrington. This appears to be an effort to accommodate more visitors. N3C will participate in order to protect wilderness values along the MLH.
- ✓ Participated in a meeting with the Shuksan Conservancy, the new name for the American Alps Legacy Project working for the addition of a National Park Preserve to the North Cascades National Park. (See page 7.)
- ✓ Signed joint letter to the Department of Interior requesting restoration of protection for LGBTQ employees in the department's Anti-Discrimination Guidelines.

PROTECTING ANCIENT FORESTS, WILDLIFE AND WILDLIFE HABITAT

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

- ✓ Retained legal services to oppose logging and road building on 63,000 acres on the South Fork of Stillaguamish River for Vegetation Management (thinning, i.e. logging). The first timber sale offered received no bids. (See *TWC Winter 2018, Fall 2019*).
- ✓ Submitted scoping comments in opposition to the Twisp Restoration Plan (once again thinning, i.e. logging) in the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest. The scope planned is for 55,000 acres of forest to be treated (logged!), requiring 20 miles of temporary roads.
- ✓ Signed new joint letter with 53 organizations to Washington State House of Representatives and Senate advocating state law that would more strictly regulate damaging suction dredge mining in salmon-bearing rivers. Last year the legislation punted to the Department of Fish & Wildlife who produced a weak rule. Sent 2 Action Alerts asking members to contact their State lawmakers regarding new legislation this year. (See *TWC Winter 2019* and page 11).
- ✓ Continued supporting SnoKing Watershed Council's appeal of Snohomish County Permit to "rebuild" the Index-Galena Road in North Fork of Skykomish River Bed. The old roadbed is now the new river bed in this salmon-bearing stream.
- ✓ Attended public meeting to protest USFS proposal to turn over protection and enforcement of the Roadless Rule in the Tongass National Forest to the not-so-tender mercies of the State of Alaska and the timber industry, effectively ending such protections in the nation's largest forest. Our comments were included with a joint statement, and N3C also submitted its own comments in opposition. Bad for the Tongass, this would set a terrible precedent and thus threaten Inventoried Roadless Areas in the Cascades.
- ✓ Met with new Darrington District Ranger and MBSNF deputy Supervisor to express concerns about continued public use and abuse of the Monte Cristo CERCLA track in Inventoried Roadless Area (IRA) and to state our uncompromising position that the track be closed when 5 years of monitoring of ground water leakage from the mining waste repository ends at the end of 2020. (See page 11.)

Nearing the end
of a
complimentary
year of N3C
membership?

Please renew before your membership expires in June, so you won't miss a single Action Alert or issue of *The Wild Cascades*.

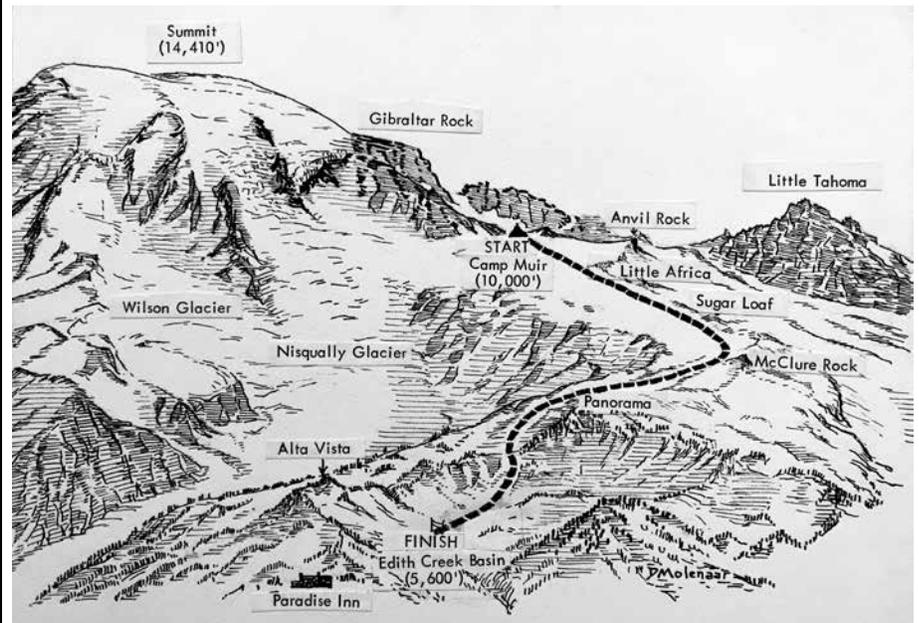
**Join our N3C
Facebook page!**

We're up to 564 friends and growing. Help us build our clout by friending us and then recommending our page to your friends concerned about preserving the North Cascades.



Dee Molenaar dies at 101

By Ed Henderson



Dee Molenaar's drawing of the Silver Skis Race, held from 1934 to 1942 and in 1947 and 1948, shows the ski run down from Camp Muir to Paradise on Mount Rainier.

Dee Molenaar, icon of Northwest mountaineering died on January 18, 2020 at 101 years old. He was one of the last of The Greatest Generation and served in the Coast Guard in the Pacific Theater in World War Two.

Before the War, Dee guided at Mount Rainier and climbed the mountain fifty times. His experience led him to write the definitive history of the mountain, *The Challenge of Rainier*. After the War he returned to the Pacific Northwest and studied geology at the University of Washington. Dee climbed in the Cascades and around the world. He participated in the second ascent of Mount Saint Elias in 1946 and the famous 1953 American attempt on K2.

Dee was not only a climber and a geologist, he was an artist and cartographer. Anywhere one goes in the North Cascades to hike or climb a remote summit, you may be sure that Dee drew a map. Both Harvey Manning in his *100 Hikes* guidebooks and Fred Beckey in his classic North Cascades climbing guidebooks relied on Dee's maps and perspective drawings to illustrate the rugged terrain described. Dee's photograph of three climbers on Mount Saint Elias

graced the cover binding of the first four editions of *Freedom of the Hills*. While storm bound on K2, he painted the highest watercolor ever done and then had to drink the colored water he was using.

Harvey Manning's and Fred Beckey's guidebooks with Dee's maps and drawings served as an inspiration and an invitation to the North Cascade wilderness. Many who started up the trail, stopped to look around, recognized the threats to the fragile wilderness, and became activists protecting it. These guidebooks and histories introduced a wide audience to the majesty of the mountain wilderness. Dee's watercolors of northwest mountains are prized possessions.

Dee Molenaar was a professional, a scholar, an artist and a gentleman. He was proud and passionate in his love of the mountains and always ready to share his love and knowledge. He leaves a legacy of respect and caring.

A memorial service for Dee Molenaar is planned for Easter Sunday, April 12, at the Mountaineer's Program Center on Sand Point Way. Check www.mountaineers.org for details.



Lake Ann: this popular hiking/camping destination is closely outside the park and reflects what the Shuksan Conservancy seeks to recognize and protect. —©TOM HAMMOND photo

Shuksan Conservancy carries on work of American Alps Campaign

By Marc Bardsley and Jim Davis

A few years ago, the North Cascades Conservation Council (N3C) Board of Directors decided that it would be more efficient to form an independent organization to concentrate on expansion of the North Cascades National Park (NCNP) and related issues. The thought was that a smaller more focused group of persons located closer to the Skagit/Mt Baker area could be effective in recruiting local folks to work for our collective goals. Since that time, the American Alps Campaign has been an effective leader in developing strategies and plans for furthering NCNP expansion by developing a program for advocating a “National Park Preserve” approach for expansion. Some details of this program have been to adjust boundaries, develop research and work with the Agencies, Tribes, elected officials and other Conservation Groups. Modifications to the original proposal have also been made.

For several reasons, including the political realities, no actual major land use changes have been made on Federal

land recently but critical alliances have been made with land owners, the Tribes, political entities and other groups. Even more important, a cadre of activists has been developed in the Bellingham/Skagit Valley areas and other portions of Skagit and Whatcom Counties. This group, besides renaming themselves as the Shuksan Conservancy, has also been working on a plan for a pollinator refuge in the North Cascades, a method to aid Law Enforcement activities on public land, and staged environmental activist training for new and younger persons. Many NCCC

members are active in this group and our organization is providing support to the Shuksan Conservancy as necessary.

The N3C is committed to cooperating with and supporting this local group, which has very similar goals and ideals. If you need more information or want to support these like-minded people you are encouraged to contact Shuksan Conservancy’s President, Jim Davis directly, jimdavispcp@comcast.net. Their website is being redeveloped and we will pass it along when available.



N3C is a supporting member of Leave No Trace.

Skagit Project Relicensing enters five-year process of study, negotiation

By Dave Fluharty



Ross Dam. —JIM SCARBOROUGH photo

A lot is happening as the Skagit Project Relicensing completes the year-long study design process and enters the formal Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) relicensing process.

Those who are tracking this N3C activity know it is a very arcane process that sets the parameters for how the three Seattle City Light dams and associated infrastructure on the upper Skagit River, in the very heart of the North Cascades, will be operated for the next 30-50 years. In particular, the Relicensing raises the question of what can be done to further mitigate the many impacts of the hydropower project on this uniquely scenic area we hold so dear, surrounded by Recreation Area and National Park, 94% of which is designated Wilderness.

