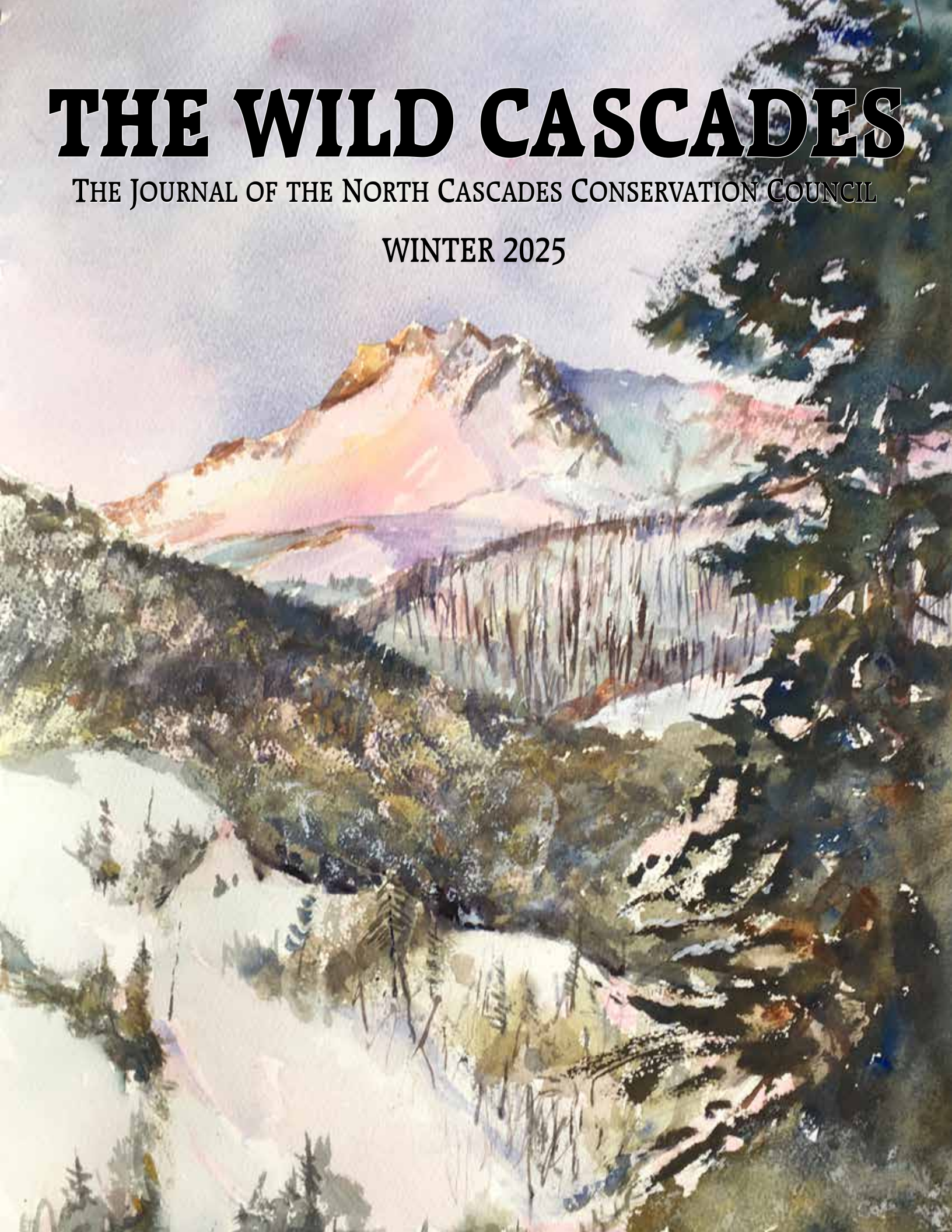
THE WILD CASCADES

THE JOURNAL OF THE NORTH CASCADES CONSERVATION COUNCIL

WINTER 2025



THE WILD CASCADES ■ Winter 2025

3 President's report — Phil Fenner

4 N3C Actions: October 2024 to January 2025

6 End game for the Skagit River Project relicensing? — David Fluharty

7 Geologic stability of Skagit Gorge — Dr. J.L. Riedel

11 Taking a look at "restoration": What's really happening on the S. Fork Stilly — Phil Fenner and Kathy Johnson

14 Beckler River TLT may be funded in 2025

Winter shelters proposal at Mount Baker cancelled for now

15 *In Memoriam:* William Ross Halliday 1926-2024 — Dave Fluharty

16 N3C pushes back against the Trump/Musk gutting of National Park Service staff

Preparing for what's next for northwest public lands — Hayden Wyatt

17 The rapid transition from bedrock environmental law to uncertain future — Hayden Wyatt

The SCOTUS shift from *Chevron* to *Loper* and how it will affect environmental agencies — Dave Fluharty

18 Who was John Warth? — Phil Fenner

19 Book review: *Hiking Snohomish County* (3rd Ed) by Ken Wilcox — reviewed by David Fluharty

20 A place for thrush — Jim Scarborough

21 Book review: *Rock Pick and Ice Axe: Recollections of a Mountaineering Geologist* by Roland Tabor — reviewed by Philip Fenner

22 Oral arguments in the Twisp Restoration Project appeal

23 N3C membership application

COVER ART: Mt. Gardner. Painter John Adams uses nature as inspiration to explore both subtle and vivid color harmonies. A mountain cabin in the North Cascades is one of his home studios. His paintings have been featured in many galleries and juried shows and he teaches weekly watercolor classes in Port Townsend and on Bainbridge Island. Copyright John Adams. Reprinted with permission of the artist.

The Wild Cascades

Journal of the North Cascades Conservation Council

EDITOR: Anne Basye

EDITORIAL BOARD: Philip Fenner, David Fluharty and Ed Henderson

Pat Hutson, Designer | Printing by Abracadabra Printing

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

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

The Wild Cascades Editor

To update your address or request electronic delivery of *The Wild Cascades*, email info@northcascades.org

North Cascades Conservation Council
PO Box 95980, University Station, Seattle, WA 98145-2980

♻ ***The Wild Cascades*** is printed on 10% post-consumer recycled paper.

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

Over the last six decades 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 William 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: $10 (Living Lightly) to $100.

NCCC would like to acknowledge the North Cascade Range and adjacent areas as the ancestral homelands of Indigenous Peoples, First Nations, and all who have lived here for millennia and have stewarded this land since time immemorial.

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

www.northcascades.org

N3C Board

Officers

PRESIDENT
Philip Fenner

VICE PRESIDENT
Carolyn McConnell

TREASURER
Lisa Bergman

SECRETARY
Marc Bardsley

Directors

Dave Fluharty

David Gladstone

Kathy Johnson

Robert Paul Kendall

Kurt Lauer

Thom Peters

Jim Scarborough

Ken Wilcox

Advisors

Gerry Cook

Brock Evans

Barry Gall

Kevin Geraghty

Tom Hammond

Ed Henderson

Fayette Krause

Dave LeBlanc

Thom Schroeder

Policy Advisor

Hayden Wyatt

NORTH CASCADES CONSERVATION COUNCIL

Founded in 1957
SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

PRESIDENT'S REPORT WINTER 2025

The attacks from the new administration are coming on all fronts. N3C is tracking developments and watching closely to see how policy announcements will impact our bioregion and our work to protect it.

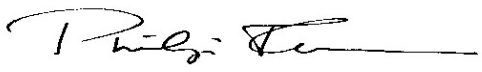
Fortunately, the core region of our sacred North Cascades is protected in National Park & Wilderness Areas, more reliable protections than many other areas enjoy, thanks to the epic efforts of our members for almost 70 years. Our National Park, Wilderness and Recreation Areas may be protected from extraction for now, but if the Park system is effectively defunded, the lack of staff and closing of facilities will greatly harm the visitor experience. We've already launched a new petition to keep the Golden West visitor center open and Ranger staffing in Stehekin adequate this year—you'll read about that and how you can sign on page 16.

We must be mindful, though, that much of the greater North Cascades ecosystem was excluded from those legislative protections for the sake of its timber-production potential. Places dear to us like the upper Twisp River valley and the N. Fk. Stillaguamish watershed are proposed for cutting on an unprecedented scale. The Roadless Rule and especially the Northwest Forest Plan were our bulwarks to protect these and many other vulnerable public lands, but they are subject to change by the new administration which is bound and determined to extract energy and minerals wherever they can find them, with timber close behind. The Forest Service already has vast areas on the proverbial chopping block, as readers of this journal are aware.

I assure you we are not capitulating, and we will adapt and adjust our response as necessary to the firehose of Executive Orders as it continues to spew. You'll read updates in this issue on our efforts to stop those harmful logging projects in court, ones that were already proposed in the last administration and are now teed up to begin this year. We're prepared to go to court to oppose diluting the NW Forest Plan, a project also already underway with the express purpose of increasing the "cut."

I'm pleased to report we're uniquely positioned with expertise and passion needed to defend wild Washington in our grand tradition. And if ever there was a time when we could use more members and more engaged members, it's now. So consider who you know that would like to join you in defending our natural heritage and give them a gift membership!

Let's resolve that we must do more than try to cope with craven wrongdoings. Ultimately, we must resist and halt them or we are complicit.



Phil Fenner
philf@northcascades.org

N3C Actions

OCTOBER 2024 to JANUARY 2025

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

DEFENDING WILD AREAS AGAINST DAMAGING INDUSTRIAL USES

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

☑ Attended virtual Seattle City Light Skagit hydropower project FERC relicensing "comprehensive table" meeting 2/20/25 where we raised serious concerns about plans for new road building. *See page 6.*

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.*

☑ Coming in the Spring-Summer 2025 *TWC*

Ooops!

