



MRNPA



NEWS

FROM THE SUMMIT

Fall is upon us and winter is close behind. I hope you each had the opportunity to enjoy the Park this summer and I encourage you to continue to do so. The leaves are changing color and a drive in the Park is beautiful at this time of year.

MRNPA continue to address a number of issues affecting the Park and its environs; we hope we are representing our members well. I encourage you again to join us for board meetings or to call any of the board members to let us know your feelings on issues that affect the Park. We are always seeking new people to help address concerns for the Park's continued beauty and the preservation of its resources.

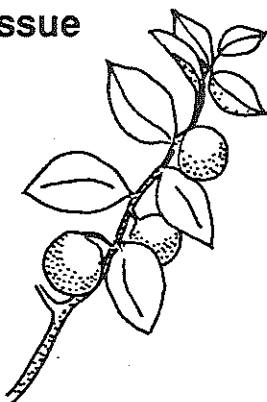
Current attention seems to be focused on the northern portions of the Park. In addition to Highway 410, the Forest Service is also evaluating and reviewing zoning and management of the road systems of the north edge of the Park and Pierce County. Because we would like to see the Park enlarged someday, we consider each of these a vital issue. The Park is too small to maintain its resources totally within the current Park boundaries.

Please join us at a meeting or give us a call. We would like to hear from you.

Pat Smith

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Logging in Chenuis Creek? No!

The MRNPA Board has just adopted a position opposing any further logging in the Chenuis Creek Valley. Several interconnected issues shaped our position.

The Chenuis Creek valley parallels the north boundary of Mount Rainier National Park, lying between the Park and the Clearwater Wilderness. The only obvious signs of man are a logging road along the south-facing slope and several 30-year-old, strip clearcuts whose regrowth is now some 15 feet in height.

The rest of the valley is magnificent old growth forest: the strips between the regenerating cuts, the creek bottom, and the north-facing slope which sweeps up onto Mt. Rainier.

A hike from the road down through one of the old growth 'leave-strips' is a visit to the "forest primeval": untracked moss-scapes, graceful fern gardens, mirror pools, sun-dappled boulders. Presiding are the massive trees, with trunks as wide as walls.

These patriarchs are in danger of being sold to the highest bidder to meet the White River Ranger District's admittedly "artificially high" timber production quota.

The MRNPA Board has just adopted a position opposing any further logging in the Chenuis Creek Valley. (October Board meeting). Several related issues shaped our position:

1. Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) on timber sales in Cheunis Creek/Cayada Mtn. The Forest Service will issue this DEIS in October. It will reportedly call for removal of 4.5 million board feet of timber, mostly from the remaining old growth Douglas fir/silver fir/hemlock forest in the Chenuis Creek valley.

2. Proposed closure of Chenuis Creek road by Forest Service. The White River Ranger District of Mt. Baker/Snoqualmie National Forest has just issued a prelimi-

nary road management plan, in which the Forest Service recognizes the need to permanently close the Chenuis Creek road to protect wildlife habitat. However, this closure would not occur until after the logging mentioned in (1), above; and the closure would be located 2 miles into the 5-mile valley, leaving half of the wildlife habitat of the Chenuis Creek valley unprotected. In addition, this would be only an administrative closure and could be reversed at any time in the future to allow logging to resume.

3. Congressional mandate to close the Chenuis Creek road. When the Clearwater Wilderness was designated, it was the intent of Congress, as stated in the report language, that the Chenuis Creek road "should be closed...after all scheduled timber harvests in the area are completed..." Now is the time to close the road, before any additional timber harvesting is scheduled.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

1. Look at a copy of the DEIS on Chenuis Creek/Cayada Mtn. timber sales, and send your comments to the Forest Service within 45 days of publication of the DEIS.

Zero logging in Chenuis Creek would:

*enable the road to be permanently closed, as Congress intended;

- * protect old growth forest
- * maintain continuity of wildlife corridors
- * preserve important wildlife habitat
- * protect resident trout fishery
- * enhance law enforcement
- * diminish poaching in the Park
- * enhance hiking and camping opportunities
- * protect summer cold-water tributary to Carbon River

Copies of DEIS: - at your local library
- at White River Ranger District
Hwy 410, Enumclaw

Send comments to: Ted Lewis, District Ranger, U.S. Forest Service, White River Ranger District, U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Enumclaw, WA 98022

2. Write your congressman, asking him or her to follow the intent of Congress to protect Chenuis Creek: oppose any further logging in Chenuis Creek, support elimination of the road, and preserve price-less old growth forest and wildlife habitat.