In early March, Seattle City Light will pre-release its Preliminary Application Document (PAD) for review and comment by the Tribal, Federal and State agencies as well as non-governmental entities like N3C which have authority over or concerns about aspects of the dam operations and its impacts. In April, Seattle City Light will

submit the PAD to FERC, setting in motion a roughly five-year long formal process of study and negotiation. This time Seattle City Light is insisting on using the Integrated License Process (ILP) instead of the innovative Alternative License Process (ALP) that was used 30 years ago to develop the current operating license. While the ALP was preferred by many of the participants, Seattle City Light and FERC prefer the ILP because it provides set deadlines for the elements of the process, thus giving the utility and regulatory agency more control over the timing of the process. Both the ALP and the ILP are intended as collaborative processes but the ALP allows for more innovative options to be considered while the ILP forces the decision process to abide by specific deadlines.

But there is a hitch in this process. More than a year ago N3C requested from Seattle City Light its evaluation of how well each of the current license provisions were performed and if the planned actions had been completed and were effective at mitigating the original impacts of the Skagit River Project. Seattle City Light responded that it had done all the projects

and expended all the funds but did not have any other measure of effectiveness of mitigation. However, as part of the normal pre-licensing process, FERC performed an inspection and found quite a few elements of the current license that had not been completed.

Most important from N3C's perspective were projects under the Recreation and Aesthetics component of the license. Foremost among these was the failure to repaint the transmission towers to minimize contrast with the background in Ross Lake National Recreation Area. Based on studies performed for the current license, these transmission towers were identified as having high visual impact on visitor enjoyment of the area. N3C, three Skagit tribes, the National Park Service and the US Forest Service all agreed and Seattle City Light concurred. Therefore repainting the towers became a provision of the project license approved by FERC.

N3C and others are in discussion with Seattle City Light over how it intends to comply with this license requirement. Something has to be done before the end of the current license. Stay tuned.



Power towers. —PHIL FENNER photo

Excerpt from *To Think Like a Mountain:* *Environmental Challenges in the American West,* by Niels S. Nokkentved

We haven't read a mix of environmental reporting and advocacy like this since Dave Brower and Harvey Manning of N3C fame in the 60s and 70s. Journalist Niels S. Nokkentved has seen what he reports on first-hand, and it shows. Rather than further extoll the book, we were granted special permission to reprint excerpts of the final chapter, where he makes his case, one we couldn't agree with more.

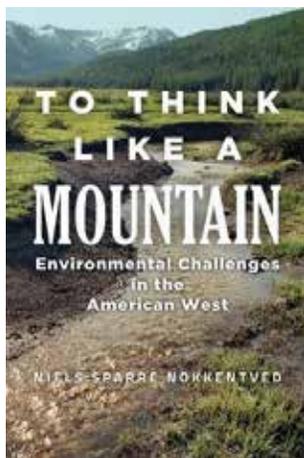
—Phil Fenner

Excerpt courtesy of Washington State University Press

Naturalist E.O. Wilson has pointed out that the main reason species have disappeared and continue to disappear is the loss of habitat.¹ For the long-term benefit to all life on the planet, the choices that preserve habitat, that give us clean air and water, allow salmon to spawn naturally, forests to thrive, and wolves to run free, are preferred. After all, we too depend on the natural world; it's where we live. We all breathe the air, drink the water. Clearly it profits us all if we respect the balance of nature.

To be sure, these issues deal with conflicting values. To resolve such conflicts we might think like the mountain. We can, if we consider the long-term consequences of our actions, maintain the balance of nature in ways that include us.

These are some of the issues that face us as the owners of those 673 million acres we call public lands. Of course, private lands are also affected by the same conflicts. Individuals are affected differently by these issues, varying with the source of their livelihoods. Still, none of us can escape the limits of the resources available on this little planet, and there are appropriate places for most uses and activities. Some might argue that human needs or values must always take precedence, and they typically value resource uses or extraction at the expense of other values. I would urge them to work with nature, not against it, for nature does not respect our human values.



I am by nature drawn to derelicts, things that have outlived their practical usefulness like old dogs, land that has been allowed to return to its natural state, and the underdogs of nature. I hope to speak for those who cannot speak for themselves. I am cognizant of the needs of people, but also see beyond them to the landscape that supports us all, a landscape that, in the words of Percy Bysshe Shelley, “may be untainted by the misery of man.”² It is all too obvious when the land is touched by the unseen hand of powers interested only in what can be extracted from it in the pursuit of individual profit. When public resources are put at risk under such circumstances, the public interest and the long-term interests of the landscape must weigh more heavily.

The public interest includes a broad array of users who depend on those same healthy forests, rivers, and grasslands on public lands. They include hunters and anglers, who depend on healthy wildlife habitat and rivers, lakes and streams; hikers and river runners, who appreciate the beauty and solitude that can still be found on public lands in many places; campers, picnickers and park visitors, who find respite from their daily stress; the indigenous people of the Northwest who have depended on the salmon in Northwest rivers and streams for ten thousand years; and those who just plain enjoy the

outdoors for its own sake, like the magic of star-filled night reflecting in a placid mountain lake while floating in a canoe as if suspended in space. They also include the thousands of people who cater to these users, selling hunting and fishing licenses, equipment, food and fuel, and all those who know it is out there and are willing to pay taxes to support the continued existence of these resources. Thinking like a mountain means recognizing that nature's bounty is far more than a commodity having only a cash value, and using resources wisely and efficiently to meet our needs—not trying to take all we can get.

¹Wilson, “The Global Solution to Extinction.”

²Percy Bysshe Shelley, “Song: Rarely, rarely comest thou.”

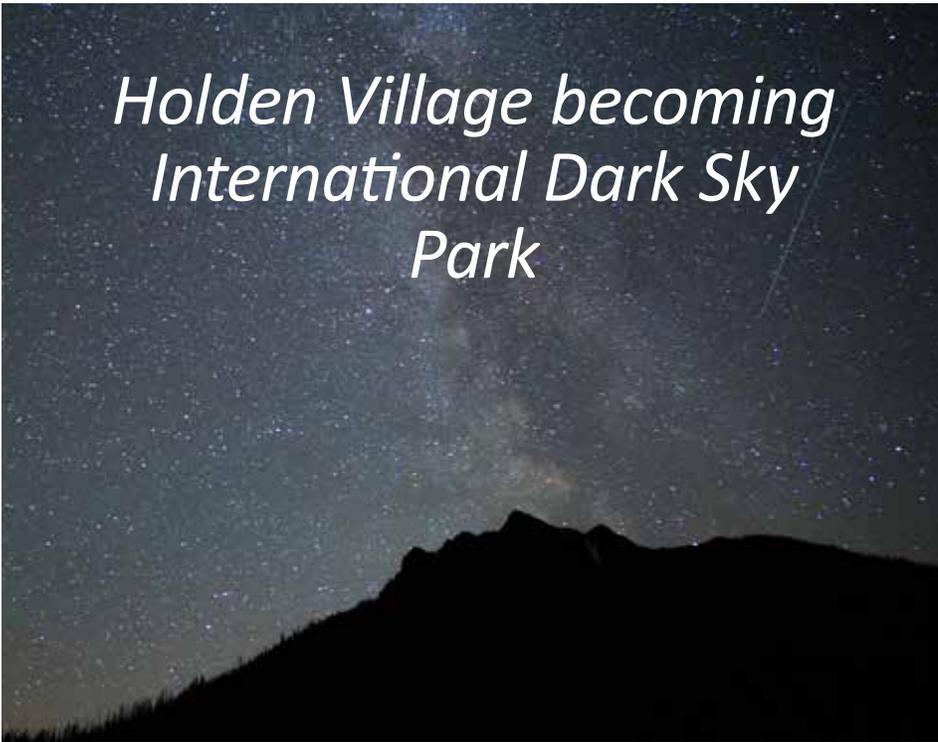
Attention N3C members

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

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

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

Holden Village becoming International Dark Sky Park



Milky Way and mountains —MARY ELLEN CHILES photo

By Nancy Rerucha Borges

“We are made of starstuff.” Carl Sagan’s words are science, poetry, beauty, wonder.

I love that my child, an astrophysicist, has a tattoo of this quote (in Elvish no less).

The wondrous reality that atoms in our body were made in stars and ejected into space in stellar explosions, in supernovas, is riveting. The night sky, stars twinkling from horizon to horizon, the occasional meteor leaving a sparkling trail for the briefest moment, reminds us of a deep connection, reminds us that we can see beyond us, and that we are home in this vastness.

I grew up taking stars for granted. I wore out my Star Finder. I marveled at the Milky Way, at being a speck on an obscure outer spiral arm staring through the disk of our galaxy; I traveled back in time more than 2½ million years just by looking up at the Andromeda Galaxy; I gaped through binoculars at Jupiter’s four largest moons. Granted, they were just pinpricks, but wow, moons, outer solar system, whoa!

I thought everyone did this kind of stuff. I couldn’t fathom an adult that had never seen the Milky Way, that didn’t know what it was.

