

THE WILD CASCADES



THE JOURNAL OF THE
NORTH CASCADES
CONSERVATION COUNCIL

Fall 2021

THE WILD CASCADES ■ Fall 2021

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COVER: A melange of wildfire smoke and storm clouds over the White Mountains as seen from Boulder Pass in early August. This fast-moving squall doused much of the North Cascades high country, yet also ignited the Nason Fire to the south. —JIM SCARBOROUGH
PHOTO

The Wild Cascades

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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

FALL 2021

What a summer it was! It would hardly seem like summer without heat, fire and smoke anymore, which is sad indeed. My intuition tells me this pattern is bound to continue as climate change drives summers further into the “nearly intolerable” zone. Don’t we wish we’d listened to the likes of James Burke, the British author of *Connections*, who when he came to Seattle back in the mid-80s, told us it was a time then that we’d all look back on fondly, before climate change (then known as global warming) affected everything.

Fire has become the new normal for Western summers, and as Fall arrives to clear the air and finally squelch the flames, we take stock of the damage. Ironically, though, it seems the damage this summer was made worse by Federal Agency efforts to limit fire. Over in the Twisp River valley some truly ugly logging was done by the Forest Service in the name of fire protection, damaging the riparian zone forest for many generations to come. I just returned from a short trip across the crest to meet with our members and experts in Twisp for a first-hand look at the situation. I was prepared to be shocked and appalled. Photos of the damage showed very large trees cut, piles of slash—reprehensible forest management. I wish it looked as ugly in person as it looked in the photos I’d seen, but it’s worse. It is a man-made disaster.

The public (that’s us!) entrust the Forest Service with the care and management of a great deal of public land in the Northwest, a lot of it outside permanent protection of Wilderness and National Park. Some of it is rarer than others, and the low-elevation east-side mature forest of the Twisp River is particularly special, not the least because of endangered species habitat.

But the Forest Service appears to think we’re in a second Trump administration, as logging plans were already moving forward for the Twisp River valley before the firebreak cutting happened this summer. The silver lining to the damage just done will be the public reaction to it. The outcry may help put a stop to further damage. Or it may not, though, so despite litigation being the last thing we want to do, we are preparing for it.

Meanwhile we have two significant transitions taking place. A new Executive Director for North Cascades Institute is getting up to speed, and the Park Service has announced a new Superintendent for the North Cascades National Park Service Complex, both of whom you’ll read more about in this issue. I’ve reached out to these new leaders and hope to start a frank and productive dialog with them. Best of all, we’re looking forward to the precious Wilderness in the National Park and Recreation Areas being under significantly better stewardship with the new Superintendent.

With all these issues, I’d like to personally encourage you to get involved in your N3C. Email me to tell me your thoughts and interests, and I’ll be happy to suggest some ways you can help.

Phil Fenner

pbilf@northcascades.org



N3C Actions

JUNE to OCTOBER
2021

Advocacy carried out by dedicated N3C volunteers in the last five months to protect and preserve North Cascades lands, waters, plants, and wildlife. Also noted: issues under study that will require action when fully evaluated and understood.



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 (SCL) Skagit Hydroelectric Power Relicensing. Now the process has moved to the next phase with the Federal Energy Resource Committee (FERC) and N3C board members are participating on the Steering Committee and Resource Workgroups meetings. Under pressure from Tribes, Federal and State Fish & Wildlife agencies, Washington Department of Ecology, Skagit County, and N3C, SCL has begun implementing studies for relicensing for water quality and fish passage. See page 9.
- ☒ Continued consulting with the Skagit River Alliance to prevent any resumption of mining at the former quarry site near Marblemount. See page 22.



ESTABLISHING, EXPANDING 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 to the National Park Service (NPS) on the draft Air Tour Management Plan (ATMP) for Mount Rainier National Park. N3C opposes tourist flightseeing flights over Wilderness.
- ☒ Submitted comments to the NPS on the draft ATMP for Olympic National Park. N3C opposes tourist flightseeing flights over Wilderness.
- ☒ Sent letter of welcome to new NOCA superintendent Donald Striker, along with recent TWC issues and a copy of Harvey Manning's *The Wilderness Alps*. See page 11.

WATCH LIST: Potential issues requiring action

Index-Galena Road. In July, N3C decided not to continue its appeal of the October 2020 court ruling against the SnoKing Watershed Council's appeal of the Snohomish County Permit to "rebuild" the Index-Galena Road in the north fork of the Skykomish River within the channel migration zone. Snohomish County went to work immediately to start clearing the right-of-way. Snohomish County has suspended construction this year. N3C

predicts that the next heavy rain and flooding will demonstrate the folly of road construction in the channel migration zone—sooner or later.

Proposed NOCA trail maintenance projects, Stephen Mather Wilderness: Still no detailed plans available, but N3C will monitor carefully for dependence on helicopters for material transportation in a designated Wilderness.



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.

- ✓ Submitted scoping comments and comments on the Environmental Assessment to NOCA for the relocation of Stehekin Road out of the floodplain at mile post 5.5. NOCA has issued a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) and Remedial Design (RD) for this project. N3C is awaiting further information and assessment of the actual routing and construction details. Construction will take place summer 2022. N3C will continue to monitor for potential “mission creep” once heavy roadbuilding equipment is on the ground.
- ✓ Submitted comments to Mount Rainier National Park on the Visitor Use Management Plan for the Nisqually to Paradise Road Corridor. N3C argued that the plan should be revised to include east side traffic via Ohanapecosh and Steven’s Canyon and its impact on congestion at Paradise. Foremost, the Wilderness integrity of the park for wildlife must not be compromised to accommodate more tourists by reopening the West Side Road. N3C cautioned about developing shuttle service and requiring reservations for visitation.



PROTECTING ANCIENT FORESTS AND PROMOTING RESPONSIBLE FOREST MANAGEMENT

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

- ✓ Viewed and discussed recent U.S. Forest Service (USFS) logging along the Twisp River road during the Cedar Creek Fire. Met in Twisp with a *Methow Valley News* reporter, a representative of the Libby Creek Watershed Association and other local experts. The USFS proposes to “restore” 77,000 acres of the same valley beginning next year with similar damage. N3C is strategizing its response. See page 14.
- ✓ Reviewed the USFS decision notice and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the North Fork Nooksack Vegetation Management (logging) project and began preparing for an anticipated formal objection. See page 6.



PROTECTING WILDLIFE AND WILDLIFE HABITAT

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

- ✓ Continued investigating the proposed McGregor Meadows land exchange in the Stehekin Valley with increased vigor because the NPS approved the exchange in May and did not inform the public until mid-June. N3C objects based on the adverse environmental impacts of increased development on public land, the lack of transparency of the public process in developing and proposing this exchange, and the failure of the NPS to provide an Environmental Assessment to allow for knowledgeable public comment. N3C has submitted two Freedom of Information Requests for details and has received some requested documentation including two appraisals. See page 9.
- ✓ Continued to follow, with the Darlington District Ranger, the Monte Cristo CERCLA track in Inventoried Roadless Area (IRA), which will remain open through 2022 to allow access for monitoring. Due to COVID travel restrictions the required monitoring was not conducted in 2021.
- ✓ Signed joint letter to Governor Jay Inslee supporting introduction of grizzly bears into the North Cascades.

Forest Service approves Nooksack logging with big assist from local orgs

By Jim Scarborough



In late September, the U.S. Forest Service published its final environmental assessment and “finding of no significant impact” for the North Fork Nooksack Vegetation Management Project. As described previously in *The Wild Cascades*, this benign-sounding endeavor is in fact a major ramping up of logging activity on the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest. It will amount to just shy of 3,000 acres of new clearcutting and commercial thinning on a heavily visited swath of public land, with national park-caliber scenery and a suite of irreplaceable ecosystem services. Expect these attributes to suffer terribly in the 10-to-15-year implementation window for this project, and for years afterward as the wounds slowly heal.

Unfortunately, where N3C sees a prime area for carbon sequestration, clean and abundant water, habitat for rare and sensitive species, and an exceptional resource for compatible recreation in perpetuity, a revanchist Forest Service sees sawlogs for Sierra Pacific Industries. In recent years, the Forest Service has developed a talent for euphemism; for instance, deploying terminology such as “variable retention harvest” as a substitute for clearcutting. But it has long had a penchant for marking its territory. At one time, the agency delighted in punching in new clearcuts hard against the boundary lines of Mount Rainier and Olympic national parks. Soon, the bulldozers and chainsaws will be unleashed below Mount Baker in an area that

Canyon Creek valley, a major tributary of the N. Fork Nooksack, will see intensive logging in the foreground and across most of the lower slopes beyond.

—JIM SCARBOROUGH PHOTO

residents up and down the I-5 corridor never thought they’d see logged again.