(Your Congressman)
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Sally Soest

Update on SR 410 Renovation Project

Public hearings on the draft Environmental Assessment (EA) for renovation of SR 410 (Mather Memorial Parkway) were held during August in Naches and Enumclaw. The turnout was very small in Naches, and modest in Enumclaw. Most of the businesses along the highway favor keeping the route scenic, and are concerned primarily with the degree of disruption of business during the course of the renovation.

MRNPA was represented at the Enumclaw meeting, and has submitted a detailed statement. The following summarizes the main points of our position:

* MRNPA agrees that portions of the roadway need repair.

* We support the parking and rock walls proposed to reduce social trails and other damage at Tipsoo Lakes

* We do not support the preferred alternative for Parkway reconstruction because of its severe impact on Park resources.

* Disrupting Park resources beyond the present cleared way, as proposed, would be a significant action justifying an Environmental Impact Statement.

* We do not feel such extensive reconstruction has been justified in the EA.

* The final EA must make it clear that the National Park Service has the final say on the removal or saving of trees and other Park resources.

At the core of the matter are the intertwined issues of highway funding, road design, safety standards, and liability.

To receive Federal funding, the highway must be designed to meet standards for construction and safety that are set by the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT). WSDOT indicates that reconstructing the highway within its present profile would not meet their safety standards. We are exploring alternatives to this ultimatum.

MRNPA has received copies of letters from individual members and other conservation organizations that indicate strong public support for keeping Hwy 410 a scenic mountain highway. The Mather Memorial Parkway must not end up looking like Interstate 90.

Officers:

President - Pat Smith
Vice-President - Sally Soest
Treasurer - John Titland
Secretary - Roger Garrett
Editor - Joan Burton

Chenuis Creek

In October the Forest Service will release a draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) on a string of proposed clearcuts in the Chenuis Creek/Cayada Mountain area, adjacent to the north boundary of Mt. Rainier National Park. (See related articles.) Comments will be accepted for 45 days after the DEIS is issued.

The Chenuis Creek Valley shelters one of the last stands of old growth timber on the White River Ranger District. This explains its appeal to the logging industry. The White River District is scandalously overcut: even the Forest Service admits to a "serious plight" of "having to meet a high level of cut on a few remaining acres." The Forest Service would like to use Chenuis Creek to achieve its quota, and the timber companies would like to get their hands on the old growth in the valley. We should not allow the old growth forest in the Chenuis Creek Valley to be sacrificed.

Geographically, the Chenuis valley is a natural bridge between the tiny, vulnerable Clearwater Wilderness and Mount Rainier National Park. The Forest Service's proposed 4,400 acre logging program would blast away that bridge, using the existing road to remove the remaining old growth timber from the north side of the valley.

Today the Chenuis Creek valley is green and tranquil. Public outcry discouraged the Forest Service from roading and logging the south slope, which sweeps right up into the Park; so the south slope, at least for now, is "untrammelled by man". On the north slope one can distinguish a series of 25-30-year old replanted clearcuts, hop-scotched along a logging road. The regenerating trees are still only 10-20 feet tall: the logging scars are no longer unsightly, but healing is slow on a steep slope at 4,000 feet. Regenerating clearcuts alternate with "leave strips" which are remnants of the original old growth forest.

The intrinsic value of the unique old growth forest in this valley is unmeasurable. Old growth like this cannot be replaced, ever. Its value for wildlife habitat and human appreciation is enormous. Its presence in the valley provides food, shelter, and migration routes between the Park and the Wilderness, for wildlife species that require old growth environment and for other species.

If the road were allowed to revert to a trail, it could become part of a fine network of trails similar to what was envisioned back during the CCC days, when trails were planned to interconnect a series of lookouts in the Park and National Forest. In fact, remnants of a "north boundary" trail still exist along the south slope of

Chenuis Creek Valley, running from Chenuis Falls, more or less along the Park boundary.