I remember when our child, Rain, first noticed the stars. Camped at Sun Lakes in summer, just before Rain turned one, we slept under a dark sky, clear, brilliant and

glittering. Rain woke up fussing, squirming about and complaining, then suddenly caught sight of the sky and just stopped. Stopped and stared.

It is enough to make us all stop and stare. It is jaw-droppingly, alarmingly, disarmingly stunning. Its reality boggles the mind: huge distances measured in light-years, time unrolling before our eyes, billions of stars in our galaxy, billions of galaxies in our universe.

Without dark skies, we’d never see any of it.

When the Holden Mine Remediation Project brought additional lights into the valley, we realized we could no longer take our dark skies for granted. So about a year ago, we contacted the International Dark-Sky Association to start the process of becoming an International Dark Sky Park (IDSP). We bought a cool Sky Quality meter to scientifically quantify how dark our skies really are. Obviously, we had to test it the moment it arrived. Behind the house that night, in an informal but accurate measurement, we met the gold standard threshold for darkness. (Of course we did.)

As part of the application process, we must inventory all our outdoor lighting. We are fortunate on several fronts – since Holden has cared about dark skies for a long time, most of our lighting reflects that. We recently installed new dark

sky-compliant path lighting. And most of the historic lighting also meets dark sky criteria. Even so, we are planning improvements in the near future to bring us into 100% compliance.

It’s not too hard to have dark skies when your nearest neighbors are deer and bears, and the nearest town, Stehekin, is a couple day’s hike away. Before the Holden Mine Remediation Project began its major works in 2013, we were the only light-generating entity in the middle of a 300-square mile area (Holden being the center of a circle with radius to Stehekin). Nearby protected public lands total about 2,750 square miles (Glacier Peak, Pasayten, and Sawtooth Wilderness areas, and North Cascades National Park). There are also significant other public lands outside these areas that remain largely undeveloped.

We are indeed lucky bits of starstuff.

We have received nothing but positive feedback about our efforts to become a Dark Sky Park. Holden is on Forest Service land, and the Chelan Ranger District supports our efforts. Together we share the value of darkness for both humans and wildlife. A mile down the road, the mine remediation folks have cooperated with our requests to use dark sky lighting at the water treatment plant as well as their entire industrial area.

One of the requirements for IDSP designation is commitment to education. Our naturalists have already developed and presented night sky programming, but we are looking forward to collaboration with other International Dark Sky Parks to further this effort at Holden.

In the end, why are we doing this? Running errands in Chelan the other day, we met a young man who, when he found out we were from Holden, talked excitedly about his wonderful experiences there as a child, and how one night he lay outside watching a meteor shower. It was awesome, he said, and after a moment: “That is when I fell in love with the stars.”

Why are we doing this? To fall in love with the stars. To feel a sense of place in the cosmos. Of home. To see beyond our small lives on a small planet in the backwoods of a typical galaxy.

Because we are made of starstuff.

Nancy Rerucha Borges and family have been Holden Village staff for many years. Currently she is the Village’s Safety Administrator.

N3C supports the Park Service request for a dark sky study of the Skagit Hydro Project.

Suction dredging facing an end if Legislature acts

By Jim Freeburg

As you read this, the Washington State Legislature will likely have wrapped up its session in Olympia. Before it adjourns, we are hoping that they will have passed a ban on suction dredge mining (SDM). N3C joined forces with dozens of other environmental groups, tribes, and businesses to urge the legislature to prohibit SDM in salmon streams, thus eliminating a threat to the survival of the southern resident orcas of Puget Sound. As reported in *TWC* Winter 2019, this type of mining has been largely unregulated by the state until recently. However, a groundswell of support is expected to push through the ban this session and overcome opposition from miners.

In suction dredge mining, an internal combustion engine sucks up the bottom of creeks and rivers in hopes of finding gold. The engine is often mounted on the back of a raft and spews an incredible amount of sediment and contaminants (like mercury) downstream. The mining can ruin salmon spawning beds by disrupting the eggs or covering them with sand and gravel. This practice is common in important salmon rivers like the Nooksack and Skagit as well as other areas in the Yakima Basin and Upper Columbia Basin. SDM is a high-impact activity that we just can't afford to have when we are spending billions of dollars to restore salmon runs. It's especially ironic that the state allows such a destructive practice in the exact rivers that are most important to providing food for orcas. Luckily, legislators are starting to pay attention and take the necessary action.

In 2019, the state Senate approved a ban on SDM in critical salmon habitat, but the bill failed to pass the House. This year, advocates decided on a new strategy to focus on the House first. On February 12, House Bill 1261 passed by a 60-35 margin. The bill is making its way through the Senate but should pass before the end of the session on March 12. Given that 2020 is a short session, things move very quickly but we appreciate everyone who has reached out to their legislators regarding the issue.

Once the bill is signed by the Governor, Washington will join California, Idaho and Oregon in prohibiting SDM in critical habitat for salmon, steelhead, or bull trout.

This includes all fresh water where salmon spawn, live, or migrate. If individuals would like to mine elsewhere in the state using SDM, they will have to apply for a permit from the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. They will still have to show compliance with the federal Clean Water Act. Furthermore, the state will have to first attempt to achieve voluntary compliance before taking enforcement action. Non-motorized mining will still be allowed. While N3C would prefer a stronger ban, this is a significant improvement over the status quo.

Facebook posts and member emails will keep you updated on this legislation. If you haven't already, please thank your legislator if they voted for this bill. House Bill 1261 is sponsored by Representative Strom Peterson of the 21st legislative district, which includes Edmonds, Mukilteo, and South Everett. He deserves our thanks as well.



Proponents of suction dredging met in Liberty, Wash. last summer. —ANNE BASYE photo

Still monitoring Monte Cristo

In January, N3C members met with new Darrington District Ranger and MBSNF deputy Supervisor to express our concerns about continued public use and abuse of the Monte Cristo CERCLA track in Inventoried Roadless Area (IRA). Our review of 2019 gate key loans found that 28 of 33 trips reported were by private property in-holders. We also affirmed our uncompromising position that the track be closed when 5 years of monitoring of ground water leakage from the mining waste repository ends at the end of 2020. Thus far no leakage has been detected. N3C will closely follow this issue until MBSNF permanently closes the track when monitoring of the CERCLA clean-up is complete.

Landing fee for trees?

Distressed by a clearcut next to her home in Poulsbo, Alia Pirzada launched a one-woman campaign to add a \$25 on every person flying into (or out of) any Washington State airports. The money raised would go to fund forests and reforestation. As well, it could persuade travelers to choose another, less carbon-intensive form of travel. The former owner of a travel agency specializing in cheap tickets to Asia knows that air travel is a major contributor to greenhouse gases, and the number of travelers has increased almost sixfold since 1985, when she operated her agency.

With 50 million people passing through SeaTac annually and millions more at Spokane and other airports, she calculates that a \$25 airport fee for trees would provide more than a billion dollars of funding for new trees, to purchase the timber rights on land slated for clearcutting, and to buy forested land to preserve it as parkland. "This user fee will only be paid by people who fly, like a personal carbon offset," says the flyer she has distributed to every legislator in Olympia. "But we will all benefit from the cleaner air, stormwater & soil retention and environmental cooling provided by the trees."

To learn more, visit <http://alia.link/2020/01/24/trees-and-travel-collide-in-the-evergreen-state/> or email alia@alia.link.

A fix for Sahale harm?

By Phil Fenner

*"I biked up the trail at a see-how-fast-I-can-make-it speed, red-faced and sweating, feeling strong, exhilaration mounting. A few last strides and I crested the pass. Cascade Pass! I dropped my pack and felt like I could fly. Sweet, heady smells rose from meadows warmed by the sun. Cool winds bathed my hot face. The glacier-bung crags of Johannesburg soared above on one side, Sahale Peak's meadowed shoulder rolled upwards on the other. And below, beckoning me east: the Stebekin Valley."**

Many of us have experienced this kind of exhilaration upon reaching Cascade Pass. And we assume it will remain intact, since it's inside designated Wilderness and N3C pioneered re-vegetation there. But N3C member Sara Webb had a very different experience. Here's what she told us:

"A low-flying helicopter flew by me 30 times. The noise was deafening... the peace and sacred space of the North Cascades National Park [was] violated repeatedly by an NPS helicopter. This helicopter overflight also occurred last year when I made the same hike [to Cascade Pass]. I strongly feel that helicopter flights should be banned in the National Park except for emergency rescue operations. Trail crews have been building tent sites for 100 years in the parks without the use of helicopters. It is totally unnecessary. It was like being in a war zone, walking along the trail from Pelton Basin to Cascade pass, being continually buzzed at low altitude by choppers. I can only imagine how vets or other war survivors might feel if they came seeking peace in the high country and found themselves assaulted repeatedly by this piercing roar!"

N3C board members went to National Park Service officials soon after to ask what the NPS was doing and why, since we hadn't heard anything about extended helicopter usage in North Cascades National

Park (NOCA) until our member wrote us. We agreed with our member that helicopters shouldn't be there unless they're saving lives or fighting fires that threaten people. After all, N3C worked for 20 years after the Park was created (from 1968 to 1988) to protect 94% of the Park as designated Wilderness because the Wilderness Act prohibits motorized use. That applies not just to visitors, but to the Park Service as well. Helicopter use in Park Wilderness should be rare and very well-justified.