We apologize for errors that appeared in our Fall 2024 Actions pages under Defending Wild Areas against Damaging Industrial Uses. Here's how we reported it then:

Signed on to N3C member's letter of concern re: continued problems with the Yakima Plan to Washington Department of Ecology's Office of the Columbia River.

In fact, it was a 40-page report addressed to the State Office of Financial Management, with footnotes, and it concerned protecting ancient forests, Wilderness and wildlife, and wildlife habit, rather than "industrial uses." Here's the full report:

In September 2024, N3C joined with Friends of Bumping Lake, Save Lake Kachess, Alpine Lakes Protection Society, Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs, Friends of Toppenish Creek, Middle Fork Outdoor Recreation Coalition (MidFORK), Wild Earth Guardians, Wilderness Watch, and the Wise Use Movement to submit a report on the Department of Ecology/Office of Columbia River (2017-2024) to the Washington Office of Financial Management. The report requested a review and performance audit of the Department of Ecology's FY 25-27 Budget Requests for uneconomical and environmentally damaging new water projects in Washington State, including the Alpine Lakes Wilderness and adjacent to the William O. Douglas Wilderness.

Read the report here:

https://northcascades.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Ecology-OCR-Report-2017-2024-September-9-2024.pdf

PROTECTING ANCIENT AND LEGACY 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.*

☑ Attended virtual oral arguments before the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals regarding our appeal of the lower court decision on the Twisp "Restoration" Project. *See page 22*.

☑ Signed on to WaWild letter regarding Trust Land Transfer urging the Washington State Legislature to fully fund Gov. Inslee and the Department of Natural Resources 2025 budget request for $30 million through DNR's Trust Land Transfer program for 8 TLT projects.

☑ Contributed $5k to Trust Land Transfer advocate Jim Freeburg for advocacy and lobbying work. He and others attended TLT Lobby Day in Olympia 2/19/25. Beckler River parcel is top priority, followed by Cascade River. *See page 14.*

☑ Signed follow-up letter by Wild Earth Guardians to Region 6 Forester Buchanan regarding old growth, outlining differences between Mt. Hood and Gifford Pinchot and the need to ensure forests within the Region are consistently following correct standards.

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.*

☑ N3C President interviewed by *Washington State Standard* regarding NPS firings by Trump/Musk. *See page 16*.

Want to take actions that protect the North Cascades?

Join the N3C board.

Contact Phil Fenner for details at philf@northcascades.org

☑ Sent letter of recommendations to Darrington district ranger on Stilly logging "Comments and Recommendations re the SF and NF Stillaguamish Veg Projects," asking for specific improvements to these projects to reduce harmful environmental impacts. *See page 11*.

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.*

☑ Monitoring plans for grizzly bear reintroduction to N. Cascades ecosystem.

Join our N3C Facebook page!

We're up to 718 followers and growing. Help us build our clout by friending us and then recommending our page to your friends concerned about preserving the North Cascades.

721 people like this

☑ Attended virtual public meeting on Northwest Forest Plan revisions as part of preparation to submit formal comments opposing some of the proposals such as those allowing cutting of larger, older trees.

End game for the Skagit River Project relicensing?

By David Fluharty

Image by Alexei from Pixabay

Loyal readers of *TWC* have seen a continuous flow of updates since Seattle City Light (SCL) initiated a pre-licensing negotiation in 2019, formal license negotiations 2020, studies and meetings 2021-2023 and then in the middle of summer 2024 the cessation of public meetings of the so-called "Comprehensive Table" and the convening of negotiations limited to specific entities, i.e., a "Partners Table" consisting of Tribes (Upper Skagit Indian Tribe, Sauk-Suiattle Indian Tribe, and Swinomish Tribe) with Treaty Rights, Federal and State Agencies which have Conditioning Authority and SCL. A cone of silence (confidentiality agreement) has limited the ability of parties to discuss anything but their own positions. Other parties are not privy to what is being discussed in terms of the final Settlement Agreement. Thus, N3C and other Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO), for example, Trout Unlimited, North Cascades Institute, American Whitewater, Skagit Environmental Endowment Commission, National Parks and Conservation Association and others are very effectively excluded from expressing their concerns and suggestions for Settlement provisions. Note well, that no Canadian entities are part of the Partner Table discussion despite the indication that fish passage into the upper Skagit River in Canada is a high priority element of the Settlement Agreement. The NGO group has welcomed and benefitted from the participation of interested Canadian Tribal colleagues.

SCL has submitted its "Draft" Settlement Plan to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) and has twice requested extension of the deadline for submission of the final Settlement Agreement, which was originally targeted for October 2024, then December 2024 and now, March 2025. FERC has permitted these extension as requested because the Partners Table claims that it is making progress toward a Settlement Agreement. (The current 30-year Skagit Project License ends in April 2025. SCL is requesting a 50-year license to coincide more or less with the end of the agreement with British Columbia for purchase of hydroelectricity instead of raising Ross Dam).

After FERC receives a final Settlement Agreement, FERC is responsible for reviewing it with respect to federal standards and guidelines including a full evaluation of the environmental impacts of issuing a license for the proposed actions under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). However, that is what federal law, process and practice is assumed to be. Under the current Presidential administration there is significant uncertainty about assuming normal practice. In fact, N3C has found no one who will hazard an opinion as to the fate of FERC and its regulatory responsibilities in the new administration. For all we know, there could be business as usual at FERC or the new order could be as radical as the idea that Canada becomes the 51st State—a fate to which not much credence is given but has been proposed.

Are we approaching the end game for the relicensing of the Skagit Project? Frankly, N3C does not know. Even under normal practice there is a long way to go before a Settlement Agreement can be worked out among the key parties. Because SCL wants a Settlement Agreement signed by all license participants including NGOs, SCL granted a two-hour meeting to discuss the status of the negotiations. N3C received very little detail about plans or firm projects, proposed costs, responsibilities, dispute resolution, contingencies, etc. SCL is now realizing that even license process participants like N3C may have concerns, e.g., about the environmental impacts of proposed actions, that are not being addressed by the Tribes or agencies in the Settlement Agreement. Under FERC regulations parties that are not satisfied with the Settlement Agreement have options to raise those concerns for resolution by FERC. Even if all the NGO concerns are surprisingly met in a final Settlement Agreement, N3C needs adequate time to review and assess the provisions of the Settlement Agreement to make that determination. Without access to the Settlement Agreement itself there will likely be a lot of pressure put on N3C and others to sign. At this point N3C can only assure our members that we won't sign a blank check. We will continue to fight for maximum protection of the North Cascades ecosystem for future generations.

Geologic stability of Skagit Gorge

Dr. J.L. Riedel, Geologist, October, 2024

N3C is very concerned about a proposal by Seattle City Light (SCL) in its publicly available Application for License to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. SCL proposes to build a new road from Highway 20 down to Ross Reservoir through a roadless area on a steep slope which hosts intact ancient forest and a watercourse. While negotiations are still ongoing which exclude N3C as a party, we can assume this new road will be part of the Settlement Agreement for the new license. Studies of the geomorphology of the road route, like the one we present below, show the slope is extremely unstable and would be a risky (and expensive) place to build a road with many detrimental impacts.—Ed

Skagit Gorge is one of the deepest and longest canyons in the North Cascades, a mountain range of exceptional relief and scenery that is viewed by more than a million visitors a year. The Gorge is a relatively young feature compared to the adjacent mountains and formed during initial Pleistocene continental glaciations ~2 M years ago (Simon-Labric et al. 2014). Skagit Gorge cuts across a former regional hydrologic divide breached by the spill-over of glacial lakes trapped in valleys to the north (Riedel et al. 2007). The erosion of a regional divide at Skagit Gorge joined the formerly Fraser-bound upper Skagit River with the westward flowing lower Skagit. Another important result of this process is that the upper Skagit Valley has no mountain barriers between it and the Fraser and Okanogan basins to the north. Parts of these large rivers temporarily joined Skagit River during the last ice age, providing an avenue for fish migration and further deepening Skagit Gorge, perhaps resulting in the incision of the broad shelf cut by the most recent passage of the ice sheet between 18,000 and 14,000 years ago (Photo 1).

The Gorge has two distinct morphologies separated by a sharp bend in the river at Diablo (Map 1). Upper

Photo 1. Skagit Gorge at the site of Diablo Dam. Note the incision of narrow (20 ft. wide) inner canyon into the broader rock valley floor above.

Skagit Gorge above Diablo Dam bears the erosional scars left by the ice sheet in the form of glacially scoured bedrock benches and hillsides on the lower canyon walls. A narrow canyon cuts below the glacial rock benches, forming an inner gorge known as Diablo Canyon where Diablo and Ross Dams are seated (Photo 1). The lower Gorge is a particularly large V-shaped canyon and lacks the extensive bedrock benches of the upper Gorge. The walls of Skagit Gorge rise steeply above the river to more than a mile above the river at the west end. Near-vertical walls of an inner Gorge rise about 300 ft. above the river in the upper Gorge.