Few federal agencies are as antiquated as the Forest Service. In the Pacific Northwest, the agency succeeded in laying mostly dormant subsequent to the fallout from listings of the northern spotted owl, marbled murrelet, and multiple salmon/steelhead runs under the Endangered Species Act -- all due in large part to earlier Forest Service mismanagement. Patient as

a snake in the grass, the agency waited for better political weather. A business-friendly Bush administration, an indifferent Obama administration, a belligerently extractive Trump administration, and a Biden administration with far too much on its plate, combined with a rightward lurch in the federal judiciary, together have encouraged the serpent to boldly slither forth again. Now, the Forest Service is reclaiming familiar territory, corruptly giving away the public's forests to its timber industry partners.

We would be remiss, though, in not also acknowledging a crucially important enabler of the Forest Service logging program's Lazarus-like resurrection in our region. Conservation Northwest, which has admittedly done good work here and there (such as protection of parts of the Loomis State Forest in Okanogan County and, more recently, advocacy for wildlife passage in the I-90 corridor and Trust Land Transfer), has reliably provided the ideal greenwash for federal chainsaws. In the late 1990s and early aughts, with National Forest logging well into its death rattle, Conservation Northwest dedicated itself to resuscitating the ailing patient.

With a toxic cocktail of ad hoc collaborations, cherry-picked dependent variables (forestry is well known as the softest of all sciences), political lobbying, persuasion via legal tender, and direct cheerleading in the service of groupthink, Conservation Northwest convinced the Forest Service, the timber industry, and later much of the interested public that the very same agency which had inflicted decades worth of damage on our forests was also the one to make it whole again, while still producing volume. A win-win! The secret sauce here was "restoration" forestry for purposes of "accelerating" the development of old growth and corresponding natural conditions across the landscape. It was garbage in, garbage out, but of course irresistible to the Forest Service and to all who reflexively genuflect to the authorities in green uniforms. For Conservation Northwest, the motivation was simple enough. They had a seat at the table, perceived relevance, and of course enhanced leverage for continued fundraising.

If Conservation Northwest were headquartered in West Virginia rather than Washington state, they would no doubt be collaborating with Governor Jim Justice,

industry titans, and a few token miners toward promoting "clean" coal technology. Closer to our neck of the woods, the Oregon Natural Resource Council, now Oregon Wild, performed a similar disservice down south, yet unlike Conservation Northwest expresses some regret these days for the monster it helped create. Things have changed. You see, the Forest Service, with its renewed confidence and zeal for getting the cut out again, no longer has such a strong need for Conservation Northwest's timber brokerage. The agency is increasingly content to do its own thing, having accepted the inches ill-advisedly given to it and now gluttonously taking a mile.

In the case of the North Fork Nooksack Vegetation Management Project, Con-

servation Northwest was initially disconcerted and angered by the Forest Service's unexpected jettisoning of a previous iteration, called the Nooksack Integrated Conservation and Enhancement (NICE) Project. Never mind that the subsequent "Son of NICE" was practically indistinguishable from its predecessor on the ground. The sore point was that, unlike NICE, the Forest Service was going its own way. The promise of NICE was that Conservation Northwest could crow to its funders and membership that it was working closely alongside the vaunted experts of the U.S. Forest Service to "restore" the forests and recreation facilities beneath ever-popular Mount Baker. Son of NICE, which merely eliminated an earlier planned trailhead restroom upgrade or two, had shut Conservation Northwest out from a self-promotional opportunity in its own backyard.

And so, during Son of NICE's initial scoping period and public comment window in summer 2020, Conservation Northwest joined N3C in vociferously opposing it as the archaic proposal it is. The one means of derailing this catastrophe in the making, that being near-universal regional opposition to it, seemed for a time to be a real possibility. However, with impressive strategic dexterity, the Forest Service thereafter dangled a thinning-only alternative to its preferred thinning-plus-clearcutting alternative when publishing its draft environmental assessment in late winter of 2021. The agency grasped that N3C would not soften its stance, but was confident that Conservation Northwest would not be able to sincerely oppose the thinning-only

alternative and retain any semblance of ideological consistency. The agency bet right. It knew exactly where the crack in the opposition could be exploited.

Dutifully, Conservation Northwest took the bait and then directed its army of arm-chair warriors to write the Forest Service during the second and final comment period of Son of NICE to express their support for the thinning-only alternative. Moreover, RE Sources, a Bellingham-based outfit of merit with a sizable membership, yet inexperienced in federal forest management, followed Conservation Northwest's lead. The end result was foreordained. The Forest Service gladly harvested these few hundred comments expressing general acceptance of the larger proposal, albeit with a few concerns meekly expressed over clearcutting, then promptly turned around this fall and adopted the more aggressive alternative. That's right, kids. Commercial thinning *and* clearcutting are coming to a National Forest near you.

N3C does anticipate filing a formal objection to this project, but hopes are not high that much can be improved at this point beyond some nibbling around the edges. The opportunity to present a united front and demand that the Forest Service listen to the community, get with the times, and steward the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest in accordance with the public's modern needs has shamefully passed us all by. The hall of forestry mirrors co-created by Conservation Northwest, plus their unenlightened self-interest, assisted by a RE Sources that got in well over its head, and the usual obsequiousness, incuriosity, and apathy of much of the local public brought us to this point.

Western Washington was cooked alive beneath a pair of bizarre heat domes this past summer. Our wild salmon and resident orcas are at the point of collapse. Fresh water is scarce and declining in quality. Ordinary folks are clinging to outdoor recreation as a last line to sanity. What is the Forest Service doing about it? They're going to log holy hell out of the upper North Fork Nooksack basin. Diesel equipment will foul the air, chainsaws will roar, wildlife will flee (if they can), soils will collapse, weeds will spread, and logging truck after logging truck will speed down Highway 542 en route to the Sierra Pacific mill in Skagit County. Meanwhile, Conservation Northwest encourages you to renew to keep enjoying their exclusive member benefits.

The corvid's eye

A simple exercise in gauging contemporary changes in wildfire behavior around our state—its frequency, intensity, and extent—is to spend some time scrutinizing and comparing satellite photos of the North Cascades from roughly twenty years ago to the present day. The Pasayten Wilderness Area is one of the more instructive examples. The Pasayten River basin itself, along with the Chewuch River basin to its east, has lost vast acreages of hydrologically mature forest in the time it takes for a newborn to mature and graduate with a bachelor's degree. No mosaic burns, these. Finding so much as a patch of remnant forest in the Andrews Creek valley, a tributary of the Chewuch, requires a bit of work. Torched pockmarks west of the Cascades crest are steadily more evident as well.

It's tempting to interpret this phenomenon as an ecological catastrophe, helped along by its aesthetic insults, and certainly the human-influenced climate change underlying these ever-larger and more frequent fires is the stuff of nightmares come to life. By themselves, though, the individual fires are not so troublesome. It remains true, as George Wuerthner and numerous others have often reminded us, that natural fire reinvigorates the local ecology. Wildlife abundance and the forage that sustains these species often increase as a result. It may well be that the lower, rainshadowed portions of the Pasayten are in the process of transitioning to a sort of mixed chaparral and grassland habitat. The subsequent biodiversity may prove superior to that which preceded it, and even be relatively adept at carbon sequestration.

Rip-snorthing fires, of course, do not neatly limit themselves to roadless terrain, where they can be admired and studied from a safe distance. This is true not just because of fire's inherent capriciousness, but the fact that wildlands now occupy such a small percentage of the American landscape. Everywhere else, there is human infrastructure to varying degrees, and much of that human settlement. As our summers get longer and hotter, we're discovering that almost no spot is out of harm's way, up to and including suburbs and exurbs in the Puget trough. Other places which have long known fire to be more than just an abstract risk, such as the Methow Valley and Lake Chelan area, have come to view it like an unwelcome relative who drops in each year, stays far too long, and leaves the place an impossible mess.

As towns and their inhabitants feel ever more vulnerable, the politics of fire, thrice as vigorous as the flames themselves, blazes ever hotter. Rather than incinerating houses, businesses, and powerline corridors, fire politics burns clean through rationality, prudence, and even basic sobriety. Residents and industry potentially in harm's way, with the deference and flattery of the politicians they help elect, are open to any and all blunt-edged weapons in order to protect their assets. And, this being America, others sniff opportunity. The firefighting industrial complex lobbies successfully for a bottomless pit of public funding, an insatiable timber industry elbows its way in for reckless salvage logging, and the Forest Service (as regrettably witnessed on the Twisp River this summer) turns anarchic, carving up our valleys behind a literal smokescreen and without so much as a nod toward public input.