An old CCC camp, Camp Gunnysack, can be found along that trail. Camp Gunnysack has historical significance; it was the last of the CCC camps in the area, abandoned unfinished when the US entered the war and the men on the CCC crew were called up for active duty.

The "north boundary" trail and the put-to-bed logging road could be linked at Hurricane Gap, to a trail along Independence Ridge, creating a triple loop that would allow access between Chenuis Creek, the Clearwater Wilderness, and Mt. Rainier National Park.

It's time to "just say no". Close the road. Put it to bed. Turn it into a hiking trail. "No" to further logging on Chenuis Creek.

National Parks and Conservation Association Regional Office

The National Parks and Conservation Association (NPCA) has opened a Northwest Regional Office. NPCA is the only national conservation group dedicated primarily to working for the improvement of the National Park System. They are a non-profit corporation, of about 200,000 members, established in 1919 for the purpose of preservation, protection of, and fostering public involvement in, the National Park System.

NPCA has operated from Washington, D.C. until recently and this is the first regional office for the Northwest. The office will work on National Park issues in Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Western Montana and Northern California.

The office is located at 618 South 223rd Street, Des Moines, WA 98198. The Regional Director is Dale Crane, who can be reached at (206) 824-8808.

If you have issues related to the National Park System or want to help NPCA do its job, please let Dale know.



Trail Work Parties

Sixteen people participated in the tree trail work parties this year. They were:

Philp Blenkush
Will and Jan Fohrell
Mary Fries
Jeff, Margie, and Molly Goulden
Art and Joani Kiehn
Jo and Ron Marpert
Howard and Sue Selmer
John Soest
John and Jane Titland
John Thompson
Mary Ann Tucker
Bob and Mary Jo Aegerter

We again plan three weekend work parties for the summer of 1991. The dates will be:

Saturday, May 18th at Carbon River

Saturday, August 17th at Paradise

Saturday, September 14th at Paradise

There may be easier ways to get your name in the newsletter, but trail work parties are good fun. We do make a significant contribution to the Park and receive some good publicity. If you are not on the work party mailing list and would like to be advised of details, contact:

Bob Aegerter
9230 41st Avenue N.E.
Seattle, WA 98115-3802
(206) 527-4492



Everyone is welcome!

August MRNPA Meeting

Much of the meeting was devoted to discussing the proposed renovation of the Mather Memorial Parkway (Hwy. 410) through the Park. (See Update on 410, this issue.)

Bob Aegerter had represented MRNPA at the August 2 public hearing in Enumclaw on the renovation of SR 410. Several other Board members were present and spoke at the hearing.

Several Board members reported their impressions as a result of an investigative field trip with Park officials, in which we had attempted to clarify details of the proposal, such as where and why trees might be cut, and where guardrails might be utilized.

The Board concluded that the Environmental Assessment on the project is vague and inadequate. The Board voted to reject the "preferred alternative" in the EA, feeling that the information in the EA does not justify such a massive, destructive project. MRNPA will pursue an alternative that would allow necessary repairs without turning the mountain roadway into a "freeway".

In other business, the Board discussed a Forest Service "Intent to Prepare" notice for an Environmental Impact Statement on logging in Chenuis Creek, a process in which we will participate. (See Chenuis Creek article, this issue.)

Bob Aegerter announced an August work party.

Getting to the Top

If you are thinking of climbing Mount Rainier, remember these three principles: Go early; go prepared for the worst; and turn back if the weather is bad. What is early? The best time to climb varies each year. Early means before the middle of August in most years of abundant snow. Early also means before the weekend and before Rainier Mountaineering, Inc. begins operations, unless you enjoy waiting for 50 novices moving at a snail's pace for most of a sweltering morning. Generally, if you want to make a ski ascent you should go earlier in the season than if you want to crampon your way up the mountain. In either case, the limiting factor late in the season is large crevasses.

Getting up early lowers the chance of an avalanche, which, except for a possible slip on a steep slope, is the greatest danger of the climb. The party that is heading back down by noon before the heat of the day is less likely to encounter an avalanche and a melted snowbridge.