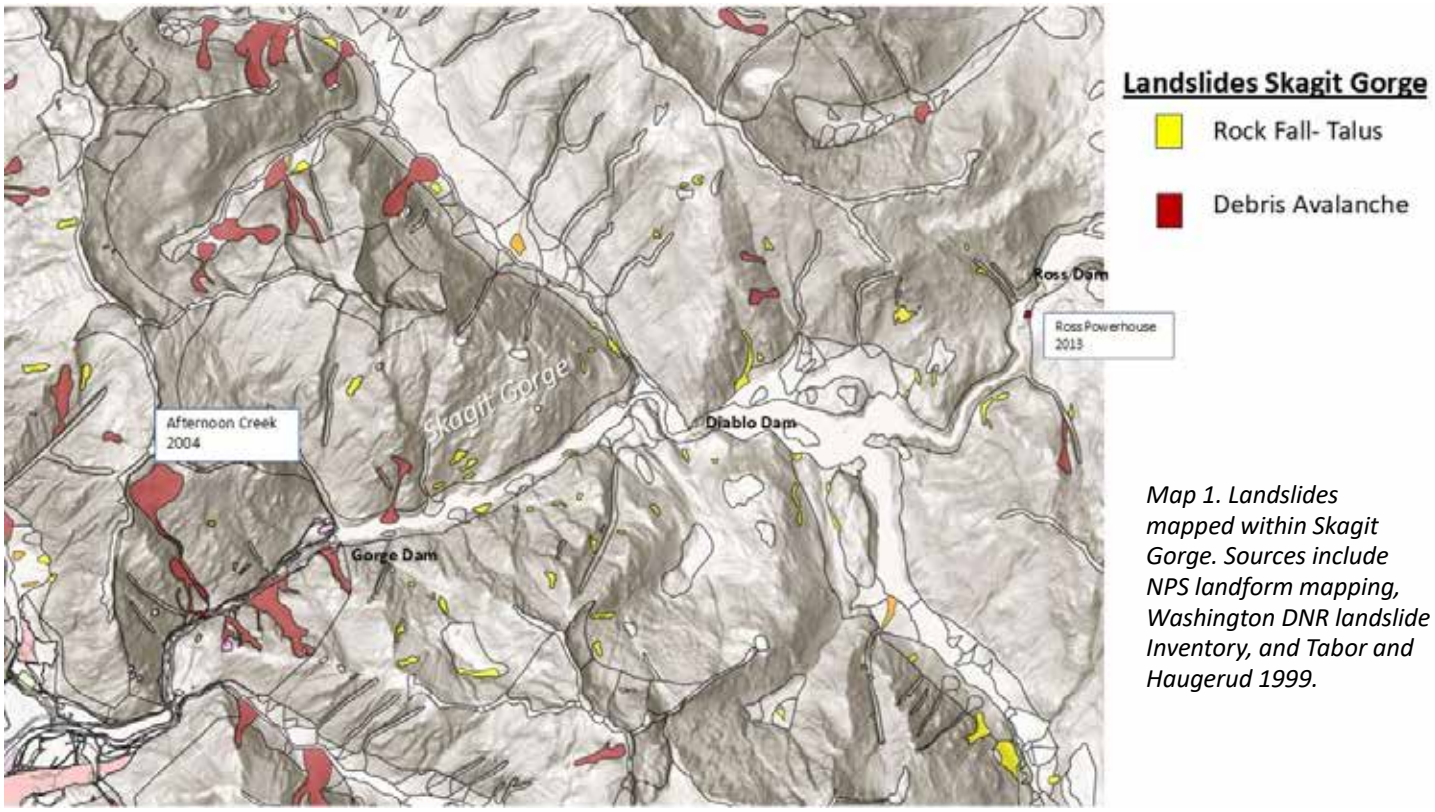
Several tributary streams further segment the Gorge, the largest having their own deep canyons (e.g. lower Stetattle Creek, Thunder Arm). These smaller canyons were deeply eroded as their base level was lowered by the rapid ice-age cutting of Skagit Gorge. Several follow faults, including Sourdough, Rhode, and Gorge creeks. The smaller streams leave debris cones or alluvial fans where they meet Skagit River, and funnel snow avalanches down to the gorge floor.

The bedrock of Skagit Gorge is Skagit Gneiss. SCL relicensing study GE-02 identified Skagit Gneiss as having the highest relative hazard ranking for rock falls within the entire project area from the Canadian border to Seattle. There are two distinct types of Skagit Gneiss, a metamorphic rock, including paragneiss and orthogneiss. Lower Skagit Gorge is composed of orthogneiss, metamorphosed from granitic rocks (Tabor and Haugerud 1999). Most of the large landslide scars mapped by NPS in Skagit Gorge occur in the orthogneiss (Map 1). The cluster of landslides in the orthogneiss includes six large failures (Map 1). Incessant rock falls and the remains of these landslides choke the riverbed within lower Skagit Gorge.

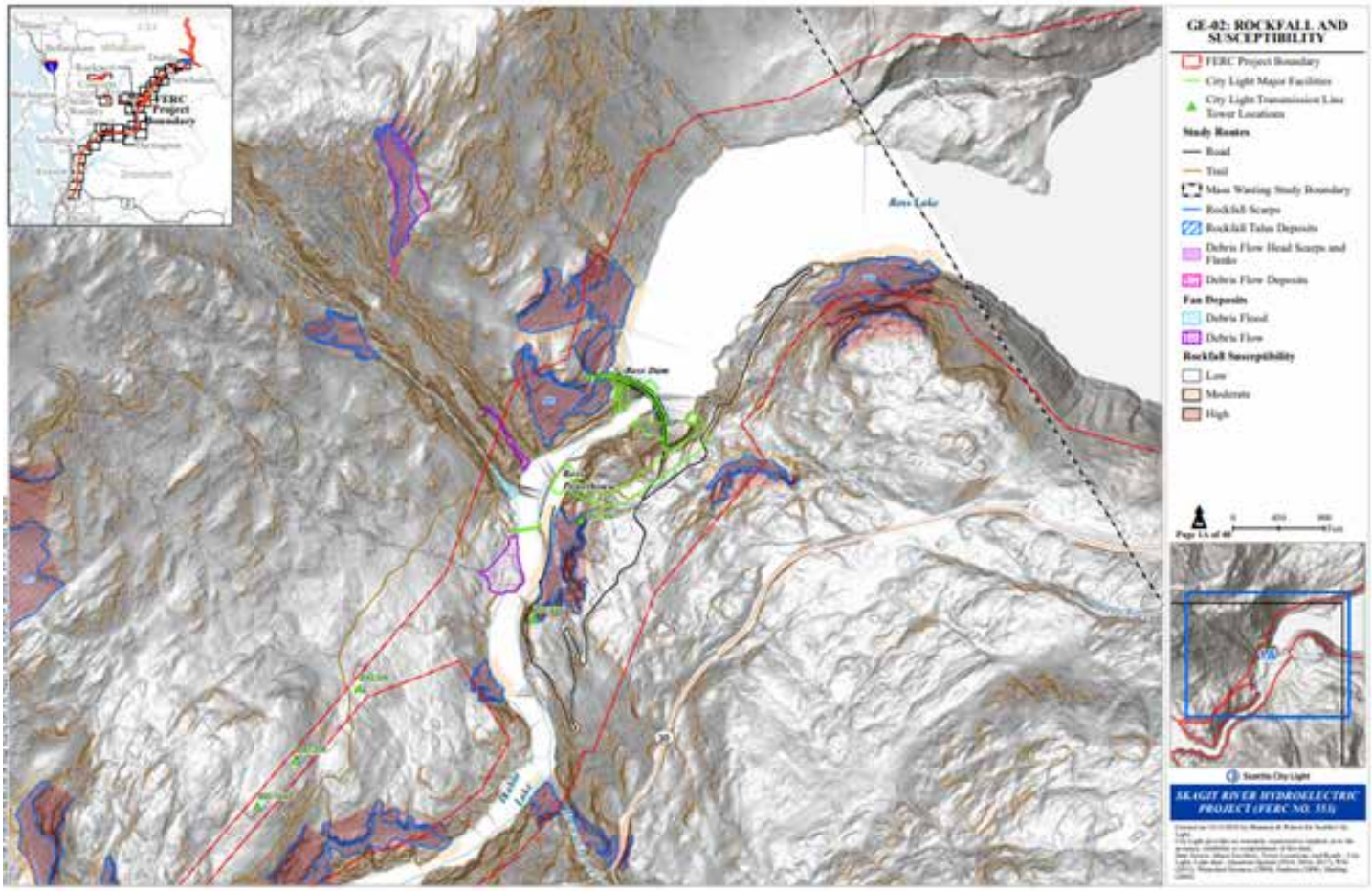
Upper Skagit Gorge is composed of paragneiss, or banded gneiss, which was metamorphosed from sedimentary rocks. The formerly horizontal bedding planes of the sedimentary rock are now tilted vertically within upper Skagit Gorge, leading to steep bedding planes between bands of the gneiss. Some of the rocks dip as high as 85 degrees near Ross Dam (Tabor et al. 2003). These act as failure planes for landslides, particularly rock falls and topples.

Bedrock slope instability in Skagit Gorge is illustrated by several recent landslides, including a 2013 slide near Ross Powerhouse (Map 2; Photo 2), a 2003 landslide at Afternoon Creek (Photo 3), rock falls at Diablo Powerhouse in 2006, and at numerous other sites in the Gorge (Map 1). All of these landslides were bedrock failures and involved little if any glacial or alluvial surficial deposits. Over-steepened slopes (cliffs) within the Gorge are

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8



Map 1. Landslides mapped within Skagit Gorge. Sources include NPS landform mapping, Washington DNR landslide Inventory, and Tabor and Haugerud 1999.



Map 2. Geologic hazards near Ross Dam as mapped in SCL study Ge-04. The 2003 landslide occurred from the walls of the inner gorge, and is located just to the south of Ross Powerhouse (blue cross-hatch).

Photo 2. Debris avalanche in 2013 just below Ross Powerhouse in Skagit Gorge.

ALL PHOTOS BY DR. J.L. RIEDEL

particularly prone to mass failure by rock falls and rock avalanches.

Debris flows are another class of landslides that represent a considerable hazard in Skagit Gorge. More than a dozen debris-flow tracts flow down the walls of Skagit Gorge, with two of the most active being Sourdough Creek and Afternoon Creek (Map 1). NPS mapping distinguishes debris cones from alluvial fans. The former have steep surface slopes (> 10 degrees) and are formed primarily by the accumulation of sediment from mass movements. Alluvial fans generally slope < 5 degrees and are formed by the accumulation of stream deposits by larger, lower gradient Skagit tributaries.