Still, the fires burn on, seemingly more so with each passing year. There are logical, clear-headed actions available to mitigate our new reality. Individual homeowners can create a defensible space around their dwellings and fireproof their roofs. Communities east of the Cascades may opt to pursue prescribed burning (which continues to meet with some counterproductive resistance from local movers and shakers), thin small diameter trees, and otherwise control brush in their immediate vicinities. All of these require a level of acceptance that fire is here to stay, and likely to burn hot around their perimeters before long.

Clear-headedness, though, is what we're most lacking. Forest managers, both federal and state, pursue logging far

away from towns, residences, and infrastructure under the guise of fire prevention, ironically leaving the acreage more flammable as a result. Remote fires, even those in designated Wilderness, are often aggressively and expensively fought to this day for no apparent reason aside from also having money to burn. Thinning projects closer to towns, seemingly justified on the surface, are directly undermined when forest managers cannot resist taking larger, fire-resistant trees in order to make things pencil out. Residents complain about the temporary nuisance of smoke during prescribed burning. Spiderwebs of forest roads are kept open to motors, allowing every aspiring firebug and bad muffler to cause a conflagration. And charlatans occasionally float the possibility of fire-prevention thinning west of the Cascades, which would in fact serve to dry out the forest even earlier in the summer season.

Analogies to Afghanistan and Vietnam come easily when reflecting upon our losing war on fire. We're destroying forests in order to save them. We're demanding the deployment of increasingly extravagant resources for what we quietly realize will be certain defeat. Contractors and peripheral businesses stand to make a bundle. Commissioner of Public Lands Hilary Franz, whose entire political career is built on the premise of fire savior while keeping timber beneficiaries fat, is our General Austin S. Miller. We make a concerted point to ignore that Washington's largest wildfire ever, the 2020 Cold Springs/Pearl Hill fire in Okanogan and Douglas counties, sprinted through sagebrush, grasses, and scattered groves of trees, rather than the "overgrown, unhealthy forests" which are purported to be certain doom if we don't



Update: McGregor Meadows land exchange, Stehekin

Too late for the June TWC, N3C was informed by the National Park Service (NPS) that it had concluded the proposed land exchange between private property owners in McGregor Meadows for federal lands adjacent to the Stehekin Valley Ranch. N3C objected to this land exchange as having unassessed environmental impacts and for contributing to development of the Stehekin Valley. N3C continues to believe that this exchange is not in the public interest as carried out.

As reported earlier, N3C made a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request in August 2020 for all documents pertaining to this land exchange from 2011 to 2020. N3C received what was termed “a first installment” in January 2021 and, over a year later, is still waiting for the rest.

Following the announcement of the consummation of the exchange, N3C submitted a second FOIA request for documents not covered in the previous request. We received copies of the February 2020 land appraisals. These are documents that should have been provided as a result of the original request. We are still waiting

allow forest managers to engineer them into submission.

One of the enduring paradoxes of humanity is the sincerely held hubris that this bipedal species of the African savanna knows the way of forests better than Ma Nature herself, and that the best way to fix the incomprehensible shambles left since the dawn of the Industrial Revolution is to let this same species do the fixing. Here's the thing: Nature bats last, as noted time after time, and we'd be fools to ignore the increasingly angry violence that seems to energize every new natural disaster. At some point, even self-regarding humans may realize that we're in serious trouble. Thoughts will turn from how to squeeze out a few extra dollars from big trees in the hinterlands or the federal treasury in D.C., to how best to protect our posteriors in the safest close-in place we think we can find.

for the decision documents from the NPS and final correspondence over conclusion of the land exchange.

In the meantime, N3C has learned that the previous owners of the large tract of land in the McGregor Meadow area reportedly offered it to the NPS for fee-simple purchase around 2010 with a request to live on the property for a limited period of years. The NPS had the funds and a willing seller but chose not to exercise the option to purchase because of the request to live there. Instead, the property was offered to another party who split it into three parcels. The new owners then proposed to exchange one 10+ acre parcel for a 10+ acre parcel of land identified in the 2012 Stehekin Land Protection Plan for exchange. At that time

the NPS had just completed the Lower Stehekin River Corridor Management Plan prioritizing land acquisition in McGregor Meadows to reduce development in the floodplain.

Making the land exchange took approximately a decade but was finally concluded on what seem to be extremely favorable terms to the owners of the private land exchanged. Their 10+ acres of land in the floodplain was traded for 17+ acres of prime developable federal land allowing for two residences and outbuildings to be built. However, remember the federal land identified for exchange in the Land Protection Plan was only 10+ acres. Apparently, to even the value of the properties exchanged, the NPS added 7+ acres not identified for trade. It gets more complicated very quickly and there is a lot more to this story. Suffice it to say, how could undevelopable property in the flood plain be worth as much a significantly larger tract of federal land that allows at least twice as much development as was “prevented” in the exchange? How could the NPS sweeten the exchange with 7 acres of land not previously identified for exchange? N3C would like to know.

These are some of the questions that N3C is seeking to answer with the assistance of legal experts. Stand by for further developments.

N3C continues to believe the exchange is not in the public interest as carried out.

SCL Relicensing update

By David Fluharty

This summer saw the start of all the agreed-upon studies for cultural resources, wildlife, fisheries and operations, etc. Maybe some of you were interviewed if you visited the Project Area to recreate. In April, Seattle City Light (SCL) added a number of prominent ex-administrators of environmental agencies as consultants and made a number of commitments to perform studies of fish passage and instream flow that tribes and agency “partners” had been requesting and which N3C supports. This was an important breakthrough and it allowed progress on a number of technical issues to be made.

However, the SCL responses were not sufficient to stave off lawsuits brought by the Sauk-Suiattle Tribe and Skagit County. In June, the Sauk-Suiattle Tribe sued SCL for violating federal and state law by blocking Skagit River fish at its dams. Skagit County sued SCL in August for failure to provide financial records concerning investments in salmon and steelhead protection and recovery in the Skagit River watershed. In mid-September the Sauk-Suiattle Tribe sued SCL under the federal Consumer Protection Act for alleged “greenwashing” its reputation by claiming to be “the nation’s greenest utility.” The suit calls for SCL to cease claiming that the Skagit project does not harm fish. SCL, not surprisingly, is defending its record in each case. Each of these cases is complex and N3C awaits the decisions of the courts to clarify the law.

In a related matter, there is intense discussion underway among the partners about a proposal from SCL to study removal of all three Skagit project dams. None of the tribes or agency partners has made this radical proposal and therefore question what purpose it is serving. Stay tuned.



Diablo Dam before the reservoir was filled, ca. 1930. —SCL PHOTO

Saul's Swan Song: NCI founder passes the torch



Saul Weisberg, Phil Fenner. —JODI BROUGHTON PHOTO

Founder and long-time executive director of North Cascades Institute Saul Weisberg enjoyed an in-person retirement party at the North Cascades Environmental Learning Center on Diablo Lake in early October. “Stories with Saul” was an enjoyable afternoon and evening, highlighted by a fireside session of NCI staff, graduates and adherents telling their favorite Saul stories. Clearly, Saul’s career at NCI was a storied one, and many staff recalled his mix of nurturing and, at times, tough love. The dinner beforehand was outstanding with locally sourced ingredients and lots of good conversation. The event really set the standard for how to conduct a meeting with near-zero risk of spreading COVID. Thorough precautions were in place, including checking immuni-

zation cards upon arrival and masking when indoors. The weather cooperated and some fine views were had over Diablo Lake.

New E.D. Bec Detrich was there too and we enjoyed chatting with her. We were left with the definite impression that NCI remains in very good hands. We look forward to a more formal meeting with her soon to discuss our many topics of mutual interest such as Skagit hydro project relicensing, the pending transition to a new superintendent of North Cascades National Park, and how we can help NCI with its good work and advocacy.

And of course, we hope to see and hear more of Saul now that he’s retired. His life lessons of a steady hand at the helm, vision and personal inspiration are ones we can all benefit from.

Greetings from Bec Detrich, new NCI executive director

As many in the N3C family know, North Cascades Institute has been dedicated to inspiring environmental stewardship through transformative learning experiences in nature since 1986. Over the past 35 years we’ve helped connect people to the rich and unique ecosystem of the North Cascades through hands-on study of the natural and cultural history of the region.

While the mountains and meadows have always been our “classroom”, in the early days we were nomads using tents and tarps as shelters instead of buildings. Our early 5th grade Mountain School students huddled under a big green tent in the evening to eat or shelter from the rain. N3C helped change this and aided our ability to serve a diverse and expanding community with the addition of the LEED-certified Environmental Learning Center.

As some of you might recall, during the last relicensing of the Skagit Hydropower Project, almost 30 years ago, N3C’s negotiations with City Light and the National Park Service led to environmental education being used as a mitigation tool—something that was unprecedented! The resulting agreement funded the construction of the Environmental Learning Center on the footprint of a former fishing lodge in the National Park.