As previous issues of *The Wild Cascades** reported, we investigated, met with Park officials, and filed a Freedom Of Information Act (FOIA) request to find out what was going on. The results were worse than we expected and revealed a pattern of extensive helicopter use in the Cascade Pass area particularly for trail and campsite construction in 2014. The procedural mechanism used to cloak these operations from the public notice was the notorious "Categorical Exclusion" clause in NEPA, intended to reduce agency paperwork burden but only for very minor maintenance tasks. We objected then, and followed up recently, hoping we'd find some improvements since we first looked into the situation about five years ago. Some sleuthing with Google

Earth revealed a slide developing at a new switchback. We wanted to take a look for ourselves, but the trail was closed by then, so we talked to the Park Service, and they said they'd get back to us.

We had a chance to visit Cascade Pass and Sahale Arm last summer, and what we saw plainly shocked us. As reported in *TWC* last year, a substantial section of the steep slope of the previously pristine meadows of Sahale Arm just above the Pass has begun to slide, right where a new section of trail has been cut into it. It appeared to us that a new trail cut had triggered a slide, and it was rapidly spreading. We alerted the Park Service. As the calendar flipped to 2020, we'd gotten nothing more than the proverbial "we'll get right back to you" reply. We asked for another meeting with officials. We see the Sahale Arm slide as symptomatic of a deeper series of problems at the Park, from purpose to planning to execution, all of which would be greatly improved if the public was notified of their plans and actions. We represent the public interest, these are public lands, and if the agency managing them chooses not to notify the public, we must pursue that.



Landslide scar spreading rapidly on slopes of Sahale Arm. Note hikers for scale.

*Wendy Walker, *Finding My Way Home*, in *Impressions of the North Cascades* © 1996 by John C. Miles. Full text at <http://www.northcascades.org/imp/imp/index.htm>



Aerial photo of Sahale with circle showing slide area. —GOOGLE EARTH ©2018 GOOGLE

Meeting NOCA staff

N3C President Phil Fenner and board member Dave Fluharty met with North Cascades National Park’s Superintendent and 6 staff members in late January 2020 to try to get to the bottom of how to resolve the slide on the switchback on Sahale Arm and the larger issues of helicopter use, lack of public notice, and the need for an updated Wilderness Stewardship Plan. It was upsetting but not entirely unpredictable to hear the NPS deny responsibility for the damage on Sahale Arm, claiming they didn’t cause the mudslide at the new switchback they cut, because, they said, the blow-out was already there. It was frustrating because their line of reasoning was flawed (see Google Map view), but also somewhat predictable in that we have heard this sort of denial from agencies before, unfortunately.

The NPS presented historic satellite photographs asserting that a bare patch visible on photos predating the trail work was the slide we saw, and thus the slide was present prior to their trail work and they didn’t cause it. N3C couldn’t believe that NOCA would have cut a switchback into an existing mudslide, and the evidence just doesn’t bear out their contention that the slide was already there before the NPS work began. What was already there was a slide-prone area which started sliding when they cut into it at two levels to connect to a new switchback they built. The historical views show that the cutting

happened earlier than N3C thought it did—about 12 years ago, not during the helicopter-supported work 6 years ago. But since NOCA has always claimed no trail work can be done on Sahale Arm without helicopters, that chronology shows they did at least twice as many helicopter-aided trail projects as we thought, and they were clearly not paying attention to where they were cutting a new trail in a steep, fragile, slide-prone place. Moreover, they did nothing to stop the slide from getting worse when they were working near there again in 2014.

The remedial work needed now to stabilize the growing scar on Sahale Arm will require more helicopters, NOCA insists. This was distressing to hear, as N3C opposes any helicopter use in Wilderness that isn’t either for Search and Rescue or firefighting, consistent with the prohibition on motorized use of designated Wilderness spelled out in the Wilderness Act. But NOCA maintains that since Cascade Pass and especially Sahale Arm trails are not passable by stock, and unsafe for workers, helicopters are their only option for moving rock, logs, and sacks of soil. It’s too steep and the objects are too heavy for people to carry without risking their lives, they claim. So if it must happen now to repair their damage, we agreed that this repair justifies helicopters. But it should be the last time helicopters are needed for work there if the repair is done right. We were encouraged, however, that NOCA

staff’s said they were striving to reduce non-essential helicopter use in Stephen Mather Wilderness. We will know more about their contention that they’ve already been reducing helicopter use over the last 5 years when we receive and analyze copies of their records we get from the new FOIA request we filed prior to our January meeting with the NPS. We’ll share details in the next *The Wild Cascades*.

We were pleased to hear that they intend to use split cedar logs rather than rock for the Sahale repair—much lighter cedar will require fewer helicopter runs. The “cedar splits” will be anchored to bedrock, then the wood retaining walls will be backfilled with small rocks and soil and the trail tread cleared. Clearing the tread of mudslide debris will restore visitor safety, which ironically was one of NPS’s primary reasons for the Sahale trail project. As soon as we know the schedule, we’ll report it on our Facebook page and in emails to members. NOCA promises to publicize it at their Wilderness Information Center and on their website so visitors can avoid the area then, or at least know what to expect if they go.

Larger issues include lack of public notice, outdated Plan, overuse

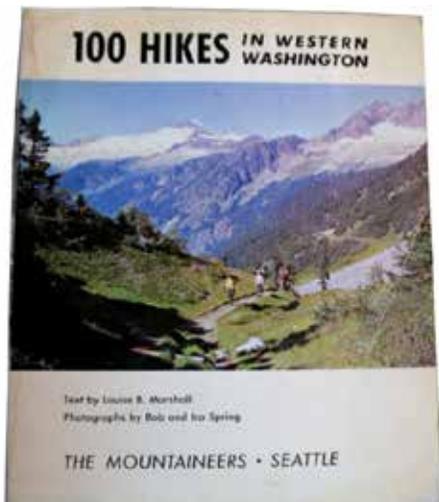
Lest we be accused of being overly fixated on one switchback, we emphasized to NOCA that the larger issues behind our concern at Sahale Arm are NOCA’s lack of public notice in its planning and implementation process, primarily accomplished using NEPA’s Categorical Exclusion clause. NOCA calls this sort of trail work “maintenance,” and that category of work excludes the requirement for public notice and comment-taking. Initially, NOCA staff told us we should just look in their PEPC system: Planning, Environment and Public Comment. Later, though, they said, actually “Not all of our PEPC projects are made available to the public.” Why not? They had no good answer. Perhaps they didn’t want us to find out and comment on it. They seem to have been operating under the old principle “easier to ask forgiveness than for permission.”

Behind that problem of opacity lies the need for a current and enforceable Wilderness Stewardship Plan, which we discussed with NOCA at length during our meeting. NOCA says it is now in the pre-NEPA phase of preparing for a new Stewardship Plan and is working on a baseline Wilderness Character Monitoring Plan, scoring sub-areas of the Wilderness

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for their distinct characteristics (e.g., natural, solitude, untrammled, undeveloped) so that changes can be monitored, and degradation remedied. NOCA expects to publish that survey by July of this year, and we'll announce and distribute it widely.



We'll be particularly curious how they rank Cascade Pass for those qualities, and hope their own actions do not further harm those very values they are monitoring.

Overuse of the Cascade Pass area was the main reason NOCA claims it needed to cut-in that new trail including the switch-back that blew out, to lessen the grade of the trail for the safety of the increasing numbers of visitors. Cascade Pass itself is so close to the end of the N. Fork Cascade River road, and the hike to the Pass has been so heavily publicized that it is often "swarming" with day hikers in summer (see cover photo of original *100 Hikes* book.) N3C has repeatedly recommended that NOCA close the N. Fork Cascade River road a couple miles before the current road end to save the cost of repairing wash-outs that seem to regularly damage the road, and to make the trailhead just a little harder to get to, which would inevitably reduce some of the heavy day use (overnight use is strictly limited by permit). But so far, NOCA has always repaired the road instead. Now NOCA staff proposes a novel way to improve the overuse situation, and N3C supports it: keep the road gated at Eldorado until all the snow has melted on the final approach trail to Cascade Pass and up on Sahale Arm. That would also probably help reduce the chances of another fatality like the one a few years ago when a day-hiker running late tried to take a shortcut on

the way back and fell. This proposal shows creative thinking on the part NOCA, and we applaud it.

We hope Superintendent Karen Taylor-Goodrich was right when she said the heavy helicopter use and resulting damage to Sahale Arm's delicate alpine cover was an anomaly, and that there's a lot more sensitivity in NOCA's caretaking and planning since the 2007 and 2014 helicopter-supported work that led to such high impacts. N3C met the right people to contact at NOCA to follow-up on the Sahale repair, and to find out about any other NOCA plans to use helicopters in Wilderness in the future. We will be following up and reporting what we find in future issues of *TWC*. N3C offered to put together a member work party to carry plants up to the repair area to eliminate the need for helicopter use. Stay tuned. "Plant carries" are fun and rewarding and something N3C has done many times in the past.