In summary, Skagit Gorge is an unstable place prone to several classes of landslides. SCL and others recognized the risk and cost of building roads in the Gorge for 100 years, as illustrated by the inclined lift in Diablo and a century of barging material on Diablo Lake to Ross Dam and Powerhouse. Scars from rock falls on State Highway 20 in the Gorge and frequent road closure due to snow avalanche danger are other reminders.

Photo 3. View into Skagit Gorge along the path of the November 9, 2003 Afternoon Creek landslide, triggered by unusually heavy rainfall (Stroth et al. 2007). This slide was active in the mid-1900s according to anecdotal evidence.

When Ross Dam was constructed (1937-52), Highway 20 had not been built that far yet and the dam was built without road access to the site from above. When North Cascades National Park was designated in 1968 the Park Service proposed a road to Roland Point which was later dropped to maintain the remote wilderness feel along the shore of the reservoir and for many of the same geomorphic and financial reasons that this new road does not make sense today. N3C won the argument then and makes similar arguments today.—Ed

The full report with data table and references can be viewed here: https://tinyurl.com/GeoStability

Room to Roam:

Current Wildlife Studies in North Cascades National Park Service Complex

A presentation by Park biologist Roger Christophersen to a recent N3C board meeting.

https://tinyurl.com/NOCAanimals

Wallace Falls, near Gold Bar, is a familiar hike—usually a little less crowded in winter, Ken Wilcox explains in Hiking Snohomish County. *—Ken Wilcox photo*

Darrington District Ranger Camden Bruner at Perry Creek. Perry Ck is Rd 4063, used for a thinning operation. Now it's blocked by a log barrier and is slated for decommissioning after sale completion. —David L. Fluharty photo

Taking a look at "restoration": What's really happening on the S. Fork Stilly

By Phil Fenner and Kathy Johnson

N3C is skeptical of claims that thinning a forest, especially the practice of so-called "commercial thinning", will really do what its proponents say it will. The claim is made that taking out half the trees in a maturing stand will accelerate the growth of the remainder. It will take 100 years for that to be either proven or disproven, but generally we feel caution should be the watchword when experimenting. Furthermore, there is scientific evidence that supports leaving forests alone to "self-thin", and that slower tree growth is actually healthier. After all, that's common sense and follows Darwin's law of natural selection: the trees that survive will be the strongest, most disease resistant. When humans cut trees we don't necessarily know which trees to cull. But the economic pressures are pushing hard to proceed, and in fact the grand experiment has already started in the South Fork Stillaguamish watershed, with a whole suite of impacts.

N3C isn't often asked to come see a logging operation in progress, so we were pleasantly surprised when Camden Bruner, the Darrington District Ranger, invited us to come up and take a look at some of their cutting units above Verlot last fall. We went on two field trips, touring several locations each time, and saw some units that had been sold but not cut yet, others that had been cut over a year ago, and a few fresh ones. I mentioned the first of these trips in my Fall 2024 President's Letter, but I didn't take time to describe it further because that issue was going to press just days after our first tour and a second one was in the works.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

S. Fork Stilly

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

We went where the Ranger took us, so of course there's no way to know if we saw a truly representative sample of the units. But most of the units we saw looked to us like "messy clear-cuts," with some scraggly "leave trees" left standing in the cutover areas. All the areas that are being "treated" are second or third growth, in places previously cut as far back as the 1930s up to the 80s, so no truly ancient forest was affected. We were curious to see the sizes of the stumps, hoping not to see any very large ones. The largest one we saw was right by the road and adjacent to the unit, sloppily cut. Apparently, these small, remote cuts attract wildcatters who come in soon after and cut large trees along the margins of the cut so that they won't be noticed.

The roads needed for this project were a major concern of ours, too, as all such roads lead to erosion and siltation of watercourses that harms fish. Roads built for timber cutting can be worse than the cutting itself. Trees grow back, but roads just keep bleeding silt. And all roads attract vehicles and garbage, as well as corvids who prey on Marbled murrelet chicks. And most human-caused wildfires begin on roads. So, as we toured, we kept looking at and asking about the roads. Some of what we heard and saw was encouraging, such as small culverts pulled and replaced with large ones, temporary roads decommissioned and tank-traps and debris placed to block spur roads. More of the same is needed, though, and we saw some spur roads that should have been, and hopefully will yet be, decommissioned. All such roads should be decommissioned immediately after the units are cut, re-graded to the original slope. Waiting to decommission a road just means letting the erosion of the roadcut continue to do more harm the longer those roads remain. Like rust, erosion never sleeps.

TWC readers will recall that back in 2022 we took the Forest Service to court to try to send this project back for a full EIS. Although we lost that case, we argued that the agency hadn't committed to the immediate deactivation of temporary roads; and even though that was included in contracts to date at the time, there was no commitment or requirement for them to do that in the future. In response, the Forest Service committed to include that term in future contracts, so we have that as an effective commitment for the rest of the contracts. Any contracts signed after March 27, 2023 should include the stipulation that temp roads must be decommissioned immediately when they're no longer needed.

To quote from the final ruling:

…the government confirmed that the temporary roads will be decommissioned at the end of each contract, noting the "contracts expressly require the contractors to [do so]." And the government further confirmed that the future contracts for the Project will require decommissioning as the Project proceeds.

FS Timber Sale Administrator explains how this large stump was not cut by the logging contractor, but by timber thieves after the logging operation. It was cut adjacent to the logging area so it would appear to be part of it. —PHIL FENNER PHOTO

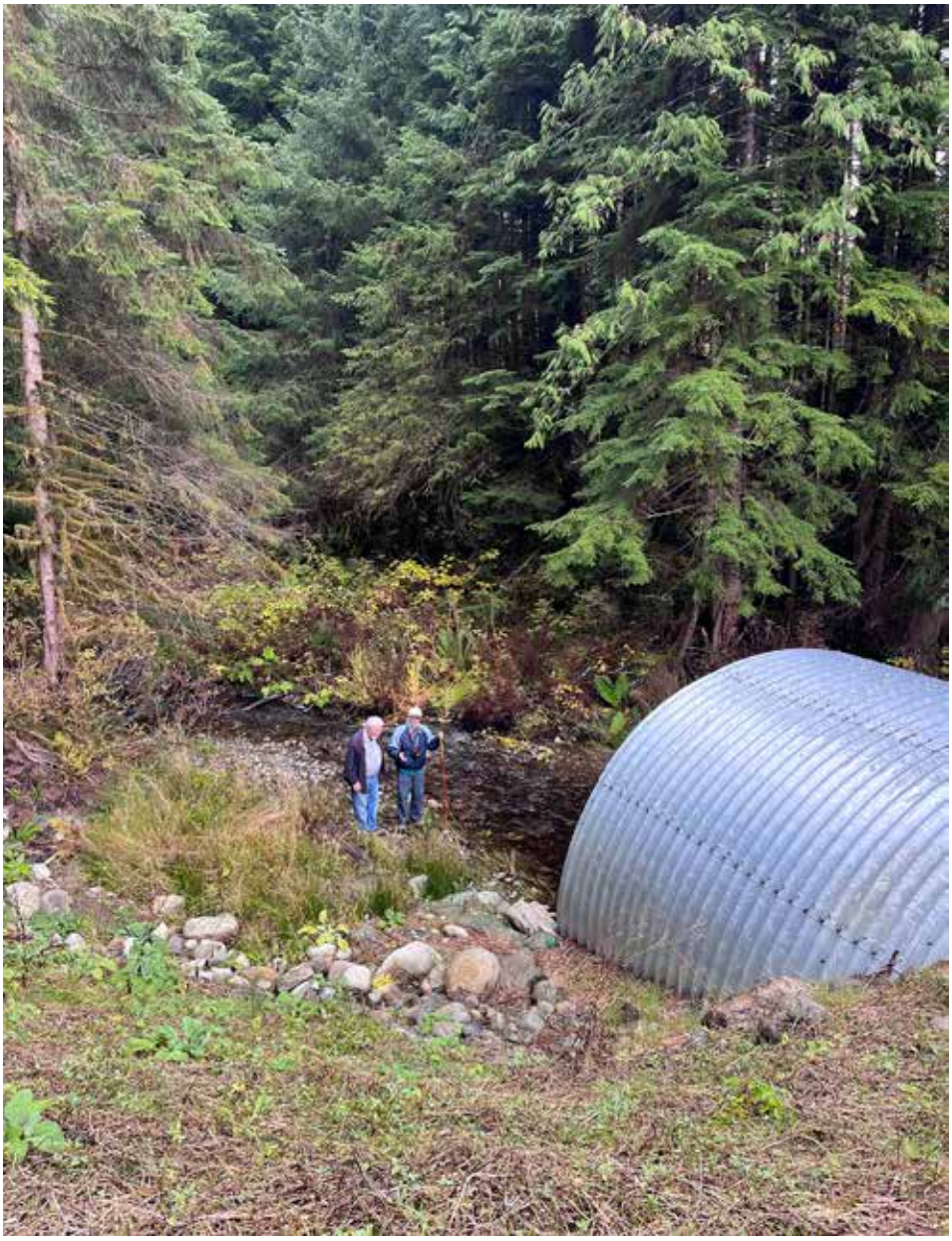
Some of the logged units still had slash piles left. The Ranger said they would be burned before the forest around them dries out next Spring. —DAVE FLUHARTY PHOTO

Read the full decision at https://tinyurl.com/SFStillyRuling

That was a success for the forest and especially for the watershed and aquatic ecosystem.

Our team of former Forest Service scientists is now evaluating the North Fk. Stillaguamish proposal and what we've learned and seen on the South Fk. will inform our work on the North Fk. proposal going forward. We want to thank Darrington District Ranger Camden Bruner for the opportunity to see and discuss these operations.