Since the Environmental Learning Center was opened, the Institute has served thousands of local students through Mountain School. It has been the jumping off point for our multi-day backpacking and canoe-based Youth Leadership Adventures. The Environmental Learning Center has brought countless families together during our Family Getaways and allowed us to host engaging and inspiring adult seminars and workshops.

NCI and N3C have been deeply connected for many decades and, as the new Executive Director, I look forward to continuing and growing our relationship with the goal of increasing education, protection, and stewardship of this unique ecosystem. I am grateful for the power, innovation, and persistence of N3C and am excited for what we can do next!

I look forward to meeting many of you and want to extend a warm welcome to join us for a virtual or in-person class and to visit the Environmental Learning Center next time you’re in the National Park.

Dear Superintendent Striker,

Welcome to the North Cascades!

Please allow us to introduce ourselves. We are the North Cascades Conservation Council (NCCC). Founded in 1957 and dedicated to protecting the North Cascades from industrial and extraction actions, NCCC led the campaign for the National Park and Recreation Areas in 1968 and then to designate 94% of them as Wilderness in 1988. We also led the efforts to stop High Ross Dam. Today we strive to maintain the pristine environment and vibrant ecosystem of the North Cascades against numerous threats.

We look forward to a long and productive relationship with you as the new Superintendent of NOCA.

To help you understand the regional story here in our "wild nearby", I'm sending you a copy of our book Wilderness Alps and recent issues of NCCC's journal The Wild Cascades. We'd also like to invite you to explore our website to learn more about us and our mission.

We have several hot topics we'd like to discuss with you soon after you arrive:

- *Need for an updated Wilderness Stewardship Plan for Stephen Mather Wilderness (94% of NOCA).*
- *The current FERC relicensing process with Seattle City Light's hydropower project on the upper Skagit River which bisects NOCA.*
- *Prospects for closing the Cascade Pass road where it's currently washed-out, as a way to reduce visitor impacts to the fragile alpine zone.*
- *The situation in Stebekin, where multiple issues have arisen recently.*

We hope we can get together with you soon after you arrive, virtually or in person if possible, to discuss goals and challenges.

Sincerely,

*Philip Fenner
President
on behalf of the board and members
of North Cascades Conservation
Council*



Don Striker is our new National Park Superintendent

New North Cascades National Park Service Complex superintendent Don Striker comes from Denali National Park and Preserve in Alaska, where as superintendent, he managed six million acres of wilderness and mountain landscapes, including North America's highest peak and the traditional homeland of Alaska's Athabascan and Dena Native people. He also served for 18 months as the acting regional director for the National Park Service in Alaska, overseeing all NPS operations across 16 parks, two affiliated areas and 54.7 million acres. Striker has also served as the superintendent at New River Gorge National River and Mount Rushmore and Fort Clatsop national memorials.

All told, he has 28 years of NPS experience and "a proven history of visitor and resources management," said Acting NPS Regional Director Cindy Orlando in an NPS press release. "He brings extensive skills in managing vast natural areas and an ability to cultivate partnerships, which make him a great fit for this position."

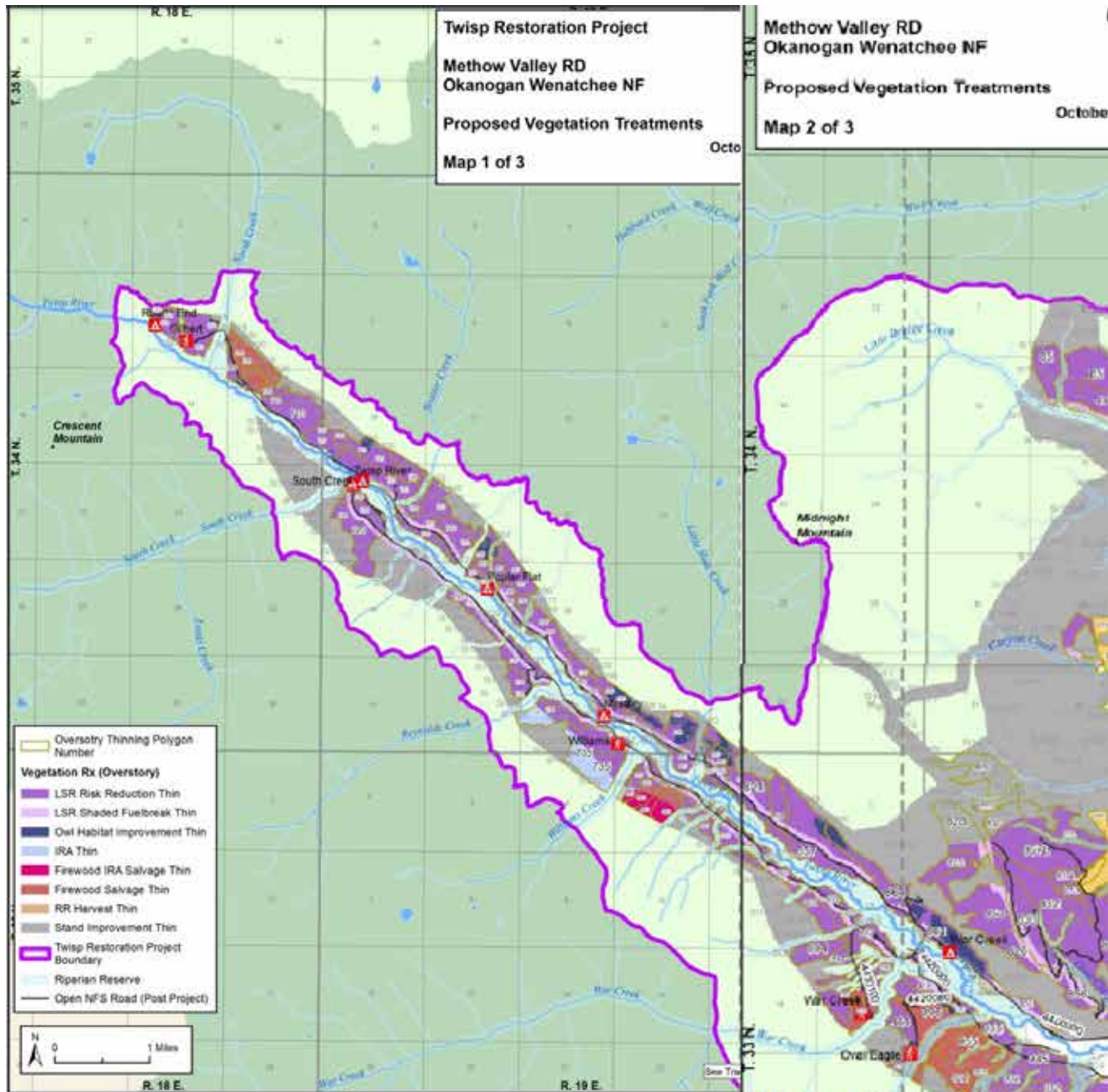
"I am excited to serve as the superintendent at the North Cascades National Park Service Complex, which is at the heart of nearly two million acres of interagency wilderness," said Striker. "I look forward to joining an amazing team and working with the park's world-class partners to conserve the scenic, natural and cultural values of this unique area."

Striker holds a Bachelor of Science in Economics from the Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania. In his free time, he enjoys all things outdoors. Striker, wife Gretchen and three grown children are looking for a house in Sedro-Woolley.

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES 2) includes incentives designed to encourage individuals and businesses to support non-profit organizations through charitable giving. From now until the end of 2021, you can claim up to \$300 in above-the-line tax credits when you make a charitable donation to your favorite non-profits....like N3C!