Member Sara Webb concluded:

"I found that N3C really had my back when I voiced a protest about the condition of the Park in the Cascades. I heard nothing back when I filed my complaint with the National Park Service. It was only AFTER I filed the same complaint with the N3C that I started getting results. The N3C is a watchdog with the expertise to document claims, to question legalities like the use of helicopters, and to file requests for information with the Park Service. They are important allies to laypersons like me who hike the trails and want to keep the wilderness wild. It's too easy to leave the work to others. I found there are staff members at N3C who will fight for me if I speak up as an ordinary citizen and say what I see when I use the land preserved for wilderness and park areas. It is heartening!"

*See *TWC* back-issues Fall 2019, Fall 2015, Spring-Summer 2015, Winter 2014-15, Fall 2014 available online at <http://npshistory.com/newsletters/the-wild-cascades/>

NOTE TO MEMBERS: *If you see anything amiss while visiting Cascade Pass and Sabale Arm this coming summer, or see similar situations elsewhere, please let us know what you see right away. Email us at nccinfo@northcascades.org.*



Hoary Marmot guarding Cascade Pass —PHIL FENNER photo



Goat Rocks, a place Harvey loved. —JIM SCARBOROUGH photo

In search of lost peaks

By Katie Ives

In August, on a pilgrimage of sorts, I set out in search of a trail that wasn't on most of the ordinary maps I'd found. I paused at the signboard near the parking lot, where a picture of official paths displayed wriggling burgundy lines. The unmarked trail lay somewhere in the blank orange space marked "Wilderness Boundary." I was hoping to follow it to a particular location within an alpine basin, concealed behind steep ridges: a place of vivid meadows and abundant flowers below a snowy peak. This was one of the favorite spots of Harvey Manning, a Cascades mountaineer, guidebook author and conservationist, who died in 2006. During the 1960s, he'd created a few infamous maps of imaginary mountains, which fooled magazine editors and climbers alike, and he'd conducted other practical jokes, both known and possibly unknown.

This basin, I was certain, was real. While researching Manning's hoaxes, I'd been

corresponding with some of his children and friends. I'd heard that he'd described the place as his "home," and that his family had scattered his ashes there. His son, Paul, emailed me a map with a line that he'd added of the unmarked trail. One of his daughters, Claudia, sent me photos of their most recent visit. Later, I found descriptions in Manning's writings. As with most seemingly hidden areas in the Internet age, scattered references to the place by other people appeared online. But the way there didn't seem easy to find. Long before you reach the unmarked path, one blogger warned, the named trails branch in confusing ways, not always corresponding to lines on maps.

When I left the parking lot, the late summer sun filled the woods and fields with a dusty shimmer of gold. I've never gotten in the habit of using GPS. Instead, at each bewildering junction, I paused and stared at my crumpled stack of printed

information and contradictory maps. Often, I simply guessed. And as I contoured a mountainside of dark evergreens, I kept looking for the unmarked trail, wondering at each dim imprint of footfalls amid the grass and rocks.

A backpacker appeared around a corner, and he told me that he was just returning from the place I sought. He and his friends had built a cairn to mark the way as they headed out. His expression turned radiant. The alpine basin had exceeded any expectations that he could have formed: it was, he believed, the most beautiful place in the world. I walked on, following his directions, to a narrow track that led up a steep hillside, around a rampart of cliffs, over a sudden pass and through the space between two giant evergreens that rose like an open doorway to another world.

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KATIE IVES photo

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As the British writer Hugh Thomson pointed out in *Nanda Devi: A Journey to the Last Sanctuary*, images of a hidden alpine basin and a high peak appear in many cultures and eras, as the object of a quest, the emblem of an ideal or the experience of paradise itself. In an article about the Nanda Devi Sanctuary for the 1964 *Himalayan Journal*, the Indian mountaineer Hari Dang recounted a Hindu legend of a pilgrim who climbed a peak so tall that the ice of its slopes merged into the frost of the clouds. There, he learned that he'd entered the realm of the divine, and he could no longer return to earth.

In European traditions, Eden or the Earthly Paradise sometimes appeared as a verdant garden, surrounded by giant walls, near or atop an improbably high mountain. In *Mapping Paradise*, historian Alessandro Scafi described the quest to place it on an actual terrestrial map as both contradictory and obsessive:

To find paradise, after all, would be equivalent to answering the paradoxical question: where is nowhere?... Throughout history paradise has appeared everywhere in a variety of secular and religious guises, always thought of as 'elsewhere' and 'out of time.'... Mapping the Garden of Eden presented the ultimate cartographical paradox: how to map a place that was on earth but not of earth.

Sixth-century Alexandrian mapmaker Cosmas Indicopleustes envisioned an immense mountain that rose past the utmost layer of clouds beyond the reach of human vision. During the late fifteenth-century, Christopher Columbus came to believe that the Earthly Paradise existed atop an elevation point so great that the planet itself was shaped like a pear. By the sixteenth century, few cartographers were inclined to take his claims of improbable heights seriously. Some theologians argued that no explorers could ever discover Eden because the original landscape had been destroyed in the Flood—all that

could be found on earth, if anything, was the place where it had vanished. Others imagined the Earthly Paradise as an inner state that disappeared with a loss of innocence.

Twentieth-century fiction books, such as James Hilton's *Lost Horizon*, perpetuated the idea of a utopian world in a concealed alpine valley, beyond an unnamed, luminous peak and outside of ordinary maps and time. Hilton's descriptions of "Shangri La" echoed images of the Earthly Paradise, but also appropriated Buddhist legends of Shambhala and concepts of *beyul*, hidden paradises within giant peaks. Mountaineers around the world continued to perceive physical ranges as unearthly places, as if summits could provide a bridge to a hoped-for other reality, a means to spiritual transcendence, an entry point into landscapes of the unconscious mind—or else a rediscovery of a "lost landscape of early experience," as the biographer Jim Perrin wrote of the British mountaineer

Eric Shipton's quest to reimpose himself in childhood wonder.

Many of these adventures expressed a persistent longing for places that remained unmappable—"on the earth but not of the earth"—free from the constraints of ordinary reality, the depredations of industrial development, and the limitations of the known. By the twenty-first century, the idea of lost paradises became entwined with a nostalgia for a "lost art of getting lost," as numerous writers called it—before GPS, satellite photos and other technologies removed some of the potential for wandering into unexpected places.

In *A Field Guide to Getting Lost*, Rebecca Solnit explained:

In [the philosopher Walter] Benjamin's terms, to be lost is to be fully present, and to be fully present is to be capable of being in uncertainty and mystery. And one does not get lost but loses oneself, with the implication that it is a conscious choice, a chosen surrender, a psychic state achievable through geography. That thing the nature of which is totally unknown to you is usually what you need to find, and finding it is a matter of getting lost.

One summer in the Teton Range, a friend told me a story about a climber who became so disoriented by gaps between a terse guidebook description and the actual topography near a mountaintop that he thought, for a moment, he was making a first ascent. He was not actually lost; he only believed he was, and in that instant he'd experienced the illusion of climbing a new route on an unidentifiable peak. Soon after, when I followed that same established route, despite the warning I'd been given, I became nearly as baffled. In fragments of memory, I recall staggering into what seemed like it could only be a dream: across a deep-green sweep of meadow; over a spine of dark, crumbling rock; into a realm that existed, strangely unmentioned, in the silences between the words on the page. Had the effects of sleep deprivation, altitude and exhaustion—and the influence of my friend's story—tinted my surroundings with an aura of enchantment? Or was it simply that I'd managed to become, for a moment, wholly lost in wonder at the real, known world?

In Harvey Manning's papers, preserved in the Special Collections of the University of Washington Libraries, there's a handwritten poem, likely from his teenage years, that evokes the desire to find—or to envision—an ideal alpine landscape. In this "peaceful, secret home," a high peak would appear "forbidding, grand,

with mystery." There would be a gleaming snowfield and delicate wildflowers, a sense of "Utopian order" and a "fairytale of splendor."

When I crossed the threshold of the pass and entered the Cascades basin, I imagined that I'd glimpsed the coalescence of many wanderers' dreams: the green-gold slopes of grass that sparkled with flowers; the surreal appearance of a snowy dome that glowed beyond dark fins of rock; the spiny rim of other peaks that surrounded this inner world. I recalled Shipton's legendary description of the Inner Sanctuary of Nanda Devi:

My most blissful dream as a child was to be in some such valley, free to wander where I liked.... Now the reality was no less wonderful than that half-forgotten dream; and of how many childish fancies can that be said, in this age of disillusionment?... Every few hundred yards, some new feature would reveal itself—here a side valley to look up...there some graceful ice-clad summit appearing from behind a buttress....

In the Cascades basin, there were small signs of human impact: dirt paths worn into lush meadows; charred logs from old campfires; vague indentations of footsteps here and there. The wonder was undiminished. I tried to memorize the way the afternoon sun blazed on clusters of yellow petals; how the clear streams glimmered across polished, almost iridescent rocks; how the tree groves encircled meadows within meadows, worlds within worlds. At last, I realized I should hike back out, through the maze of branching paths, before dark. With each step, I felt the steady loss, in my own life, of this place. Even if I returned, I would never again see it this way: in this fleeting burst of late-summer light, in this startled awe of encountering it for the first time.