First tour (10/4/24) pictures: https://photos.app.goo.gl/b64mxso5SjEN-18Qw6
Second tour (11/8/24) pictures: https://photos.app.goo.gl/pZmSny9dkfzN-9sU96



A huge new culvert that replaced a small one as part of stewardship work. Large culverts like this allow streams to carry aquatic organisms including fish that were previously blocked by small culverts. —Phil Fenner photo

Give the gift of the North Cascades through our Gift Membership Program

Know someone who'd like to be part of N3C? Give them a one-year gift membership—and at a discount. Your friend will get a copy of *The Wild Cascades* immediately, as well as the next two issues.

Go to our website at www.northcascades.org and click on the new "Gift handover" icon on the home page. Enter the gift recipient's name and mailing address, then, enter your info under Credit Card Info. We suggest a $20 donation for a gift membership. Thanks, and give a friend the North Cascades now!

If you have questions, contact us at GiftMember@northcascades.org. If you lack internet access, simply cut out the membership card on page 23, complete your information, write "GIFT" across the top and attach a note with the name and mailing address of the gift recipient.

Beckler River TLT may be funded in 2025

Readers of *TWC* may recall that trust land transfer (TLT), a state conservation program, was revitalized under the leadership of the N3C over the last 5 years. The state legislature is now considering its funding level for the first time since the passage of legislation in 2023 that created a new framework for evaluating TLT projects. The N3C appreciates TLT's past contributions to conserve critical lands within and adjacent to the North Cascades ecosystem, especially the Morning Star Natural Resources Conservation Area (NRCA), which spans from southeast of Mt. Pilchuck to the Spada Lake Basin.

This year, the legislature will consider funding a project along the Beckler River—a section called Beckler Section 6—transferring 676 acres of state trust land to the Tulalip Tribes for long-term conservation. Dave Upthegrove, the state's new Commissioner of Public Lands, is especially interested in using TLT for more conservation of land managed by the state Department of Natural Resources (DNR). N3C remains committed to supporting this critical program, recognizing its vital role in preserving the wild heart of the North Cascades for future generations. We encourage our members to stay engaged by advocating for continued funding and raising awareness about the importance of trust land transfers.

And lucky for our state, trust land transfer is completely protected from the reach of President Trump's power-hungry DOGE as there are no federal funds involved.

RICK MCGUIRE PHOTO

Winter shelters proposal at Mount Baker cancelled for now

By Jim Scarborough

In spring 2024, four well-established backcountry recreation entities, including Aspire Adventure Running, Baker Mountain Guides, Round House Touring, and Whatcom County Snowmobiling Club, each simultaneously proposed construction of its own "temporary winter shelter" on the Mount Baker Ranger District of the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest. Aside from the snowmobiling club, the majority of these winter shelters, if realized, would result in expansion of these same entities' private enterprises on our public land. The structures would be located at Heliotrope, North Twin Sister, Watson-Anderson, and Bearpaw Mountain/Lake, respectively, at the termini of seasonally snowed-over forest roads.

Industrial-strength rec has proven to be as extractionist-minded as timber or mining

Operation of heated, overnight shelters as proposed would greatly increase already-exploding winter recreation across this formerly remote mountain terrain. It's not an exaggeration to report the Mount Baker Ranger District, among other regions of the Cascades, to be under an assault of human recreation, progressively consuming irreplaceable wildlands bit by bit. Consider, for example, the Mount Baker Ski Area's and U.S. Forest Service's recent expansion of the White Salmon parking lot, which destroyed not only centuries-old trees, but blasted an entire slope of living rock away beneath them. Or, a chilly, snow-dusted Saturday this past October, when so many were walking the Chain Lakes loop that it more resembled Las Ramblas in high tourist season than an experience with the natural world.

During the initial scoping phase for this proposal, N3C submitted comments to the Forest Service which simply highlighted the anticipated impacts of winter shelters to the survival of *Gulo gulo luscus*, the North American Wolverine, newly listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. Wolverine presence has been documented around Mount Baker and would necessitate a thorough analysis through the National Environmental Policy Act prior to any degradation of winter habitat occurring. Then, on January 7th of this year, District Ranger Ted Neff wrote a letter cancelling the initial proposal for these shelters, apparently basing his decision on opposition from regional tribes (primarily), along with the other 200+ commenters like N3C. Curiously, though, Neff's letter does not mention the North American Wolverine.

Unfortunately, as with most bad ideas that never seem to die, this does not appear to be the end of the winter shelters. Neff, in his letter, essentially spells out the sort of "stakeholder" outreach the shelters' proponents must make prior to submitting a revised proposal. Increasingly, Indigenous peoples—in this case the Tulalip Tribes, Lummi Nation, and Snoqualmie Indian Tribe—now constitute the most effective bulwark against our National Forests becoming little more than self-actualizing exercise yards for the moneyed elite. Industrial-strength rec has regrettably proven itself to be as extractionist-minded as the timber or mining industries. N3C, meanwhile, will stand by to remind the Forest Service that *Gulo gulo* has statutory protection, which will curtail the agency's usual impulse to develop the still-bountiful lands it manages on the public's behalf.

In Memoriam

William Ross Halliday 1926-2024

By Dave Fluharty

Dr. William Halliday was an early supporter of North Cascades Conservation Council (N3C) and remained actively engaged in National Park issues until his very last days. A gift from his estate will sustain N3C into the future.

Phil Fenner and I reconnected with Dr. Halliday at the 50th Anniversary Celebration of the Designation of North Cascades National Park Service Complex in the Newhalem Visitor Center in 2018 where Dr. Halliday was a guest speaker.

Dr. Halliday first shows up in a stirring letter to the editor of *N3C News* (June 1959):

We may be a small spearhead, but there is a tremendous body of public opinion which we have not even attempted to utilize, yet which remains immovable despite the strenuous efforts of the commercial opposition. Time is on THEIR side. We must not be hoodwinked. This is no time for fear, but the time for bold, vigorous and decisive action.

He was elected to the N3C Board in 1960 and served until 1968, advocating for wilderness protections in the Alpine Lakes and other areas. During that time Dr. Halliday was a very active participant on behalf of N3C and the Mountaineers and others in the North Cascades Study Report process (1965) and was appointed as a member of Governor Dan Evans "Governor's Study Committee on the North Cascades National Park" which recommended the designation of the national park as the State of Washington position.

It is interesting to note that Dr. Halliday cut a greater swath among the spelunking community at the state and national levels than he did among mountaineering circles, although he was an avid hiker and climber. He was author of *The Depths of the Earth: Caves and Cavers of the United States* (1966), *American Caves and Caving* (1966), *Adventure is Underground* (1959), and the definitive *Caves of Washington* (Washington Department of Natural Resources Information Circular No 40, 1963), which is now a collector's item. I remember him extolling the wonders of Cave Ridge on Granite Mountain near Snoqualmie Pass; however, I never did follow his detailed instructions on how to explore the area.

Dr. Halliday proudly shows that he made it to the entry sign of North Cascades National Park at High Bridge, 10 mi.+ from Stehekin Landing, despite his mobility impairment.
—Marcia Gojan photo

Dr. William Halliday was still a rabble-rouser when we reconnected in 2018. He was legally blind, and using a wheelchair he proudly showed that he was able to reach the South boundary of North Cascades National Park at High Bridge NW of Stehekin despite many obstacles he encountered on the way. This photograph was attached to a letter he wrote in 2020 to Karen Taylor-Goodrich, then Superintendent of the Park, copying N3C, complaining of the difficulties that the mobility-impaired experience trying to get into the Park Complex. Unfortunately the letter is almost unreadable, handwritten with a wide-tip marker in his unsteady hand but the force of his personality and care for all users of the national parks is clear. Thank you, Dr. Halliday for showing us the way to protect the North Cascades and for your continued support to N3C over the years.

More details of Halliday's distinguished life can be found in his obituary [https://www.pattonfuneralhome.com/obituaries/william-halliday-md] and a video characterization of his life [https://www.pattonfuneralhome.com/obituaries/william-halliday-md]. His papers are found at the University of Washington, Pacific Northwest Archives and https://archiveswest.orbiscascades.org.

N3C pushes back against the Trump/ Musk gutting of National Park Service staff

N3Cs president Phil Fenner was quoted in the Washington State Standard on February 20, 2025.

At the North Cascades National Park, advocates had previously been sounding the alarm over lack of staffing. The North Cascades Conservation Council recently circulated a petition to reopen the visitor center in Stehekin after it was indefinitely shuttered last year.

"It is appalling to us to see the Park Service, known as 'America's best idea,' gutted of staff crucial to the visitor experience by what will doubtless be known as 'America's worst idea," said the conservation council's president, Phil Fenner.

It's great to be the expert quoted—but more is needed. Thanks to public uproar over firings and staffing cuts, the National Park Service has announced plans to restore jobs, including hiring 7,700 seasonal employees.

However, there's no commitment that any of those restored positions will be in Stehekin! Now is the time for us to double down on our calls for staffing in Stehekin. Please sign our petition and send it to at least 5 friends.

1. **Sign our new petition here, calling on the federal government to fully staff Stehekin and to open the visitor center:** https://tinyurl.com/StehekinRangers
2. **Share this petition** with friends, urging them to sign and circulate as well.

Preparing for what's next for northwest public lands

By Hayden Wyatt, N3C policy advisor

The new administration has brought chaos and uncertainty to the well-worn process for environmental advocacy to protect our national forests. My work as N3C's Policy Advisor has focused on engaging with the environmental review process conducted for the national forest projects. All the projects N3C is engaged in began long before the Trump administration. Most of them are in various phases of the environmental review process. The next steps in this process have traditionally been predictable and concrete. Although we have not confirmed that the new administration's disruptions have trickled down to the national forest project level, we are seeing significant delays.