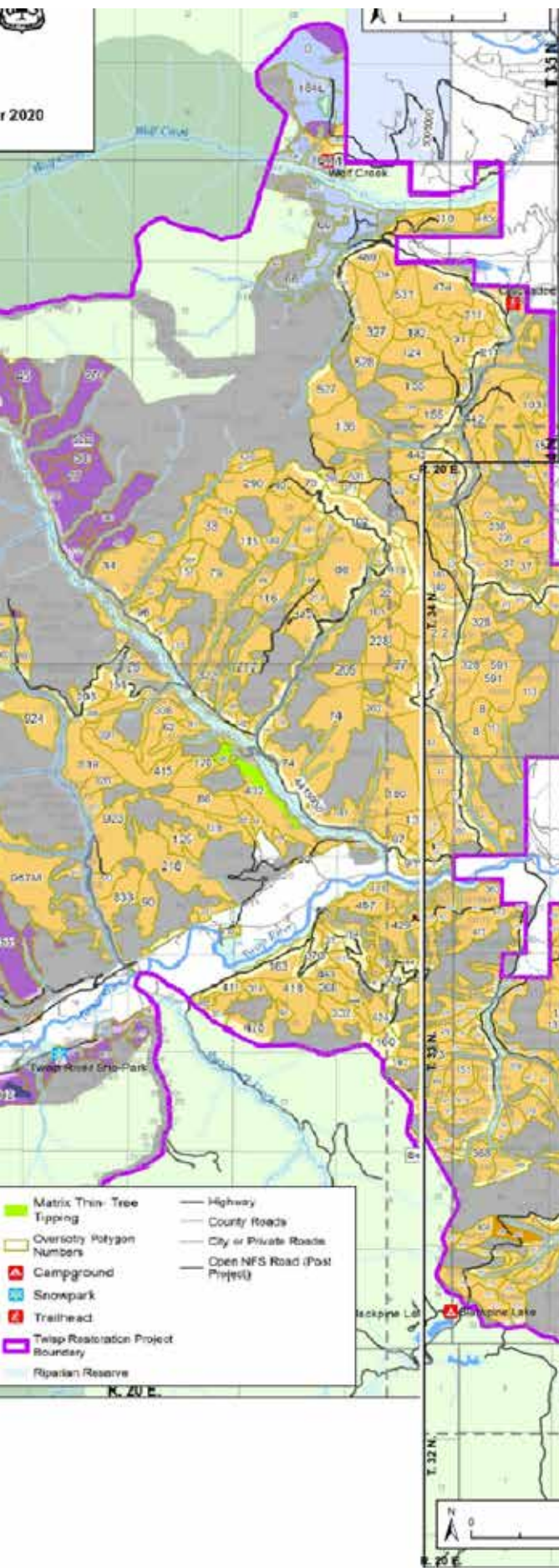
A Twisp logging tragedy

How the Forest Service tried to disguise the size of their logging proposal



The FS's own map of the Cedar Cr. fire closed area shows how far the Twisp River "firebreak" cutting was from the maximum extent of the fire at the ridge-top to the northeast. The cutting continued after the fire was contained.





The Forest Service included 3 separate maps of their “Restoration” proposal in the Twisp EA document, which makes it hard to see the full extent of the logging they propose. Even the scale of the maps was manipulated— one of them didn’t match the other two. So we combined them in this composite view and re-scaled the center one to match the others, so you can see the full extent of the area they propose to damage. Inset map shows how the 2021 Cedar Cr. Fire never got closer than 2 mi. from the cutting done ostensibly as a firebreak along the Twisp River Rd.

Massive logging project threatens Twisp river watershed

By N3C member Ric Bailey

With two million acres of designated wilderness, including a national park, you might think the North Cascades ecosystem is fully protected. With its logging proposal encompassing the Twisp river watershed, the Forest Service is reminding us that it isn't.

When I contacted N3C, I was heartened to find its activists were already actively opposing the so-called "Twisp Restoration" project. So, I joined NCCC after I found out it is the only forest and wilderness advocacy organization whose approach to the Twisp logging proposal was founded on protecting roadless areas and defending hard-won environmental laws.

The ancient forest within the Twisp watershed is a critical vestige of habitat for endangered northern spotted owls, marten, salmon, and trout. It is a bastion of biodiversity and carbon sequestration, and a mecca of high quality backcountry recreation.

The forests on the east side of the North Cascades—like the Twisp—contain particularly unique habitat, as "wet" ponderosa pine forests.

The uppermost reaches of the Twisp watershed are protected within the Chelan-Sawtooth Wilderness Area, but not the lower roadless slopes and the valley bottom. And like a flashback from the bad old days in the 1960s when massive logging projects on the national forests predominated, the Forest Service is proposing a 30-year, 77,000-acre logging project.

As might be expected, the surrogate for the "Twisp Restoration Project" is fire. The Okanogan National Forest feels that the giant "legacy trees" in the Twisp River valley, and residences along the lower



Old-growth ponderosa pines in the Twisp Watershed where logging is proposed.

—RIC BAILEY PHOTO

Twisp River, are in danger of burning. They've decided logging is the best way to protect them.

The Twisp forest has already proven its resilience. The 2018 Crescent Mountain Fire and the 2021 Cedar Creek Fire burned mostly in mosaic patterns on the upper slopes and reduced the likelihood that future fires would be unnaturally large. They did not burn the magnificent ancient groves in the valley bottom.

The forests of the North Cascades have adapted to fire. But they haven't adapted to logging. That's the reason the northern spotted owl is listed under the

Endangered Species Act. Yet among the area slated to be logged is designated critical habitat for the owl, called Late Successional Reserves. These were designated in the 1994 Northwest Forest Plan to protect ancient forests from logging.

NCCC agrees that some fuels reduction work in the upper portion of Little Bridge Creek that were previously logged—and left in horrible condition—might be appropriate. But the Forest Service proposal would remanufacture the entire forest ecosystem, converting it to a condition it has never been in, and will not remain in once the surgery is completed.

Among the many objectionable aspects is the principle that there's something wrong with dense forests even if, as is the case with the Twisp, that's the way they evolved. The intricate prescription for the Twisp logging illogically purports that wildfires will conform to a thinned-out forest. Actually,

opening up the dense canopy will allow ground fuels to dry out, thus increasing fire danger.

The Forest Service reasons that a wildfire *might* occur, that it *might* be fatal to some of the large trees, that fire suppression *might* not put the fire out, and that such fire *might* kill more trees than the logging. The Twisp project is essentially an experiment that uses the entire upper Twisp watershed as the guinea pig.

The Twisp Valley is a popular portal for hikers and packers to access the heart of the North Cascades. Eight magnificent trails lead to high peaks and alpine lakes. The Valley has six campgrounds, and has only ever been used primarily for recreation. But under the Forest Service



proposal, the ongoing logging show with its skid trails, stumps, slash and ripped up ground, will predominate for decades.

During the effort to suppress the Cedar Creek Fire this summer, the Forest Service gave us a preview of what we might expect to see if the Twisp project is implemented: they logged a ten-mile stretch along the once-scenic Twisp River Road allegedly as a fire break. Ancient trees and scores of snags and green trees were removed in an unregulated commercial logging operation that occurred six miles from the fire front, and after the fire was contained.

N3C joined me in writing an alternative plan. Our management plan would implement trailhead and campground improvements, convert the road on the west side of the river to a trail, and allow some thinning and prescribed burning in already-logged areas in Little Bridge Creek. However, the Forest Service has declined to allow our plan to be reviewed in its environmental assessment. We feel this is a violation of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

We have found other violations of NEPA, particularly that the Forest Service has prepared a limited environmental assessment that has only one alternative. It is declining to prepare an environmental impact statement, which is clearly required given the magnitude of the project. We also perceive violations of the Endangered Species Act via logging in designated critical habitat for the northern spotted owl, bull trout and spring/summer chinook salmon.

N3C has submitted extensive comments on the Twisp logging proposal, and we have met with Forest Service officials. However, agency leaders have indicated that their proposal will proceed, possibly with some minor revisions, but not the more extensive environmental review and major changes needed to comply with federal laws.

We have raised enough funds through individual donors to retain noted

environmental attorney Liam Sherlock to take the case at a generously reduced rate. Additional donations dedicated to the lawsuit would be most helpful in carrying out the anticipated litigation to fruition.

I continue to enthusiastically support N3C not only because of its dedication to preventing the Twisp logging project, but also because of its determination to add the undesignated portions of the North Cascades ecosystem to the wilderness system. We don't need to continue fighting more logging proposals year after year. Until we can add the entire Twisp watershed to the wilderness system, it is imperative we defend NEPA, the Endangered Species Act, and the hard-won Northwest Forest Plan.

Ric Bailey is former Executive Director of the Hells Canyon Preservation Council. He's been involved in developing and examining dozens of fuels reduction projects, and was educated in fire behavior and management while serving on a Forest Service helitack crew. He now lives in Winthrop, Wash.

The Twisp project is essentially an experiment that uses the entire upper Twisp watershed as the guinea pig.



Twisp logging, allegedly a firebreak for the Cedar Creek Fire. —RIC BAILEY PHOTOS

Tragedy in the Twisp River valley

By Phil Fenner and Dave Fluharty



From the descriptions, it sounded ugly and outrageous, and the first photos we saw looked pretty bad: arrays of stumps and piles of slash along what had been a pristine valley road where a rare east-side “wet Ponderosa pine forest” once grew. During a field trip to the area on October 9, the scene was even worse than we imagined, with a wide swath of damage along ten miles of the upper Twisp River Road.

The Forest Service explanation that this was an attempt to create a fuel break didn’t seem to make sense. It was beyond absurd. Green trees and snags were felled and left on the ground. A few of our members had been up the road before, and now saw a familiar, natural scene beaten to a pulp, like the victim of an assault, lying there with open wounds.

