

# THE WILD CASCADES

THE JOURNAL OF THE NORTH CASCADES CONSERVATION COUNCIL

SPRING 2011



## THE WILD CASCADES ■ Spring 2011

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*COVER: Cornice camp close to Porcupine Peak, Black Peak beyond. This area is central to the American Alps Legacy Project, and marks the headwaters of the Skagit River in the United States. —TOM HAMMOND PHOTO*

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## The Wild Cascades

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*Journal of the North Cascades Conservation Council*

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Printing by EcoGraphics

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

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

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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, NCCC keeps government officials, environmental organizations, and the general public informed about issues affecting the Greater North Cascades Ecosystem. Action is pursued through legislative, legal, and public participation channels to protect the lands, waters, plants and wildlife.

Over the past half century the NCCC 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.

The NCCC 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; Other, \$\_\_\_\_\_.

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Founded in 1957  
SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

## The President's Report

Spring 2011

I'm sure you know by now that the North Cascades Conservation Council is leading the effort to expand North Cascades National Park by a few hundred thousand acres. In order to support that effort, we have partnered with other groups including the Mountaineers, several Audubon groups, Republicans for Environmental Protection, and the Climbing Club at the University of Washington, among others. This umbrella group calls itself the American Alps Legacy Project.

As part of our effort to educate the public on the need to protect lands adjacent to the Park, and to work with the businesses in the affected area, the NCCC and members of this partnership planned an event in the heart of the North Cascades this summer. Our ideas ran the gamut from a cross-Cascades hike to a series of separate guided tours. An event promoter even suggested we try a relay race, but the prime mid-summer dates eluded us and after testing response to a late September date, the promoter backed-out. Just too late in the season to attract the triathlon crowd, I guess.

Not to be deterred (persistence has always been one of our strongest virtues, after all) we'll be working with our friends at North Cascades Institute to host several guided nature hikes, canoe trips, a barbecue and a chance to introduce our National Park expansion proposal to the press and the public at the North Cascades Environmental Learning Center (ELC) on September 24. You'll hear it called the American Alps Challenge. You may have seen publicity about it in various magazines and on our websites. It should be a great weekend to get out into the mountains we cherish, after a very long and late spring season. If you haven't visited the ELC, you'll be very impressed with the place and the spirit of the folks there.

For information on the events and how to participate in them, please see our websites [www.northcascades.org](http://www.northcascades.org) and [www.americanalps.org](http://www.americanalps.org). You'll also find a detailed description of the events and activities in this issue of *The Wild Cascades* on pages 10-11.

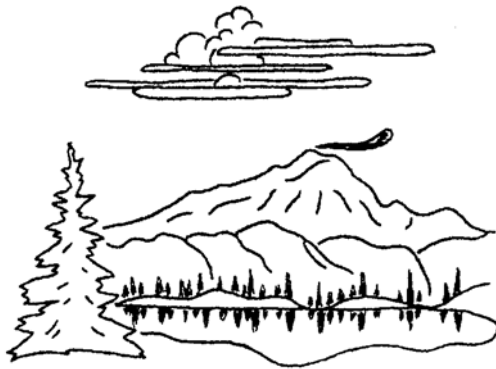
I personally hope to see you and many other fellow NCCC members and guests up at the Environmental Learning Center on September 24! It'll be a great chance to mingle with others like you who care deeply for the wild Cascades and advance the cause of park expansion.

# It's in the air

By John S. Edwards

**M**achine noise: the omnipresent ear pollution that envelopes us night and day is no respecter of wilderness or park boundaries. Refuges are rare but the National Park Service is at last starting to do something about it. As noted in *The Wild Cascades* Spring 2010, Congress decreed in 2000 that the National Park Service (NPS) and the Federal Aviation Administration must co-operate under the National Parks Air Tour Management Act to generate regulations for commercial overflights. The process is now under way. The NPS is in the process of developing regulations to limit flights in that most assaulted of all parks, the Grand Canyon, where the yattering of helicopters and the whine of small planes is all but inescapable.

Mount Rainier has also become the subject of hearings. The following letter was sent by NCCC in support of banning tourist flights over the park. The measures will not, of course, stop all intrusion, but it is a start.



Larry Tonish, Federal Aviation Administration  
PO Box 92007  
Los Angeles, CA 90009-2007

David Uberuaga, Superintendent  
Mount Rainier National Park Headquarters  
55210 238th Avenue E  
Ashford, WA 98304

Dear Sirs,

This letter addresses proposed alternatives in the Air Tour Management Plan for Mount Rainier National Park, as required by the National Park Air Tour Management Act of 2000.

The North Cascades Conservation Council strongly recommends Alternative 1. No Air Tours. We reach this choice after careful consideration of all four alternatives, three of which allow for access of fixed wing and helicopter tours within park space.