In the face of uncertainty and delays we have taken this time to build connections with other non-profits and prepare for whatever happens next. I have been working closely with N3C president Philip Fenner and N3C member and consultant Barry Gall on three projects. First, the North Fork Stillaguamish Landscape Analysis, which targets the logging of old growth near Darrington. Second, the amendment to the Northwest Forest Plan, a regional directive that governs all the national forests in the North Cascades. Finally, the Midnight Project outside of Twisp, another example of the Forest Service attempt to cultivate old growth by first cutting it down.

For the North Fork Stillaguamish Project, my work is building on the advocacy of N3C members Barry Gall, Roger Nichols, Jim Doyle, and Brady Green, who were actively involved in every phase of the environmental review process. Over the last several months, I have worked with them to consolidate their comments and reach out to like-minded organizations to build further opposition to the project.

The NWFP, established in 1994, was designed to protect old-growth forests and ensure a balanced approach to resource management across federal lands in the Pacific Northwest. The Forest Service is currently proposing substantial amendments. Although some are needed updates, aspects of the amendment raise serious environmental concerns. Barry and I have been taking a detailed review of these proposed changes, assessing their implications for wildlife and old growth. We will submit our review to the Forest Service in March.

Finally, I have continued to track the proposed Midnight Project on the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest near Twisp. The project proposes to thin and burn vast areas of old growth along the Twisp River. Thinning and prescribed fire can be useful tools for restoring historic conditions, but N3C strongly believes there is no place, or need, for them in old growth. We have continued to dive into the environmental review documents for the project to spot environmental deficiencies and fact check the Forest Service's science. Like North Fork Stillaguamish, we have used the extra time caused by delays to build relationships with other groups concerned with Midnight.

The ancient trees of the northwest have survived a lot, but they will need our support more than ever over the next four years. We live in unprecedented and unpredictable times. As the new administration attempts to dismantle environmental regulations and government agencies, we will continue to advocate for the protection of public lands.

The rapid transition: from bedrock environmental law to uncertain future

By Hayden Wyatt

Passed in 1970, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) has remained one of the most far-reaching federal environmental laws for over 50 years. It was the brainchild of Washington senator Henry "Scoop" Jackson, who introduced the bill creating the Act in February 1969, just after he led the North Cascades Act to fruition under LBJ.

NEPA requires every federal agency to take a "look-before-you-leap" approach to every major project that affects the environment. This legal requirement is colloquially known as an environmental review, ensuring agencies have considered the implications of their proposed actions.

Like many statutes passed by Congress, legislators exercised humility and brevity by keeping NEPA relatively simple. In doing this, Congress acknowledged that the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) and other federal agencies were better positioned to know what should be included in an environmental review. NEPA empowered CEQ and other federal agencies to design a system that would ensure that environmental concerns were appropriately analyzed and disclosed to the public.

Since 1978, CEQ has taken the lead on developing regulations implementing NEPA. By doing this CEQ helps ensure that the NEPA process is consistent across federal agencies. Under this structure agencies may still develop their own protocol so long as they meet minimum requirement. CEQ's NEPA regulations functioned as a quality control on all agencies environmental review process.

The D.C. Circuit Court last November undermined the long-held belief that CEQ could issue NEPA regulations. In *Marin Audubon Society v. FAA*, the court ruled that CEQ does not have the authority to issue regulations under NEPA. Despite this disastrous ruling, many held out hope that further judicial review by other courts might hold otherwise.

Only 2 months from bedrock to elimination

These hopes were largely squashed when Donald Trump took office and ordered CEQ to rescind its NEPA regulations. On February 19, CEQ issued a notice that it intends to rescind all its NEPA regulations. Though this will not take immediate effect, once it does it will effectively eliminate regulations which have served the environment and public for 47 years. The removal of CEQ's NEPA regulations does not affect the statutory requirement for every agency to comply with NEPA, rather it will remove the quality control and consistency of agencies' environmental reviews.

In a little over two months bedrock environmental laws developed by CEQ went from a pillar of the environmental review process to effectively eliminated. The magnitude of the *Marin Audubon* case and the Trump directives to CEQ cannot be overstated. The future of sound agency environmental review and public participation is left in serious question.

The SCOTUS shift from *Chevron* to *Loper* and how it will affect environmental agencies

By Dave Fluharty

What's the problem?

The Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS) in June 2024 overturned 40 years of judicial precedent by ruling that courts would no longer defer to federal agencies interpretations of statutes. The overturned case was *Chevron v. NRDC*, which required judges to defer to reasonable agency interpretations of ambiguous federal statutes. The court's 2024 ruling in *Loper Bright Enterprises v. Raimondo* (a suit challenging fishing regulations) held that judges must make all determinations of law and therefore should not defer to agencies interpretations of statutes. For the last four decades in the judicial review of agency decisions, courts have deferred to the expertise of agency when interpreting statutes. This was environmentally beneficial in many lawsuits where Congress passed legislation that was intended to protect the environment or resolve an environmental problem but was not specific about the standard to be met. The decision in Loper will shift significant power from agencies to the judges.

What's it to N3C?

Chevron's judicial deference to administrative agencies may have led to more stringent regulations than extractive users of resources and environment want to accept but it has generally served the environment well. However, *Chevron* was sometimes a concern to forest environmen-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18

Who was John Warth?

By Phil Fenner

The early history of N3C has mostly been well documented, and its early board members' names are already "up in lights" in Harvey Manning's magnum opus, *Wilderness Alps* and elsewhere. But a few seemed to have glowed brightly then suddenly gone out and fallen into obscurity. I'm hoping to revive the name of one of them, John Warth, a founding board member in 1957 who stayed on until 1968.

The most remarkable legacy of his time at N3C was a pair of photo-journals, thick books homemade on a photocopier, of pictures with lots of text. Flip the pages and you can follow his whole environmental career from a very long bike ride on a simple old 1-speed bike from Spokane to Leavenworth, through all sorts of mountain climbs, his marriage and more hikes and expeditions, the arrival of his daughter and her time outdoors with them. These photo journals are truly priceless.

We owe it to our founder, Patrick Goldsworthy, for saving them, and to Patrick's widow Christine White for donating his collection to N3C. I read and re-read Warth's photo books and each time I saw pictures of his daughter, I thought how amazing it would be to get in touch with her, but no matter how many web searches I did there seemed to be no trace, probably due to a surname change with marriage.

Then on my most recent pass I noticed something I hadn't before—a photo and caption where he introduces his nephew and climbing partner, at the time a newly minted heart surgeon, and his name did appear on some searches.

Ultimately, I was able to contact the nephew, who led me to the daughter! In coming issues, we hope to have some of John's slides scanned, but in the meantime we scanned his North Cascades book and have pulled a series of his articles out of early issues of *NCCC News*, the predecessor to *The Wild Cascades*, and put them online. He was a multi-talented individual, excelling at both photography and writing. You can access the material we've digitized so far at the link below. Future issues will include more of his photography and writing!

https://tinyurl.com/WarthNCascades

See photos on p. 22

The SCOTUS shift

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 17

tal groups like N3C, who often argue that the science used by administrative agencies is out of date, incomplete, or just plain wrong. Most recently, N3C experienced judges deferring to the US Forest Service over the adequacy of the scientific and technical analysis in the decision for the Twisp Restoration Project (TRP) case, as previously reported in *The Wild Cascades*. After *Loper* will judges be more inclined to take on the burden of independently interpreting scientific and technical issues? Time will tell.

What to expect next?

The jury is out among legal experts.* Some have argued that SCOTUS was already ignoring *Chevron* for the last decade, instead employing other legal doctrines and legal exceptions. But as seen in TRP, the *Chevron* doctrine was alive and well in lower courts. Some expect the courts to be swamped with plaintiffs relitigating cases decided earlier based on a deference to agency interpretation. Other observers cite the need for courts to figure out how they are going to develop scientific and technical expertise to make informed decisions independently or with "friends of the court." Finally, Congress may need to develop greater scientific and technical capacities to specify standards and rules to clearly direct administrative action.

The *Loper* decision is the latest case in a trend in which the SCOTUS overturns well-established legal precedence. This unnerving trend has recently been shadowed by a growing concern that the president might overturn all laws.

** Thanks to Hayden Wyatt and Phil Fenner for cogent review and comments on this article. Also T. Harris, and R. Alexander, "Science in a shifting policy system" Science 11 October, 2024 Vol. 386. Issue 6717, p. 125. 10.1126/science.adt5684; A. Krupnick, J. Linn, and N. Richardson, "Après Chevron, Judges Rule," RFF, Resources for the Future, Winter, No 217, 2025.*

Book Review
Hiking Snohomish County (3rd Ed.)
by Ken Wilcox

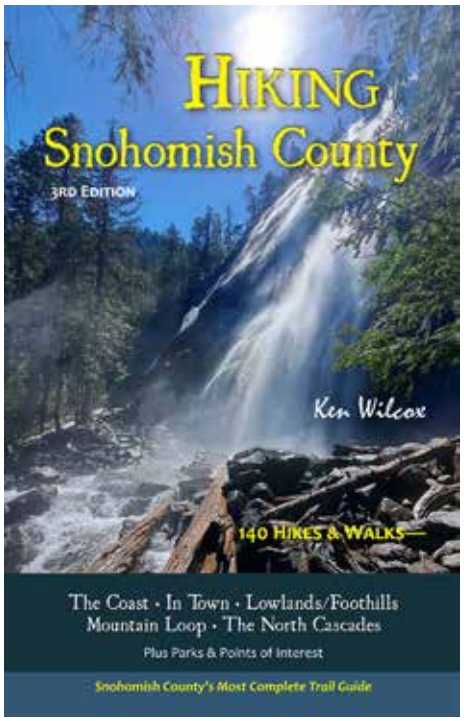
Reviewed by David Fluharty

Some things keep getting better and better with time. That is the case with N3C board member Ken Wilcox's hiking guides to Snohomish County. First published in 1998 with 90 hikes and re-issued in 2007 with 110 hikes, the third edition of *Hiking Snohomish County* published last summer contains an impressive 140 hikes and walks. With new hikes and revised access and trail descriptions, the latest guide is worth the price of the upgrade and update. It saves time hunting for access and opens a lot of new territory. To those who have come to know or are just getting to know the area, this guidebook gives much needed advice about the year-round hiking opportunities in lowland SnoCo and when to start gearing up for the summit hikes during the spring, summer and fall.