This summer, the Cedar Creek Fire roared from Highway 20 west of Mazama, south to the slopes far above the Twisp

Valley—burning an estimated 55,000 acres. That was bad enough, but what the U.S. Forest Service did in the Twisp River drainage during the late stages of that fire seems downright malicious. The agency contracted loggers to cut what they called a fuel break ten miles long and up to 250 feet wide mostly along the north side of the Twisp River Road. The thing is, the fire was 87 percent contained when the logging started and never got nearer than five miles from the road. Who would consider this an effective fuel break if the goal was to prevent fire damage to private property a dozen miles down in the lower valley—far from these “protective measures?”

N3C has many, many questions about this “preemptive strike.” The military metaphors are pretty obvious, actually. Similar to declaring Martial Law, the Forest Service declared an emergency, closed the road and kept the public out

Large trees were cut and smaller ones left standing along the Twisp River road, a likely preview of what the Forest Service will do throughout the valley next year if not stopped. —PHIL FENNER PHOTO

while they did the damage, claiming it was to save the valley when in fact they maimed it. In fine cut-and-run style, they took the logs with commercial value and left behind huge piles of slash and wood chips. Most amazing was the felling of old snags considered key parts of the ecosystem for bird and animal habitat, as well as many large trees over 30 inches in diameter and 80-150 years old, cut and left on the ground. Did that constitute a fuel break? It looked to us a lot like an example of the worst of the “commercial thinning” that’s proposed there for next year, in which valuable larger trees are removed for sale, contrary to any rational thinning program.

N3C had already been preparing to challenge the Forest Service's announced plan to "restore" the Twisp Valley forest with a massive logging proposal, a 30-year operation, starting next year. The USFS' Environmental Assessment presented last year to the public was deficient in many ways. We were preparing to take legal action if necessary and in conjunction, planned the October 9 in-person meeting of the N3C Board and local members to discuss strategy.

Then THIS happened! The Forest Service closed the road to the public, ostensibly for firefighting, so at first all we learned of was the train of log trucks rolling down the valley. Our members discovered some large trees in the log deck, but we couldn't see for ourselves since the USFS kept the road closed. As soon as the road was opened again, local N3C members as well as members of the Methow Valley Citizens Council went up and took photos. We were simply stunned. None of us had seen anything this bad since the days of rampant "getting out the cut" in the 80s!

Our meeting plans moved rapidly forward. The weekend of October 9, we met in Twisp to discuss the situation, look at maps and hear experts speak, then headed up the valley road to see it for ourselves. A reporter for the Methow Valley News joined us to see what had happened. We explored all the downsides of any fuel-break logging operation, and the especially egregious way it was done.

N3C has heard that the Twisp Restoration Plan may be going back to the drawing board, because much of the 77,000-acre proposed project area has been naturally "thinned" by the fire. Let's hope that this and other fire impacts in the Twisp Valley will trigger the USFS to do a complete rethink of their ability to "restore" the Valley with logging, when natural forest succession was doing it already. Our fear is that quite likely more of the same will be inflicted on the valley if the Forest Service proceeds with its so-called "Restoration" project next year.

We're building a fund for legal work and invite you to donate. Email us at nccinfo@northcascades.org if you'd like to help. Hopefully as the story of what happened this summer is revealed to the public, the outrage that ensues will help block further actions. But it will be many of years before the public can go up the Twisp River road again and not see a decimated forest corridor.

Methow Valley logging, grazing, and fire industry relationships

By Don Johnson

The Okanogan-Wenatchee NF "restoration" projects were initiated by a draft Revised Allotment Management Plan (Lookout Mtn Allotment, 2008) that was designed to "open the overstory" to increase "transitional" forage for cattle; re-growth of forest stands logged decades earlier had required reduced grazing allotment Animal Unit Months (AUMs—the amount of forage required by one animal for one month).

When that plan was blocked by local opposition the "collaborative" Mission Restoration Project (MRP 2016) was initiated with increased logging to satisfy both the Cattlemen's Association as well as the logging industry. That project was projected for a 30-year time frame to accommodate the need for repeating the logging on a 15-year cycle to obtain the desired outcome. The Forest Service has recognized that existing adverse environmental effects of the cumulative actions of logging and grazing activities have resulted in "at risk" status of critical habitat for Endangered Species Act-listed salmonids. However, they did not follow NEPA protocol which would have required an Environmental Impact Statement to investigate long-term adverse environmental effects of concurrent logging, burning, and grazing activities. The project was approved and a timber sale was offered.

When no bids were offered for the MRP timber sale a collaborative Twisp Restoration Project (TRP 2020) was initiated on the watershed that shares a border with the MRP. That timber sale would enhance the profitability of the logging activities by linking the two logging operations over the 30-year time. Again there is no plan to conduct an EIS to investigate the potential for adverse cumulative effects resulting from these actions on adjacent watersheds.

With 2021 public opposition to these proposed timber sale/restoration projects an adjacent wildfire has been accompanied by commercial logging within the TRP action area under the guise of a fire line at some distance from any active fire. It also has been reported that logging of future associated timber sales may be based on aerial timber estimates and logger selection of trees to fall without Forest personnel marking or monitoring the timber going to mills.

All of the above should be reviewed by the public prior to any additional logging. Thank you for any effort to make that possible.

Don Johnson is a Fisheries Professional Emeritus and member of the Libby Creek Watershed Association.



View west up the Twisp River valley from below the firebreak cutting hints at how bucolic that valley was before the chainsaws arrived. —PHIL FENNER PHOTO

Summer heat wave bad for North Cascades and other glaciers

Compiled from Mauri Pelto's blog, From a Glacier's Perspective

For the 38th consecutive summer the North Cascade Glacier Climate Project (NCGCP) measured the impact of climate change on North Cascade glaciers. Led by Mauri Pelto—N3C's Tom Hammond couldn't go this year—project members completed detailed measurements on 10 glaciers, three of which are part of the World Glacier Monitoring Service reference glacier network that have 30 consecutive years of mass balance observations. The Project does all of its work without helicopter support.

Glaciers are one of the world's best climate monitors and a critical water resource to many populated glaciated regions. This is particularly true in the North Cascades where 700 glaciers yield 200 billion gallons of summer runoff—critical for salmon, farms, hydro power and all that makes the Pacific Northwest special. These glaciers have lost 30% of their area in the last century. This has reduced glacier runoff in late summer as the reduction in glacier area has exceeded the increase in melt rate.

The 2021 field season followed a historic heat wave and sustained warm weather from late June to August. Snow melt causes a greater exposure of bare ice on glaciers. For ice surfaces with a higher albedo and greater density the observed melt rates during warm weather are 7-9 cm/day water equivalent versus 4-6 cm/day for snow surfaces.

At Mount Baker and Stevens Pass winter snowpack on May 1 was 116% and 115% of normal. From June 1 to August 17 the mean average temperature was similar to 1958 and 2015, and well above every other year. A maximum temperature exceeding 80 F on 17 days during this period at Stevens Pass meant exceptional melt conditions. Our observations indicate 11-14 cm of snowpack melt on glacier on these days. Just the melt from these 17 days would equate to half of the average summer melt for a North Cascade glacier. The earlier summer heat wave has led to exposure of greater higher albedo and faster melting glacier ice, which is why such a heat wave is more impactful than in late summer.

The Adams Glacier on Mount Adams and the Whitney Glacier on California's Mount Shasta (not part of our study) lost



all their snowmelt. In 1981, the Whitney Glacier was 3.0 km long. Whitney and many Cascade volcanos actually advanced from 2000 to 2005, following a retreat in the 1980s and 1990s. By 2014 the Whitney Glacier in California was 2.6 km in length. This summer, between 15 and 20% of the glacier ice volume was lost. The glacier is now a mere 2300 m long and is separating into two glaciers, an upper and a lower.

The Adams glacier on Mount Adams still had 50% of its snow cover on August 15. By August 25, that had shrunk to about 10 percent. Losing all of its snow cover means a 5 to 10% volume loss for the Adams Glacier in 2021.

The Columbia Glacier was 87% snow covered on August 1, well above the recent early August average. Snow depth in the three biggest west side avalanche fans averaged 4.9 m, 25% above normal. The three largest fans comprise an area of 0.14 km², yielding a volume of 686,000 m³ swe (snow water equivalent). While the melt season continued, this substantial avalanching kept this section of the glacier covered in snow. Columbia Glacier will have a small-moderate negative mass balance.