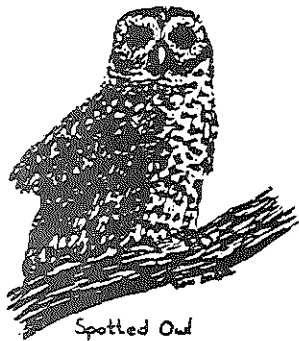
If you are a knowledgeable skier, you know that since Rainier is so high, only a fraction of the descent will actually be in good ski conditions. Often, the top is windblown crust, and on a warm day, the snow can turn into impenetrable mush. This leaves very little enjoyable terrain, but many people prefer to try to ski the mountain despite the availability of other more reasonable forays, such as those in the Tatoosh range. As one who has tried to be macho by climbing Rainier in February, I would advise against winter ascents. If you enjoy post-holing in waist-deep snow and sleeping in sub-zero temperatures, (when it is clear in the winter months, it is usually very cold), then go ahead.

After summer heat sets in and begins to melt the snowbridges and expose the ever-widening crevasses, the climb of Washington's highest mountain takes on an

altogether different flavor. Once on an August climb on the north side of the mountain, our party had to traverse around a large bergschrund at about 13,500 feet and travel all the way around the mountain to intercept the Camp Muir route from the southeast side.

Finally, plan to turn back if the weather is questionable, and keep an eye peeled for changing weather patterns. It is easy to tell yourself that the weather is marginal, but will get better. In fact, on Rainier, the weather tends to get worse very fast. Before you know it you could be waiting for three days in white-out conditions inside a small tent with a dwindling supply of food. The lesson is that if the weather begins to look marginal, think about turning around, waiting and coming back for that day of brilliant clear blue sky when just being on the mountain is a joy.

Jeff Novack



Spotted Owl



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Are you interested in doing volunteer work in the Park? Are you interested in assisting NPS personnel collect data on the lakes and ponds in the Park? Are you willing to help carry the scientific equipment needed to collect this data?

Long term surveys of the lakes and ponds inside Mount Rainier National Park are being conducted to accumulate physical, chemical, and biological baseline data and to assess human impacts. Being collected are data

on things like pH, water transparency, and samples of free floating organisms called phytoplanktons and zooplanktons. Currently about 60 of the Park's approximately 390 lakes and ponds have been surveyed. This effort will be to collect additional data on some of the larger lakes that have been already investigated and to begin data collection on a few smaller lakes.

Each survey trip will be completed in one day. The time required, including the drive from Longmire to the trailhead and back, will be about 10 hours. Due to scheduling of laboratory testing services, the survey trips can be done only Monday through Thursday. If you are interested and able to help this fall before snowfall, please contact Barbara Samora, Resource Management Specialist, Mt. Rainier National Park at (206) 569-2211, extension 294.

Book Reviews of

Fragile Majesty & The Gentle Rain

Fragile Majesty, by Keith Ervin, was written before the Spotted Owl decision, but is a fine guide to understanding old growth forests in the Northwest. Published late in 1989, the book has won one of the Pacific Northwest Booksellers' Association's Best Book of 1990 awards. Even for those of us who have followed the old growth issue, the book is packed with new information and perspectives.

To begin with, the ecological definition of old growth arrived at by scientists within the Forest Service was not followed by the same Forest Service when it calculated the number of acres of old growth still standing on national forests. Within the national forests' personnel there was neither agreement nor consensus. Of course this led to grave miscalculations and exaggeration of old growth reserves.

I learned that Coastal Indian Salish tribal tradition requires untouched old growth cedar groves for religious rituals, for meditation, and for ceremonial bathing in wilderness lakes. When the Indians appealed under their First Amendment rights to preserve old growth groves and lakes for religious reasons, the Supreme Court denied their appeal. Justice O'Connor said that Indian tribal freedom of religion "could not interfere with public programs"!