Sometime during the 1980s, in one of the many pocket notebooks that he kept, Manning jotted down fragments of a vision of the modern wild as a "suspension of disbelief." In an age of air transport and mass tourism, he asserted, "Increasingly we move into the era of make-believe

wilderness.... Everest, now, is make-believe compared to when Mallory was there. That's the bad. The good is, the same make-believe can be used everywhere." Children know how to use their imagination to transform or create vast untrammeled lands out of small patches of weeds or fringes of woods. Accessible green spaces should be conserved near cities, Manning believed, to prevent people of all ages from losing that opportunity to wander and dream. In page after page, he scrawled down ways to connect with inner and outer wildness: "to be at home," "to be afraid," "to be alone," "to be friends," "to look out," "to look within," "a reaching out," "a soaking in." Since "the experience requires vulnerability," he wrote, hikers

and climbers could find it more easily by using a tarp for shelter rather than a tent, and they should consider "going without guidebook or even map on purpose."

In one definition, Manning declared, "a wilderness is a place where it is possible to get lost." This state could be attained, he believed, even on the fringes of Seattle, amid the hills near his house in Issaquah. During his efforts to protect these gentle, wooded summits, Manning renamed them "the Issaquah Alps"—a ploy to make them seem more Ro-

romantic and alluring. By enticing visitors to the lowlands, as his friend Dave Fluharty remembers, Manning hoped to decrease some of the crowding in fragile alpine regions. With an imaginative approach and an altered perspective, small hills might appear as sublime to hikers and climbers as high, snowy peaks.

The day before my trip to the Cascades basin, I'd driven to Issaquah to walk the Harvey Manning Trail (thus named after his death). On the way there, as the first branches arched above the asphalt road, I gasped: the subdivisions blinked out in an instant. It was as though the city had never existed: the forest ahead was hardly the *wild* in a grandiose sense of the term; yet its groves appeared haunting, all consuming. Soon, even the recollection of houses, pavements and yards vanished amid the green darkness of tall trees, their

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I walked on, following his directions, to a narrow track that led up a steep hillside, around a rampart of cliffs, over a sudden pass and through the space between two giant evergreens that rose like an open doorway to another world.

In search of lost peaks

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trunks thick with soft moss, their shadows falling on masses of giant ferns. Dusk drifted through the cool violet air, and I saw no one else as I continued beyond the junction with the Shangri La Trail to Cougar Pass. In growing dark, the woods seemed to multiply. The last light flared and then turned ashen as it faded between countless leaves.

Manning had a penchant for inventing peak names—whether the “Issaquah Alps,” which now bear that designation on common maps, or the “No Name Peak” and the “Riesenstein Peaks” that he used for the fake cartographies of his most well-known hoaxes. He also advocated for some genuine names. In a May 1988 *Mountaineer* article, Manning urged readers to write to the Washington State Board of Geographic Names and demand a restoration of the Indigenous Lushootseed term *Wbulj* to at least part of the area around Puget Sound. In many geographic regions, fantasies of *terra incognita* can obscure an awareness of the presence and traditions of local inhabitants. A converse to the imagining of ideal, unmappable places is the realization that what is truly real and important has never been on colonialist maps at all.

Driving through the North Cascades on the way back from a climbing trip, I paused at an outlook above Ross Lake. Beyond the slow bends in the waters and the dark ridges of evergreens, a rocky tower bent into view, sharp and silver, in the bluish haze of distance: Mt. Hozomeen. To the Beat writer Jack Kerouac, this peak was a kind of numinous “Void,” an immense, dark silhouette against the night sky, its facets glittering, ice-bright, under the aurora borealis. In *100 Classic Hikes in Washington*, first published in 1998, Manning declared that this mountain had inspired some of Jack Kerouac’s best prose.

Somewhere “out beyond” Hozomeen, Canadian mountaineer Dick Culbert, dreamed up another unearthly peak. In a poem titled “The Ballad of the Border Survey,” he described it as “misty and waiting.... Across the dark moat of the dim, deathless Skagit, A tall twisted country, alive and aloof. / A great phantom network of mist-tangled ridges, / A chaos of mountains just bustin’ with ice.”

Glenn Woodsworth, Culbert’s friend and publisher, recounts the tale:

Many decades ago, Dick said he found the name Matsuac on an old map, but I have not found any such (nor had Fred Beckey, when I asked him about it....) When I quizzed Dick about the name late in life, he couldn’t remember it and said he might have just made it up.... The area was poorly mapped in the early 1960s, when the poem was written.... Dick added to the mystery in his 1965 guidebook by applying the name “Matsuac Peak,” to a prominent, unnamed peak (now Mt. Custer) near the International Border west of the Skagit River.

In my own memory, that brief vision of Hozomeen blurs into surreal images of wild, blue-tinted walls above tree-shadowed valleys. At night, I’ve long felt haunted by dreams of summits that are impossible to find in the waking world. For me, those landscapes seemed connected to a persistent fantasy that there was some journey I was supposed to go on, some glimmer of possibility beyond the last light of the horizon—a destination that was, perhaps, still attainable, but seemed to recede ever farther away with time.

On a typewritten scrap of paper, attached to the pile of Manning’s scrawled notes about *wilderness* and *getting lost*, appeared the words:

I had learned, by then, that a peak doesn’t have to be remote to be wild—very wild. There is wildness next to our railroads, our highways, our lowland homes. I had relearned, as I’d known for some time, that at the far boundary of wilderness is...death.

There are numerous ways to interpret those lines. Perhaps Manning sensed that the common European idea of wilderness at its extreme edge becomes a dangerous void—an imaginary place devoid of human history and inimical to life. But Manning also loved to plant literary allusions in his writing. And “Death,” as Hamlet famously pronounced in Shakespeare’s play, is “The undiscovered country from whose bourn / No traveler returns.”

Manning admitted his fear of mortality in his 1986 book, *Walking the Beach to Bellingham*: “Walking lads, walking’s the trick, / For fellows whom it scares to tick.” In a note to an editor, Don Graydon (found in *The Mountaineers Archives*), Manning explained that this tick represented the sound of a clock. In addition, perhaps, the word recalled the beat of a human pulse; Manning had suffered from

a heart condition since youth. By moving at the deliberate pace of footfalls, he could prolong his immersion in a wild area, and he could lose himself, however briefly, in an experience of expanded space and decelerated time. “To make your world larger,” he advised readers of *100 Classic Hikes in Washington*, “go slower.”

On my way out from the Cascades basin, after hours of continual walking, my own body felt nearly weightless, as ephemeral and transparent as the dust that hung, suspended, in the twilight air. The final rays of sun lingered on the hillsides above me, illuminating boughs of evergreens with a beauty that seemed almost unbearably gentle and fleeting. Nearby, crisp shadows outlined countless blades of grass, petals and leaves. I thought of Manning’s trips here and of the hike that he might have guessed would be his last. I thought of what it means to move through a landscape that someone else has deeply loved, whether something of that person remains in it. I imagined how he might have known each tree and branch, each gentle curve and jagged line of peak and ridge; how he might have recognized the way the small, bright faces of flowers still turned toward the fading light as the soft gold of evening lit the pines. It was hard to believe that all of that kind of love, for any place or anything, could ever be wholly lost.

*Like “A Brief Atlas of Phantom Peaks” in *Alpinist 67* and “The World As It Is Not,” in *Alpinist 59*, this article is part of a book project on Harvey Manning, the Riesenstein Hoax and the history of imaginary mountains in North America. Paul and Claudia Manning, John Scurlock, Ruth Fremson, Charlie Lieu, Jim Hopkins, Dianne and Geoff Childs, Emily White, Kate Rogers, Glenn Woodsworth, Anders Ourom, Phil Fenner, Dave Flubarty, Rick McGuire, Lowell Skoog, David Kappler and Doug McClelland all provided help with maps, directions, advice and/or research assistance. Sources include the *Harvey Manning Papers*, Acc. 2097-008 and 2097-010, *Special Collections*, *University of Washington Libraries*, and *The Mountaineers Archive*. This article originally appeared in *Alpinist 68* (Winter 2019-20).—Ed.*

Much ado about very little: The Mountain Loop Highway Feasibility Study

By Ed Henderson

Two years ago the Federal Lands Access Program provided a \$500,000 grant to Snohomish County, the Forest Service's Darrington Ranger District and the Federal Highway Administration to study the feasibility of paving the 14 miles of the Mountain Loop Highway (MLH) between Barlow Pass and the White Chuck River crossing. The resulting study has produced a multiplicity of data on the entire MLH and clearly demonstrates that paving the 14-mile section is not justified.

The Feasibility Study's report was expected to take a year and answer three questions:

How can recreational opportunities be on the MLH be enhanced?

How can highway traffic safety on the MLH be improved?

How can highway maintenance cost be reduced on the MLH?

With these initial goals the Feasibility Study appeared to be a thinly disguised attempt to justify recommending paving the gravel section.

Now the Feasibility Study has produced a 100+ page final report full of tables, graphs and charts with a plethora of interesting facts, but no recommendations. The Feasibility Study demonstrates that paving the 14-mile gravel section of the MLH will *not* improve recreational access, will *not* improve safety, and will *not* reduce maintenance cost. Neither, incidentally, will it increase economic activity in either Darrington or Granite Falls. It is time to render an honest recommendation to wit: that paving the 14-mile gravel segment is not justified.