Easton Glacier on the south flank of Mount Baker does not receive avalanche

Jill Pelto holds her sketch of the Easton Glacier Icefall. —JILL PELTO PHOTO

accumulation, and the regions above 2500 m typically have significant wind scouring that leads to little increase in mass balance on the upper glacier. On August 11, the glacier had only 38% snow cover, with more than 50% of the area above 2500 m having lost all of it. By summer's end the glacier had the lowest percentage of snow cover of any year since we began monitoring in 1990. The bench at 2000 m typically has 2.75 m of snowpack on Aug. 10, and this year was 50% bare, with an average depth of 0.25 m. The icefall above also lacked snow cover as well. There are a number of pockets/basins, where wind deposition increased snow depth and this snowpack will be retained.

The observations across the range illustrated that glaciers or areas of glaciers that did not have enhanced deposition from wind drifting or avalanching were either bare already or would be by the end of August. What is apparent is that the losses from Easton Glacier will be extraordinary. More frequent heat waves continue to plague alpine glaciers all around the world.

Icicle “strategy” impacts Alpine Lakes Wilderness

By David E. Ortman, former NW Office director, Friends of the Earth

The Icicle Work Group (IWG) held its fall quarterly meeting virtually on October 14, 2021. Chelan County and Washington Department of Ecology’s (Ecology) Office of Columbia River (OCR) co-convened the IWG in December 2012. This was in response to a water right lawsuit filed by the City of Leavenworth, and to further OCR’s Legislative mission to aggressively find new water supplies, including within the Alpine Lakes Wilderness by raising irrigation dams in place before the establishment of the Alpine Lakes Wilderness in 1976.

The IWG is made up of a small number of irrigation districts, tribes, agencies, as well as Washington Water Trust, the Icicle Creek Watershed Council, and Trout Unlimited (which often votes to fund projects to be carried out or managed by TU). It is modeled after the controversial Yakima Workgroup (which also includes TU) that is lobbying Congress and the Legislature for new environmental damaging and

uneconomical new irrigation dams in the Yakima River Basin.

Elements of the Icicle “Strategy” that have raised concerns regarding impacts to the Alpine Lakes Wilderness include:

- Alpine Lakes Reservoirs Optimization, Modernization, and Automation of outlet works and gate infrastructure at seven sub-basin lakes.
- Eightmile Lake Storage Restoration rebuilds the structurally compromised Eightmile Lake dam to restore usable storage to the historical and permitted high water storage elevation.

In January 2019, Ecology and Chelan County issued a SEPA Final Programmatic EIS to push these projects and other elements forward. Ecology and Chelan county are now preparing a site-specific

preparing a site-specific draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) that is to be issued by the end of the year.

The October IWG meeting reviewed and approved a 2021-2023 budget, reviewed water conservation projects (controversial due to uncertainty as to whether “conserved” water would remain in-stream for fisheries), and reviewed “outreach videos” (which use taxpayer funds to promote and lobby for the Icicle strategy).

The next quarterly IWG meeting will be held in December. More attention and attendance to these meetings is needed in order to protect the Alpine Lakes Wilderness from water grabs by the Department of Ecology.

To obtain the video meeting link and call in number for the next IWG meeting contact Mary Jo Sanborn, maryjo.sanborn@co.chelan.wa.us or 509-860-2135.

For more information, see <https://www.co.chelan.wa.us/natural-resources/pages/icicle-work-group>

Wilderness jet noise bugging you?

We see and **HEAR** Navy growler jets in Cascades Wilderness Areas randomly, and N3C always encourages those who hear their noise to report it via email, phone or web-map to Navy officials and the Sound Defense Alliance. Now, we have a *new* opportunity for you to share your experiences and stories about the growlers and how they affect your lives!

Professor Nina Berman from Columbia University is making a film about the Growlers and noise impacts. She is asking for people to leave voicemails on her phone with their noise complaints. This way, an audio record of complaints can be collected and saved for use in the film, since the Navy erases voicemails left at their noise complaint line after logging them. She says this about herself:

—I’m Nina Berman, a filmmaker and professor at Columbia University. My aim is to produce a film and a podcast and I’ll be sharing the work with a cohort of science journalists at MIT where I have a research grant. My phone is 917-488-5552, and I would welcome your noise complaints!



Watch for rocks

I took this picture in May 2010, going east down from Washington Pass. And missed getting crushed by a few hours. Makes you think about what comes down in an avalanche—not just snow!

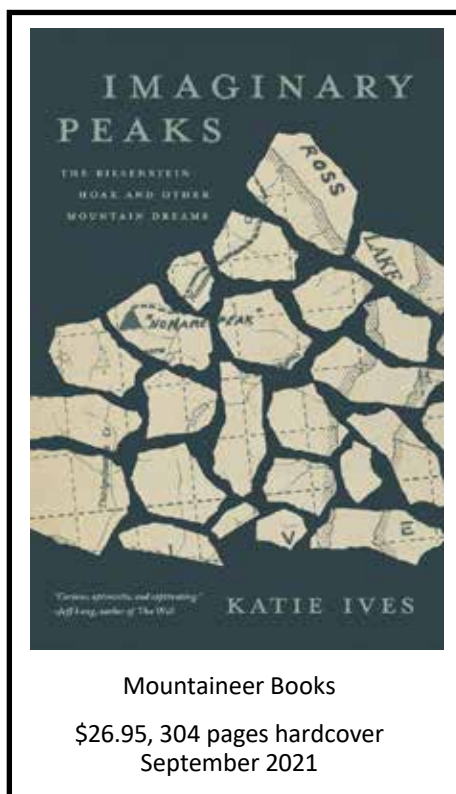
—SCOTT CRAIN



BOOK REVIEW

Imaginary Peaks: The Riesenstien Hoax and Other Mountain Dreams

by Katie Ives



Reviewed by David Fluharty

Katie Ives, author of *Imaginary Peaks*, reached out to N3C because she wanted to know more about Harvey Manning as a human being, conservationist and author of some of the more infamous hoaxes perpetrated by Harvey and friends in the pages of *Summit Magazine* in the early 1960s. For years Ives has been intrigued by literature on mountains both from an intellectual and philosophical perspective as well as the practical dimensions of the

history and meaning of the intent to climb mountains as it has evolved through the ages. The culmination of this quest seems to be to understand the phenomenon of individuals who deliberately manipulate human predilections and metaphysical appreciation for mountains to aggrandize their egos or, in Harvey's case, to poke fun at the sport that climbing was becoming as opposed to the experience of mountains. That brought Ives to investigate the origin and fallout from Harvey Manning and friends' hoax about the Riesenstien range of mountains.

I expect that Ives' making Manning the protagonist in this remarkable inquiry would have been a surprise to him. However, if Harvey had had the chance to review *Imaginary Peaks* he would have been bemused and totally willing to engage in the role he is asked to play. But he probably would have wanted to edit the script to answer some of the questions that go unsatisfied. Would that he could, but well-deserved kudos to Ives for her incredible five-year efforts to review archives, interview Harvey's family, friends (like Austin Post, Ed LaChapelle, Dale Coles, Ted Beck, Dick Brooks and their families), and the members of climbing communities that gradually exposed the hoax.

What was the Riesenstien hoax? In brief, it was a spoof on the peak baggers and their tendency toward boastful accounts of first ascents. By "relocating" an impressive unclimbed mountain massif from its home in Alaska to an unspecified place in Canada and then reporting an fictional unsuccessful effort by a group to climb its myriad routes, Manning et al. set off a

frenzy among a certain part of the climbing community intent on making first ascents.

Ives has done an amazing "tour de force" in exploring the myths of real and unreal mountains through history, describing the antics of hoaxers and fakers, reflecting on contemporary meanings of mountains and relating her own relationships with mountains around the world and the multitude of mountain people she has come to know as editor of *Alpinist*. One additional element that Ives has sought to credit and to honor is the ancient presence of indigenous peoples in the mountainscapes before climbers "discovered" them. She frequently reminds the reader that the places and mountains already had names before colonial names were assigned by explorers and climbers making a "first ascent".

I frankly wondered how Ives would combine all of the disparate elements she essays to cover in the book into a coherent whole. I was most eager to see what she could tell me about Harvey Manning and how he and a few friends were able to literally move a real mountain far enough to fool nearly a generation of mountain climbers about a massive unclimbed peak in North America. However, in a totally subtle and uncontrived way, Ives accomplishes the task that she sets out in a very entertaining and readable fashion.