Despite the National Forest Management Act of 1976 mandate requiring the Forest Service to "provide for diversity of plant and animal communities and to maintain viable population of all native vertebrates". Ervin reports that some of the largest carnivores, such as wolves, lynx, and cougars in the National Parks, Cas-

cedes, and Olympics, are close to extinction, particularly those requiring old growth forests. Government scientists are not encouraged to report research counter to agency policy. But preservation of these species is dependent on preservation of an adequate amount of forest in all successions, and incorporation of structural diversity in managed forests. Ervin says this is not being done.

A century after it occurred elsewhere, according to Ervin, the Northwest timber industry is making the transition from old growth to second growth, and is lucky that reforestation policies had begun in the forties here. But, as we all know, the impending drop in timber supply puts more pressure on the dwindling supply of old growth. What can be done?

Ervin has some specific recommendations to cut through the deadlocked positions of opposing groups and to save what can be saved of the remaining old growth. Some of these are already underway.

1. Stop the export of logs to Asia
2. Increase logging on private industrial forests.
3. Give incentives to stop urban sprawl on fertile low elevation soils.
4. Combine national forest lands with private lands to calculate the total sustained yield.

This is a fine, informative book, written with care and sensitivity. Readers will enjoy learning more about a topic they may have thought they already understood.

The Good Rain, published in 1990, by Timothy Egan retraces the steps of Theodore Winthrop, who visited the Pacific Northwest in 1853 and wrote of his impressions in Canoe and Saddle. Winthrop rhapsodized about the beauty of the land. Egan says Winthrop felt as if he were living in a painting—one of those romantic oil versions of the Hudson Valley, popular in his time. Winthrop sailed to Victoria, then canoed 320 miles down Puget Sound, rode horseback around the north and east flanks of Mt. Rainier and down to the Dalles, where he crossed the Columbia, and continued his riding tour as far south as the Umpqua River, before returning east. In his memoir he wrote glowingly about the magnificence he had witnessed in the Oregon Territory, and the inspirational influence it should have on settlers, but then he was killed in the Civil War. Winthrop believed that a new race of humans inspired by the magnificence of the wilderness would be ennobled by close contact with great mountains. He was confident that citizens of this land would "elaborate new (and superior) systems of thought and life".

Egan found this a provocative concept. He decided to

follow the same path through the Pacific Northwest countryside "strong, savage, and majestic" to see what a century of the new civilization had produced. Writing with style, flair, and fresh imagery, Egan explores Astoria—no longer a working waterfront, and reflects on the discovery and history of the Columbia Bar. Then he backpacks up the Quinault rain forest trail to Enchanted Valley, under a constant "gentle rain". He reflects on rip and slash clearcutting which has resulted in the death of the Quinault sockeye run. Of the Olympics in 1855 Winthrop said, "The calming influence of these azure, luminous peaks, their blue slashed with silver, was transcendent." That transcendental influence escaped Seattle and state citizens for another 35 years. Egan proceeds to retell the wonderful story of the 1890 Press Expedition to explore the range, still unknown at that time, and the story of FDR's decision to save it as Olympic National Park in order to preserve Roosevelt elk. Perhaps Winthrop's transcendent spirit was still around, Egan reflects.

His chapter on volcanoes includes a detailed description of his summit climb of Mt. Rainier. Egan says he feels today as Winthrop did when he walked the Cascade Crest in August of 1853. Though he would only live another seven years, Winthrop felt the alpenglow of the volcano brought him a hint of eternal life. Egan discusses the first climbers of Rainier and the volcanic fires slumbering under ice in all of the Cascade volcanoes.

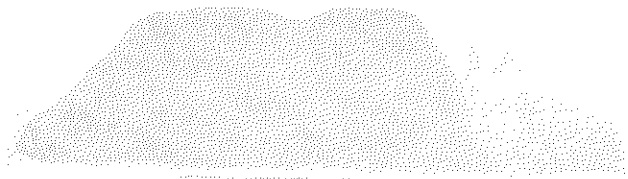
Have citizens responded to the inspiration of their surroundings and lived up to Winthrop's expectation? Egan's answer is a qualified one. Later chapters cover the damming of the Columbia and subsequent end of salmon runs promised Indians by treaties, and the tragic murders of two generations of the Goldmark family in Okanogan and in Seattle because of misplaced citizen fear of Communist infiltration.

The book makes fine absorbing reading, and I heartily recommend it.

Joan Burton



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