I find there are constant improvements in each edition. For example, in this edition the author has designed a clever, easy to use decision-making matrix to help readers choose a hike that meets their ambitions, level of fitness, appropriateness for kids, and indicates if a hike has an initial stretch that lends itself to being an attractive shorter hike. The practical tips that introduce the hikes combined with words of caution and enticing natural history observations make for an altogether user-friendly hiking companion. Up-to-date information on trailhead and trail amenities can be invaluable. Need I say more?

Most important in a guidebook is the prose. With the lively writing style that Wilcox has developed, he informs and invites us to tag along:

Continental glaciers thousands of feet thick carved out much of the Puget Sound region over the past 13,000-25,000 years, then melting ice and huge meltwater rivers dumped thick layers of ***sediment over*** *much of what we call the lowlands of northwest Washington. As the ice retreated and the climate moderated, vast forests gradually reclaimed the land. Wildlife, salmon and humans followed. The land, free of this enormous burden of ice, went into rebound as if someone took seven thousand years to step off a 400-foot trampoline. But the sea rose almost as quickly, fed by the melting continental and sea ice.*



The organization around geographic features makes it easy to decide how far one wants to drive and whether to seek a coastal, in-town, lowland, Mountain Loop, or North Cascades hike. Hikes are listed by geographic groups in the Contents and alphabetically in the Index. Large-scale maps make it simple to locate hikes by numbers. The individual trail route descriptions provide detailed maps to reach related trailheads. I will admit that I would have liked primary roads to have been inked in more prominently because they are very faint on the large site maps. This small criticism is more than offset by the excellent trail maps, new higher-quality photos, and interesting route descriptions for every hike.

As a bonus, Wilcox expanded the final chapter on other hikes and historical tidbits that you would never know about—what the late local author Tom Robbins termed "other roadside attractions." This chapter is not to be missed because it provides context for the diverse and complex region that SnoCo constitutes. I doubt there is anyone who has spent more time tramping around the low and high trails of SnoCo. Wilcox makes a most experienced and trustworthy guide to inform our travels.

Hiking guides have been criticized for bringing overuse and disrespectful use of scenic areas. Wilcox sees the publication of *Hiking Snohomish County* as one way to disperse use and to encourage respectful use. It is pretty clear that Wilcox does not anticipate that major new trails are likely to be constructed but as a professional trail planner and designer, he suggests ways to make more river-fronting lands accessible and advocates for devising loop trails and connecting trails in networks. Wilcox writes,

We can't all rely on the wilderness as one big happy playground dedicated to our weekend whims, nor should we presume that less pristine areas are any less sensitive to our numbers or our carelessness. Yet we can enjoy these areas as concerned humans, and learn to explore them in ways that keep them intact and unspoiled. We can learn to coexist with wildlife and the land. We can care about the place. And we can encourage others to do the same.

Follow Ken Wilcox on his hiking adventures at
https://open.substack.com/pub/kenwx

A place for thrush

By Jim Scarborough

Lane Wintermute/USFWS

Warm mug of tea in hand, let us momentarily forget the long, dark winter through which we've slogged and slip instead into a reverie of summers past. Eyes closed to our immediate surroundings, we reopen the mind's eye to one of the great green valleys of the North Cascades at its annual peak of fecundity. Perhaps your recollection is of Baker River, Big Beaver Creek, Downey Creek, North Fork Sauk River, or any other of the forest cathedrals which have succeeded in permanently imprinting themselves upon the consciousness.

It's not yet dusk on this day of summer freedom, though the sun has already retreated beneath the ridgeline, the air has perceptibly cooled, and there's another hour or so of walking to reach the trailhead. Then, abruptly, one hears the first murmur from somewhere high in the forest canopy. This peculiar voice initially seems tentative, but soon another is heard from a different direction, louder and more assertive. The towering trees grow ever larger as elevation is lost, and eventually these haunting, single-note calls are multi-directional, bold and frequent enough to overpower even the ubiquitous sound of rushing snowmelt.

It is at this point in the evening that the ancient forests of the North Cascades rise up beyond the complex mechanics of a rare ecological marvel, having now also attained the power of enchantment. Seemingly disparate threads of existence, the illusion of self and other, are rewoven into an indissoluble arras of which we are inextricably part. For this fleeting moment, awe yields a quiet comprehension, and so we continue our stride downvalley in a state of unrivaled peace. For this, we can thank the shy and lovely Ixoreus naevius, otherwise known as the Varied Thrush.

With a slight start, eyes open again to find us sitting passively indoors. Our tea is now tepid, and the view outside our window still retains the gray dormancy of interminable winter. There's a distant sound of internal combustion engines and the barking of dogs, along with views of asphalt surfaces, imposing edifices, and sterile, overly tended yards. The North Cascades valley and its promise of wholeness is once again far away.

Or is it? In a tangle of vegetation persisting in an untended corner of the parcel on which we regularly pass these dank, abbreviated days, a small, shadowy figure roots through the unraked detritus for meager sustenance. We locate our binoculars and discern plumage of burnt orange, divided by a patterned blue-gray. The Varied Thrush has come to visit us! Or more accurately, it has fled the snowy, stormy desolation of its mountain valley for the lowlands we inhabit in a desperate bid to survive the lean time. It must somehow make it through this dark seasonal tunnel in order to return to the towering firs in the months ahead to raise a new brood, whereupon it will sublimely sing again from the highest perch.

Alert observers will often note a rapid influx of our avian friends into human-dominated landscapes starting in late autumn, when the first big weather event hits. Along with the secretive Varied Thrush come hordes of Dark-Eyed Junco, no scarcity of Steller's Jay, an assortment of Red-Breasted Nuthatch, industrious quantities of Black-Capped and Chestnut-Backed Chickadees, and potentially the likes of Pacific-Slope Flycatcher or Wilson's Warbler pausing during migration, among numerous others.

These wild birds are as integral to and characteristic of the North Cascades as the biggest western red cedar, and herein lies the opportunity to maintain connectedness with our cherished mountain range year-round, physically and metaphysically, without need for snow tires or skis. Even the smallest scrap of terrain within our sphere of influence has potential for attracting and aiding these feathered paragons of evolution in their time of need. This is largely just a matter of planting native species wherever they might fit, then allowing their shed foliage in autumn to accumulate. In this undisturbed duff, a wondrous diversity of invertebrates will invariably result. These wee creatures, plus extant seeds on and near the native plants themselves, augmented by the vegetative cover, are the stuff of avian survival.

A typical example is a westside, semi-urban lot of five thousand square feet, with dwellings taking up a bit over a third of the total. A pair of conifers, western hemlock and Douglas-fir, complemented by blue elderberry, oversee a variety of shrubs consisting of red currant, mock orange, buffaloberry, twinberry, trumpet honeysuckle, evergreen huckleberry, Nootka rose, beaked hazelnut, snowberry, Indian plum, salal, Oregon grape, black hawthorn, saskatoon, ocean spray and, most beneficial of all, red osier dogwood – a veritable bird magnet. Sword, lady, and maybe even deer ferns help round out the scene, along with forbs such as Pacific waterleaf, wild lily of the valley, wild ginger, red columbine, and fringecup.

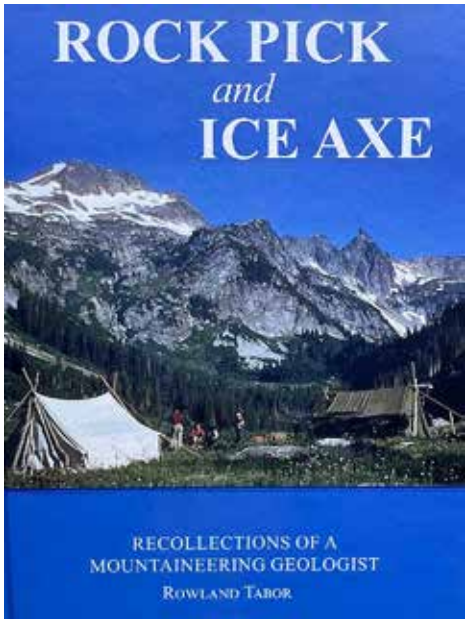
Presto! Winter habitat for wild North Cascades birds has been created, and with the sort of hardy native species that can survive and even thrive despite the intrinsic harshness of developed environments. It's a good deed, a selfless act, but accompanied also by long-term reward for the thoughtful steward who made it possible. The malaise of modern life has no more central contributor than a sense of alienation from the natural world which nonetheless produced us. A small act of helping mend this shredded fabric is felt and savored down to one's marrow. The path leading from the modest backyard refuge to the verdant mountain valley is clear and ready to be walked or, depending on the animal, flown.

Book Review
Rock Pick and Ice Axe: Recollections of a Mountaineering Geologist
By Rowland Tabor, 2022, self-published by Kajsa Eckelmeyer

Reviewed by Philip Fenner

This book is incredible on so many levels, I couldn't bear to put it down once I started. I just kept thinking "what a life!" Rowland Tabor was THE preeminent modern geologist of the North Cascades, and he took on the role of popularizer of the science in his spare time, between expeditions around the globe. If you're not familiar with him, he wrote *Routes and Rocks: Hiker's Guide to the North Cascades from Glacier Peak to Lake Chelan* with Dwight Crowder, and *Geology of the North Cascades: A Mountain Mosaic* with Ralph Haugerud, both classics of the genre. And he was an N3C member for much of his life who spoke out on the problem of damaging mineral exploitation in pristine wilderness areas. His passing was mourned deeply by all who knew him, and by those like myself who only met him a few times at events and admired his work. It's now a huge pleasure to be able to relive his adventurous life vicariously in his memoir.