In fact, once I began reading I forgot my concerns. I was lost in reading ancient and modern accounts about mountains and the way humans have considered them. Ives weaves many elements together in a way that completely resonates with me and I suspect many others who have once been climbers with ambitions to climb local and distant ranges but who now relegate their trips to hikes that can be accomplished on creaky knees or vicariously from the comfort of an armchair. Ives makes us feel good about admitting to the ambitions we may still harbor about the mountains of our dreams and to recollect as she does and Harvey did about special places in our lives. How many of us have, as Ives describes Harvey at Marmot Pass in the Olympic Mountains in 1938, found our-

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

Ives talks about *Imaginary Peaks* at Village Books

Meet author Katie Ives, editor in chief at *Alpinist* magazine, and learn more about the Riesenstien Hoax in the Readings Gallery at Village Books in Bellingham on Thursday, November 11 at 7:00 pm. This book centers on a hoax perpetrated by Harvey Manning and friends, and Dave Fluharty, Rick McGuire and Phil Fenner were interviewed by the author as she was writing it. N3C's Ken Wilcox will host the event, which is part of the Nature of Writing series in partnership with the North Cascade Institute. Space is limited and masks, proof vaccination and pre-registration are required for this in-person event. Register at <https://www.villagebooks.com/event/litlive-katie-ives-111121>

BOOK REVIEW

Classic Cascade Climbs: Select Routes in Washington State

by Jim Nelson, Tom Sjolseth and David Whitelaw

Reviewed by David Fluharty

If you already own and have read the late Fred Beckey's *Cascade Alpine Guide: Climbing and High Routes* (Third edition) you may wonder why you should acquire yet another climbing guide. I can assure you that whether you are just beginning your climbing career, at your prime, or over the hill, you'll want to acquire the just released *Classic Cascade Climbs*. Why? Because it is the only climbing guide I have found that tells you how to get back down once you have made it to the top. In my opinion, this is a serious omission from other treatments and an essential part of mountain safety. A surprising number of accidents happen on the descent. The advice here does not necessarily prevent accidents but it takes some of the uncertainty out of getting down.

If that is not enough of an endorsement, then how about the efforts the three experienced authors have made to do the beta testing to identify routes on many peaks that they consider classic? These are not "classic" as in the highest peaks, the most elegant routes, the best views or the favorite climbs of generations. As best I can tell, the authors define "classic" to mean these are routes that have been climbed. Sometimes, but not always, the routes are classic because they are traditional and often climbed. Here, they are challenging, diverse, representative of Cascade climbing and better than others in some subjective way. Recently climbed very difficult new routes are included as classic in the sense that they demonstrate the constant evolution of climbing in the Cascades. I'd say, too, that some climbs are classic because they are typical of the long and horrendous brush whacks required in the Cascades where the swarms of mosquitoes compete with devil's club to vet the mettle of the climbing party and ensure its members are worthy to climb a seldom-ventured remote peak. I've always considered a classic Cascade climb as one that requires crampons, an ice axe, and a few pitons—rock and ice. But then, I don't like sitting for hours in a belay on difficult rock much less leading out on same. Whatever the definition, the selection here defies criticism. All are great climbs,

sufficient to tantalize the newcomer, reward the accomplished, and remind the armchair climber of past achievements.

I cannot vouch-safe every route description. The few "classic" climbs I have made are clearly and accurately described. More important, the authors rightly point out that route descriptions and ratings of climbing difficulty vary depending on the season and the weather. The user is on notice that she/he/they have the responsibility to adjust the descriptions to conditions and to their capabilities.

I very much appreciate the variety of photographs. Not only useful for illustrating routes, they include candid shots of climbers who made the historic first ascents. In addition, striking aerial photography provides context and shows the stunning beauty of the Cascades in all seasons.

This is not a handy book to carry in a backpack on a climb but it is durably bound to withstand such treatment. Most likely key pages will be scanned or photocopied prior to a trip. A similar criticism might be leveled at the detailed history of climbing of a specific mountain. One does not need to know the history of first ascents to be able to climb (and descend) the routes described. However, I personally value seeing the names and contributions of older generations of climbers I have known or have knowledge of and to be introduced to a new generation of climbers cutting their teeth in the Cascades and then going global.

Most of all what I like about *Classic Cascade Climbs* and the authors' philosophy is contained in a single toss-off quotation, "For those with the inclination and imagination, there remain many lifetimes of new and unclimbed routes to be dreamed and realized" in the Cascades. The classic climbs are only the beginning for new generations of climbers. And, do I need to remind, climate change is altering the route descriptions almost as fast as they are written.



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Imaginary Peaks

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

selves on the verge of an enchanted world and *felt* answers to questions that we did not know enough to ask?

Why would a highly trained writer and editor choose to write this book? Katie Ives' own words answer that question. After a brief family vacation focused on Mt. Rainier when she was nine years old, "I felt keenly the lack of high places in my New England backyard. And so, perhaps, my unconscious mind conjured a giant peak into being, its invisible contours rising out of the swells of drumlins and other traces of vanished, ice age glacier in the forest behind our house. I wandered deep into ever-expanding woods until the hillsides sharpened and I stood on the spine of a narrow ridge crest that arched into snow, seracs, and clouds."

And thus, Ives journey start us on a global tour of ancient Tibet and Buddhist concepts of *bayul*, James Hilton's Lost

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Action required to halt Marblemount mining permit process

By Skagit River Alliance board

Baseball great Yogi Berra was speaking of the New York Mets when he uttered his famous saying, "It ain't over till it's over," but now we have to borrow it again in our fight against the rotten permit process for the proposed Cascade Big Bear Mine. Just when you think the fight is over, it ain't.

The big mining and jetty companies are back and pushing for a quick approval of a mining permit even though DNR has acknowledged "the likely presence of asbestos throughout the entire site proposed for mining" with "the potential to impact the environment and public health and safety". As a result, DNR withdrew the application and told the applicant they would need to resubmit a new one if they wished to continue the process. Recent information obtained by the Skagit River Alliance through Public Documents Requests (PDRs) has revealed some unsettling correspondence that is summarized here:

- The applicant has proposed to move ahead with the same plan to mine the Shuksan Greenschist with the potential to create free asbestos that could be released into the environment.

- DNR has requested that Skagit County sign away its duty to review operations and impacts without any new information about the hazardous materials mitigation measures that would be necessary to avoid the release of asbestos into the environment and our lungs.
- State Senator Keith Wagoner has been putting significant political pressure on DNR to issue a new mining permit with seemingly little regard for State and County regulations or for a thorough and open review and permitting process.
- DNR once more looks like an advocate and agent for big mining and less like a public agency with concern for all interests.
- Skagit County Planning and Development Services appears to be willing to simply sign off on the proposal without further details or review. Their justification appears to rely on a special use permit issued 45 years ago for local rip rap and gravel. The proposal is a very different operation and there have been significant changes in the surrounding environment since then.

This is not how the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) process is supposed to work!

Skagit County must be the SEPA lead agency. Only Skagit County has the ability to review onsite and off-site operations and impacts and issue the necessary County permits. We must not let the County abdicate this important role because DNR does not have jurisdiction for this required review and monitoring. Skagit County needs to follow SEPA process for a new mining special use permit. DNR could then conduct their process for a Reclamation Permit, which considers property restoration for subsequent use.

Now is an extremely important time for county and state officials to hear from you to let them you're your concerns about mining asbestos-laden rock at Marblemount. It is equally important to let Skagit County and DNR officials know that you expect them to follow the permit review process in a fair, open, and transparent

manner without influence from political or business pressure. Please email and call our state and county officials. Here are possible talking points:

- Let them know how you feel about having this proposed mining operation in the community, particularly in light of the asbestos findings.
- In addition to the asbestos there are many other issues related to the safety and health of Skagit residents and this tranquil corner of the county (noise, traffic, pollution, water use, etc.). Such issues must receive thorough study and review to ensure that the health, safety, and well-being of Skagit County residents and visitors are not overlooked.
- There are very significant distinctions between the small local quarry approved by Skagit County 45 years ago and a new high-level industrial-scale jetty-stone mine, as well as the significant changes in the surrounding environment. This must be acknowledged by both Skagit County and DNR.
- The review of operations by Skagit County is important because mitigation of asbestos dust, noise, and traffic is under their purview, not DNR. Carefully considered mitigation measures and enforcement of those measures are vitally important to assure safe, fair, and reasonable conditions for county residents, the general public, and the County environment.
- Skagit River Alliance should not have to get this information through public document requests. Demand that Skagit County and DNR provide regular updates and publish all related documents on their respective websites.

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Horizon (Shangri-La), Pliny the Elder, Ptolemy, Humboldt, Kerouac and many more. Ives insists that hers is not a comprehensive documentation but she has selected a wide range of diverse perspectives about real and mythical mountains. We are regaled with descriptions of manuscripts, maps and photographs that shape our relationships with the earth—especially the bumpier parts. Fortunately, Ives provides

both documentation of her research and an extensive bibliography to encourage further exploration.

Ives reveals Harvey Manning's deep commitment to conservation of the Cascades and the Issaquah Alps. However, she remonstrates that full treatment of that topic exceeds the scope of the book and demands another author. I hope that she will reconsider.

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Undated photo of Harvey Manning atop a real peak, one that might rival his imaginary ones. Courtesy Manning estate.