In the final report the goal of improved recreational access is wafted off into the future when more as yet unspecified amenities may become available to users of the unpaved section. There are apparently no restrictions on current access to avail-



Pinch point on the gravel section of the MLH between the Sauk River and cliff at Milepost 33.4.—BILL LIDER photo

Paving the gravel section will not improve recreational access, improve safety, or reduce maintenance cost.

able recreational sites along the 14-mile gravel section. Anecdotally, lack of parking at the recreational sites along the entire MLH restricts access, and paving would not alleviate that problem.

As far as improving traffic safety, all 55 traffic accidents reported for ten years from 2008 to 2017 occurred on paved sections of the MLH. The gravel section in the report is treated as "No Data Available." If there were serious accidents with fatalities or injuries on the unpaved section they should have been reported and records of them would have been included with the records of the accidents on the paved sections. It is fair to conclude that no significant accidents occurred on the 14-mile gravel section of the MLH. It is difficult and indeed impossible to see how

paving could improve on an accident rate of zero.

In the section on reducing maintenance cost, the report estimates an annual maintenance expenditure of \$112,000 for the unpaved section. I was astonished to learn, at the public meeting in Darrington on November 7, that nobody knows what is currently being spent to maintain the gravel section or even which agency maintains it. So it begs the question of how any of the proposed options can improve or reduce unknown maintenance cost.

Unstated but implicit additional goals for paving the gravel section are for the MLH to serve as an emer-

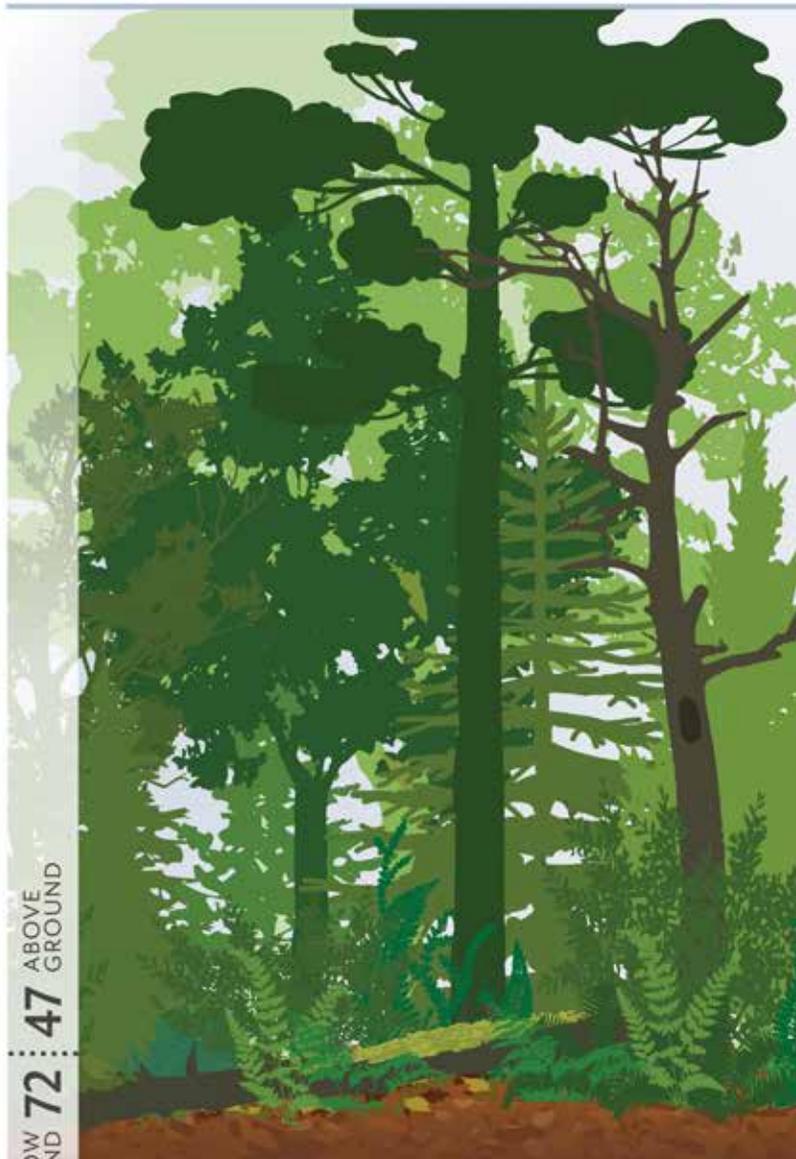
gency evacuation route from Darrington and to increase economic activity by improving access to Darrington and Granite Falls. The MLH as a potential emergency evacuation route is of dubious value. The route is closed for half the year (mid-November to mid-May) by snow, and the northern eight miles into Darrington are threatened by volcanic mudflows (lahars) off Glacier Peak. No economic benefit to either Granite Falls or Darrington from paving can be forecast. Quarterly Washington State sales tax receipts document this for the period 1994-2010, as the MLH was closed for five years during this period due to washouts. There was no discernible difference in tax receipts in these towns when the MLH was either open or closed.

The Feasibility Study, while providing a range of options for the 14-mile gravel section, also includes information on conditions on the entire 50+ miles of the MLH. There are highway traffic hazards, narrow bridges, potential landslides, ten 30-inch or greater culverts needing repair or replacement, only five of which are within the gravel section, and 28 locations requiring bank stabilization monitoring, none of which is in the gravel section. These conditions present abundant opportunities to

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PRIMARY TEMPERATE FORESTS

HARBOR UNIQUE BIODIVERSITY AND ECOSYSTEM SERVICES, INCLUDING CLIMATE REGULATION



Carbon

Primary temperate forests sequester and store vast amounts of atmospheric carbon in living and dead biomass and soil organic matter holding on to it for centuries.

- > The world's **highest known biomass** (above ground live + dead) of 187 kg/m² is in Victorian Mountain Ash forests.
- > **Unlogged forests store ~40%-55% more carbon** than logged forests.
- > When old forests are cut down, **two-thirds or more of their stored carbon is released** to the atmosphere as a global warming pollutant from combustion and decomposition on-site and emissions from the wood-product manufacturing and distribution chain.
- > **Logging emissions are not "offset"** by planting trees or storing carbon in short-lived wood products.
- > Large, old trees **sequester carbon at rates 3x** that of smaller trees.
- > Large trees (>1 m diameter) contribute **76% of the total biomass** in old-growth forests, but only 43% of tree numbers.
- > **Longevity of carbon stocks** determines the degree of climate benefit.
- > Trees should be allowed to grow old to **maximize climate, water, and biodiversity benefits**.
- > **Clear-cut logging does not mimic wildfire**. Fires do not combust tree boles, and the dead wood generated by fire is longer-lived than 95% of wood products.

BELOW GROUND 72 ABOVE GROUND 47

CARBON STORED [in billion tonnes]

119 TOTAL TEMPERATE FOREST CARBON = equivalent to global CO₂ emissions from 2005-2017

CARBON STORED [tonnes C ha⁻¹] vegetation: 147-377 soils: 148-357 root + dead vegetation: 102-265

Temperate forests are home to 108 Million hectares of remaining primary forest, or 9% of the global total, highlighting the urgency of protecting what's left

Big, Old Trees

Loss of big, old trees is a global concern as fewer of them, and the primary and intact forest landscapes that harbor them, remain due to logging and other threats.

Biodiversity

Primary wet temperate forests (deciduous, evergreen, broadleaf, conifer, mixed) harbor diverse communities that experience distinct seasonal changes affecting productivity, ecosystem services, and migratory species, especially birds.