In the big scheme of things, Rowland's work in the North Cascades was essential to the modern science of geology, coming as it did mostly after the general acceptance of plate tectonic theory. Previous works on the North Cascades, such as Cascadia by Bates McKee (1971) only briefly even acknowledged the new theory as something to keep an eye on then. Plate tectonics was truly a scientific revolution, making the prior theories of the earth obsolete, and it happened so recently that a lot of geologists' work was left in the dust by it. Rowland accepted the new theory and "ran with it" despite being the student of a defender of the previous theories, Peter Misch at UW. Rowland's characterization of Misch as in turns cranky, possessive of the area, and a blatant chauvinist, is one of the gems of the book—but that was the 50s, after all.



Rowland's first encounter with the North Cascades was in 1957, the same year N3C was founded. His work in Glacier Peak wilderness began prior to it being congressionally designated as a "Capital W" Wilderness area, back when N3C was still trying to protect it by influencing the Forest Service and lobbying for the Wilderness bill in Congress. He was sent by the USGS into the area to evaluate its mineral potential specifically because it was becoming apparent that some sort of wilderness bill would pass and "lock up" those resources. Ironically, Rowland became a proponent of wilderness protection in the process of looking for those minerals. Upon finding a weak mineral vein on the north face of Mt. Johannesburg (so named in the 1800s to imply mineral wealth) he says "The ridge with the vein is now in National Park, and no longer open for mineral claims. I am glad."

Nowhere in the Cascades was there a better example of what the effects of mining would be than at Holden. He visited the Holden mine in 1953 when it was in full operation, even going down on the hoist into the tunnels, trying to record what the strata looked like for his survey. The damage to the surrounding land from the operations left a lasting impression. Later, when he'd completed his survey of mineralization in the range and it was ready to release, Rowland tells us that Stewart Udall himself held up the release of his report just long enough for North Cascades National Park to be designated in 1968, ending further mining! He wrote an essay for The Wild Cascades in which he clearly stated his opinion that scenic places should not be desecrated for short-term mineral exploitation.

Rowland used helicopters a fair amount, though, and his encounter with Harvey Manning, N3C's most famous member and a staunch opponent of helicopter use in wilderness, is truly a classic:

> *In the fall of 1979... I visited Harvey Manning... and tried to persuade him to take a helicopter ride with us. I thought he might enjoy seeing his beloved North Cascades from a different viewpoint. But Harvey refused, probably because his published writings had been lambasting mechanical devices in the wilderness for many years.*
>
> *Such a trip would have been like a temperance leader having one alcoholic drink just to try it. Harvey was very fond of geology and sympathetic to my work; we got along fine as old friends, but he had to be uncomfortable with my desecration of the wilderness with helicopters. When I sent Harvey a copy of a finished geologic map from the North Cascades, his thank-you letter was a little ambiguous (see Appendix "Harvey Manning Letter"), but clearly expressed his disgust with the institutions he had*

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22

Roland Tabor book review

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 21

so diligently supported in the past. Today in 2020 I do not understand all of his references.

That letter from Harvey (see below) is just one of many interesting documents linked via the book's online Appendices, here: https://taborghub.github.io/

The book is available in limited quantities from his widow Kajsa Eckelmeyer, who self-published it. If you're interested in a copy, email me at philf@northcascades.org and I'll see what I can do. Watch for announcements of it being made available for purchase.

In closing, there is perhaps no better quote by Rowland to share:

We are born of and sustained by the planet earth, and the elements of its rocks and seas are our nearest cosmological relatives. When we can understand the earth and its history, we have come a little closer to understanding ourselves and our place in the universe.

See also:

The Letter from Harvey Manning to Rowland, 2005:
https://taborghub.github.io/appendix-harvey-manning-letter.pdf

Rowland's obituary in *The Wild Cascades*, Winter 2022
https://npshistory.com/newsletters/the-wild-cascades/winter-2022.pdf

Geology and the Wilderness ethic in the North Cascades, in *The Wild Cascades*, Spring-Summer 2014
https://npshistory.com/newsletters/the-wild-cascades/spring-summer-2014.pdf

Geologic Map of the North Cascades, 2009, USGS, by Haugerud and Tabor:
https://pubs.usgs.gov/sim/2940/

Review of *Geology of the North Cascades: A Mountain Mosaic,* in *The Wild Cascades*, Spring 1999
https://npshistory.com/newsletters/the-wild-cascades/spring-1999.pdf

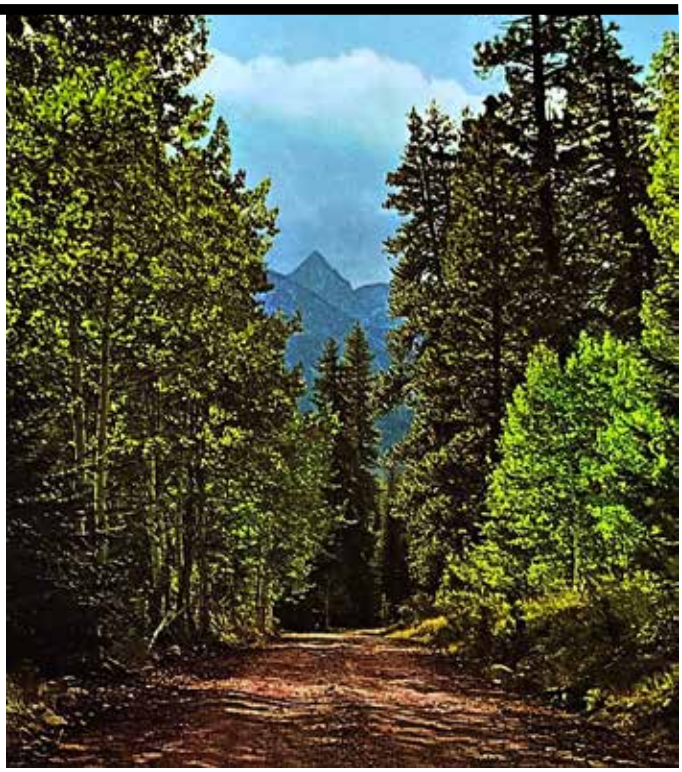
Oral arguments in the Twisp Restoration Project appeal

Attorney Liam Sherlock represented N3C at the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals on Feb. 14th on our appeal of the District Court ruling on the legality of the Twisp Restoration Project, which in our opinion is an egregious violation of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). We were fortunate to be heard by a panel of Clinton and Obama appointees, since as our readers are doubtless aware, the makeup of the Federal courts has become heavily politicized in recent years. As one N3C member commented to us after viewing the session, "If one can go by the questions asked repeatedly of the USFS by the judges, body language, and the fact that the head justice seemed to be drafting an opinion as the arguments proceeded, and that they clearly were old enough to remember the spirit of NEPA, it seems we got the right judges. They seemed to be cutting through the extensive bureaucratic jargon." All of which is encouraging. Now we wait, as the judge concluded by saying, for the ruling in "due time."

Audio and video recordings of the appeal hearing are available here:

https://www.ca9.uscourts.gov/media/video/?20250214/24-1422/

https://www.ca9.uscourts.gov/media/audio/?20250214/24-1422/



John Warth was a prolific photographer who developed a lot of his own work, like this photo of Entiat Road near its end, in his basement darkroom. His daughter tells us that in his old age he would claim he was "a better photographer than Ansel Adams," and they'd chuckle about that, although she did say he studied under Adams briefly. We have to say, from what we've seen so far, his work was indeed more engaging and less austere than Adams', often including people in his photos. His granddaughter sent us a picture of a fraction of his slide collection still in the hands of the family, that they will soon be lending us to scan — so stay tuned!

Lee Memorial Forest is not well known but it's a very nice walk among big trees near Maltby, in Snohomish County.
—Ken Wilcox photo

NORTH CASCADES CONSERVATION COUNCIL

Enjoy The Wild Cascades*? Not a member yet? Join NORTH CASCADES CONSERVATION COUNCIL!*

Yes! I want to support North Cascades Conservation Council's efforts working on many fronts to establish new wilderness, defend our forests, support wildlife conservation and keystone species, and promote sound conservation recreational use. I want to be a part of a vibrant grassroots network of advocates for protection of unique lands, clean waters, native plant life, and wilderness of the North Cascades.

Support N3C with a generous IRS tax-deductible contribution in the amount of:

____ $10 Living lightly/student ____ $30

____ $50 ____ $100 ____ $200 ____ $300

____ $500 ____ $1000 $ _____ Other

All *new* members will receive a free copy of *Wilderness Alps* by Harvey Manning.

ALL donations include N3C membership and a subscription to our journal, *The Wild Cascades,* published three times a year. N3C is a 501(c)(3) organization. All donations are tax deductible to the extent of the law.

Name_____

Address _____

City _____ State____ Zip_____

Phone _____

Email _____

Send your check or money order and this form to:

NORTH CASCADES CONSERVATION COUNCIL
PO Box 95980, Seattle, WA 98145-2980

Or make your contribution securely online through our website: *www.northcascades.org* – just click "Donate Now" and use your credit card.

Provide us with your email address and you'll receive our e-newsletter, Action Alerts.

NORTH CASCADES CONSERVATION COUNCIL
Post Office Box 95980
University Station
Seattle, Washington 98145-2980

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

Holden Village after a February snowstorm, with Buckskin Mountain on the left and Copper Mountain on the right. —Anne Basye photo