Mountain Loop Highway

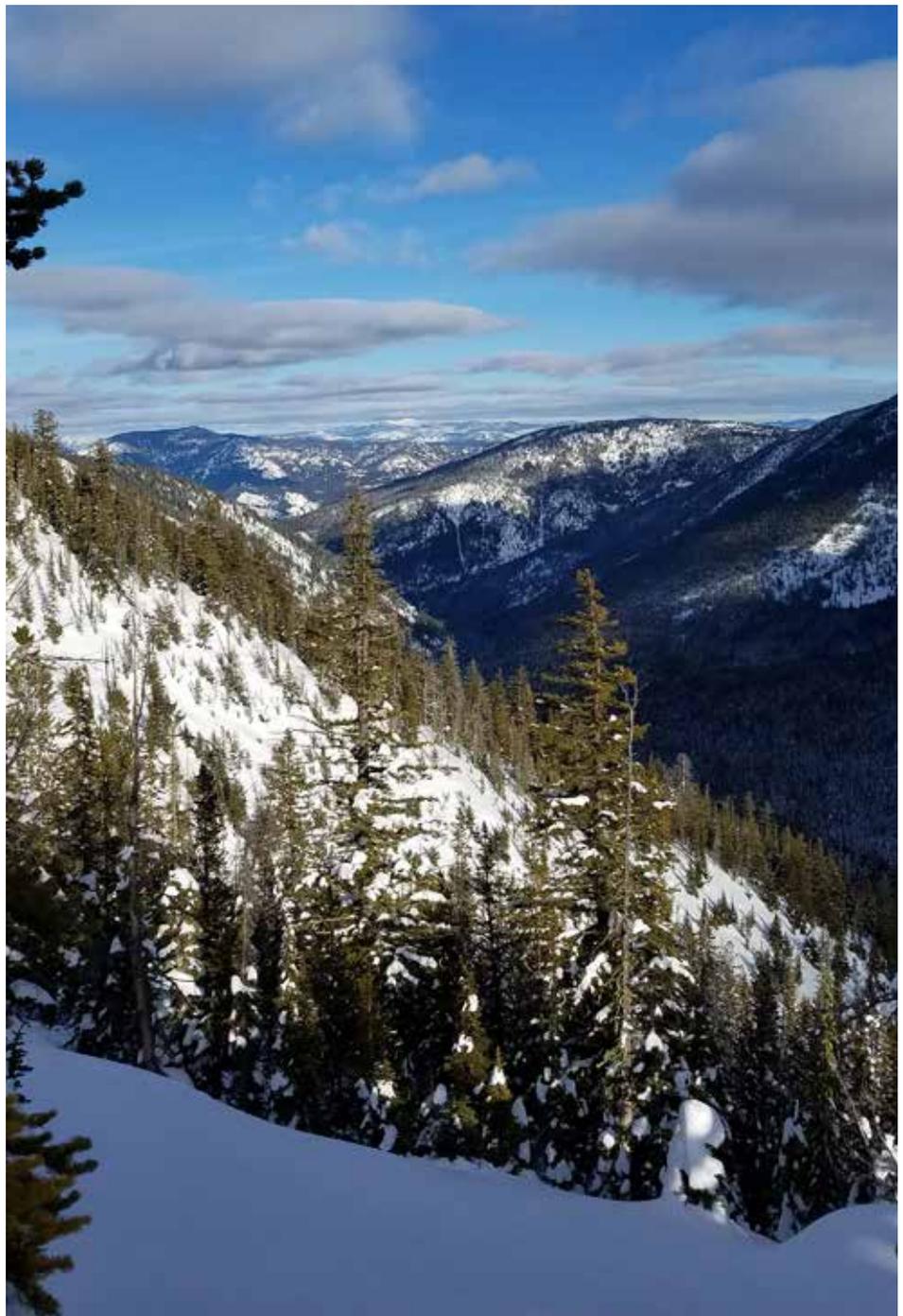
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provide for improved recreational access, to enhance traffic safety, and to maximize effective maintenance expenditures on the paved section of the MLH.

While the final report of the Feasibility Study presents four options for the unpaved section in ascending order of complexity and expense, it provides no information beyond a general description of the resulting roadway prism and order-of-magnitude cost. This lack of specific detail obscures the very complex engineering design and construction problems presented by widening, straightening and paving the gravel section. In addition the report does not address the environmental regulations that will have to be met. These laws include The Aquatic Conservation Strategy for salmon in the Sauk River, the 2001 Roadless Rule for forest on either side of the current alignment or the Endangered Species Act including habitat protection for the threatened Spotted Owls and Marbled Murrelets.

Of the proposed options only Option 1, Maintaining the Status Quo, meets the newly stated Goal #3, added in the Final Report: minimizing adverse impacts to the environmental, cultural, scenic, and recreational characteristics of the MLH. Therefore N3C can only support Option 1, to maintain the Status Quo on the 14-mile gravel section. And encourage Snohomish County and the Forest Service to concentrate their efforts and limited funds on addressing the multitude of needs on the heavily used paved sections of the MLH.

Learn more about the Mountain Loop Highway Feasibility Study Final Report at <https://flb.fbwa.dot.gov/projects/wa/mountain-loop/>



Back to Cedar Creek yesterday. I wanted to go to Robinson Creek but didn't want to pay for the sno-park permit. I hoped I could just find some place to park, but didn't. Wasted an hour on that. No one had been up Cedar Creek beyond the trailhead since my last visit. Snow was a little better but I was still only cranking a mile an hour, so when I got to the same area where I turned around before, I decided Abernathy Pass was out of reach, again. I went up the mountainside toward Silver Star instead, hoping to reach the ridge top and walk it back to the trailhead for a loop. I got to 6000 feet in safe tree cover but decided to turn around because the snow was very soft and sloughy, which makes for really difficult climbing where it's steep. I enjoyed the challenge of this but at a certain point it became too slow. A lovely day of peace and quiet, once the damn heli-ski helicopter got done making its three round trips in a row. Very sunny beautiful day.—ROBERT KENDALL

The corvid's eye

The corvid is a sucker. One whiff of a Pacific zephyr drifting through a stand of old evergreens is all it takes to forget the worries of the day and postpone any looming chores. The multi-sensory impression that comes with loitering in the promised land of a North Cascades forest ameliorates even the most stubborn angst. Somewhere along the trajectory of a single rainy drip from the upper canopy to the layered duff and deadfall below, the tedium of responsible living is quietly exchanged for the thrill of recalling the endless moment. Here the forces of Earth that allow us to respire are themselves breathing in unison. The shift happens before we're even aware, and soon we're serving our essential role of bearing witness to a perennial unfolding. Yes, the corvid is a sucker. It's tough to look away, to resume the to-do list, when the individual who might do so can no longer discern a meaningful difference between the spruce boughs and the limbs he maintains for locomotion.

Well up the valley of the North Fork Nooksack River and just downstream of the Canyon Creek confluence, bottomland suddenly fans out below slopes only moderately steep, in contrast to more intimidating terrain to the east. The channel migration zone here is seasonally flooded by recurrent rain-on-snow events in higher elevations of the watershed. Combine this with the long geoduck siphon of marine influence that often finds its way up the valley from Bellingham Bay, and conditions are ideal for Sitka spruce trees to grow both stout and tall, sporting superb crowns with no hindrance about them. This is Wildcat Reach, in reference to the stream that in the space of two miles tumbles from imposing Slide Mountain at 4300 feet elevation to 750 feet at the point bottomland is reached. Once there, Wildcat Creek opts for a more contemplative course, bending lazily for another quarter mile prior to meeting the Nooksack.

Sitka spruce is of course emblematic of temperate rain forest in the Pacific Northwest. Although one typically conjures images of the west end of the Olympic Peninsula when the topic is at hand, the windward slope of the Cascades has its own rain forest pockets. The Carbon River flowing from Mount Rainier is probably the most notable in this respect, but the



major valleys of the North Cascades have their own lesser examples. Spruce groves here are more or less predictably found in and near bottomland, where big rivers slice through the foothills that encourage acutely enhanced precipitation. Above one thousand feet elevation, and beyond the reach of intermittent tendrils of ocean fog, these cloistered giants are scarcely encountered. Still, Sitka spruce retains the capacity for surprise. They are sometimes weirdly found on middling ridges in Washington, as they are along the Alaska panhandle. In the far more arid Puget trough, they make do in estuaries. And in the international Chilliwack valley, they hybridize with Engelmann spruce, bringing a whole new suite of possibilities.

The spruces of Wildcat Reach thrive at the foot of what the corvid has taken to calling the Delphic Mountains: the jumbled, obscure, medium-height range defined within the drainages of the Nooksack's middle and north forks, due west of Mount Baker. So named because of their capacity to prophesy the future quality of the human species' relationship with wild nature, the Delphics in recent decades have been roughed up, to put it mildly. Yet this hodgepodge of state, county, and private lands still retains a few hints of happier, more intact days, while offering as solid a case for rewilding as can be

found in these parts. Thanks to the forward thinking of the late Jake Steiner and subsequently the Whatcom Land Trust, the 270 acres of Wildcat Reach are forever out of harm's way. Here at the uppermost limit of Sitka spruce habitat on the North Fork (try finding them around Glacier, a short distance upvalley), the trees' trunks slowly become ever more bell-bottomed, while their resplendent crowns expand ever farther to catch both the fickle sunlight and silent mists sent from the sea.

The corvid, like most sentient beings, has too many things to do, but it can't hurt to spend a few more minutes perched atop this sturdy spruce bough. The view downstream is of a moody, unruly river surging toward the populated Whatcom lowlands, which it sometimes mischievously chooses to inundate. Upstream are the wild Cascades, with the snow cone of nearby Baker acting as a beacon for those who jubilantly set a course toward the primeval mountains beyond, where essentially all is still as it should be. And so the ticking clock is forgotten again as contrasts begin to merge. The spruces serve as a temple-column ingress to the heart of the known beauties and impenetrable mysteries of the North Cascades, as the high peaks cast an appreciative gaze back to the green lowland marvels that their waters help sustain. Then, without

realizing it, the oppressive little guy in the cranial cockpit dozes off, allowing the rest of one's being to awaken in full. What remains is the subtle, perdurable roar of wilderness, rising from a deep valley and echoing betwixt impossible spires.

When reason returns, as it must, can there be a higher calling than observance and unyielding defense of this divine fount? The routine tasks and errands can certainly wait.



Old-growth stand of Alaska yellow cedar above Dry Lake, Manning Provincial Park. —JIM SCARBOROUGH photo



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Candlelit labyrinth, Holden Village—HANNAH LAUBER PHOTO