According to park statistics, Mount Rainier receives well over one million visitors a year, of which 73% list day hikes as their favored activity. A significant number of visitors make longer hikes or climbs offering an alpine wilderness experience. For both the hiker and the more serious venturer the sights and sounds of the natural environment are critical factors in the experience of the mountain. Within a short distance from parking lots the sounds of surface transport are lost and nature reigns. Intrusion of the sight and sound of small airplanes and helicopters into this natural world is, to most visitors in our experience, irritating, even obnoxious.

It can be argued that the aged and the infirm cannot experience the park as a

hiker does, and should be considered in the context of air tours. There are however ample opportunities to experience grand vistas of the mountain from roads and parking areas. Indeed it has been a tradition of the National Park Service that ample provision be made for the vehicular traveler.

The aerial experience can be impressive but it is at the expense of the surface traveler. It is an experience that can be readily simulated by movies of overflights shown in visitor centers.

Our environment is so saturated with the sounds of modern machinery that the preservation of quiet natural refugia with their natural sights and sounds in the National Parks should be zealously protected.

For these reasons we oppose any form of tourist flights over the park and support Alternative 1.

We note that besides the commercial tours associated with Mount Rainier there is also glider activity operated out of the Ranger Creek State Airport on Route 410. It is stated in the operations information listed on the airport website that tow aircraft "should avoid overflights and aerotow near popular destinations such as Sunrise" and that there have been complaints concerning gliders "loitering" over ridges near Sunrise. We emphasize that any decisions relating to air tours over Mount Rainier should apply also to aerotow planes and gliders.

***The North Cascades  
Conservation Council***

# Celebrating crumbling roads in the backcountry

By Robert Kendall

I was thrilled when that most beautiful of rivers, the Stehekin, jumped its channel during a fall flood and took up residence in the roadbed which had been foisted upon its floodplain sixty years before. The mining-cum-tourist road had been washed out, closed, and “repaired” numerous times, but this was a “flood of record” and the river moved in to stay. As the years went by, alder pleasantly feathered the quieted edges of the road beyond. The Park Service brushed the alder back, planning to reclaim the road again, if the river acquiesced. I wished they would just abandon it, preferably at the park boundary. Many in the Park Service agreed, but they were constrained by the newly completed 1995 General

Management Plan. During the process of writing this plan, the NPS preferred alternative had been to terminate the road at Bridge Creek Campground, but “public outcry” intervened. Then came the torrential Pineapple Express in October of 2003, decisively obliterating long sections of the Stehekin and numerous other roads. To me, this was sweet serendipity.

I happily celebrate the “crumbling away” of roads in the North Cascades that Rick McGuire wrote about in the Winter 2011 issue of *The Wild Cascades*, because I believe that roads are fundamentally inappropriate in the backcountry of the North Cascades, and ought to exist and be maintained only if justified socially, environmentally, and economically. Unfortunately, this is a matter of conflict within the hiking community.

With very few exceptions, the roads in the North Cascades were built expressly and solely for the rapid and mindless strip mining of a unique forest ecosystem which had arisen under conditions very unlikely ever to be repeated (a non-renewable resource) and to service mineral operations

that were usually uneconomical. However, the unimaginably enormous extraction of untold trillions from the earth in the last 150 years has not enabled anything resembling a sustainable economy, way of life, or functional government. Many of the resultant flood- and erosion-prone Forest Service spur roads, vestiges of obviously failed paradigms, are one good example of the kind of waste from which we can hope the bloated empire might redirect its broken debt-hobbled tentacles.

In addition to wasting money, disrupting habitat, causing tremendous erosion, and spreading invasive species, forest roads also offer ease of entry for timber and wildlife poaching, drunken “target” shooting, vandalism, littering and illegal dumping, illicit ORV use, and other assorted manifestations of irresponsibility. Destructive effects often ripple

*Continued on page 6*



*Above: Justin and Amber Kendall on Point 7424 McGregor Mountain on Rainbow Lake backpacking trip, July 2009. Lake Chelan is in the background. (Rainy Pass/Rainbow/McAlester Loop)*

*Below: Seven years earlier, Justin, age 7, and Amber, age 5, in upper basin at Horseshoe Basin in August 2002.*



## Celebrating crumbling roads, *continued from page 5*

beyond the road, inversely proportional to the distance therefrom. The need to exert effort, while not foolproof, seems to be the best protection against bad actors.

I am not expecting that every Forest Service road be closed, just listing some benefits that occur when they are. The biggest benefit of

all, in my opinion, is the improvement for human enjoyment. (I concede this is a matter of personal taste). Even if you are not in range to hear, see, or smell cars, a road changes the way a place feels that is difficult to ignore, like a mosquito in your shelter. You can't necessarily see it, but it will bug you as long as you know it's there. This alters the experience. A fragmented wilderness feels different because it is different.

Of course, there is no true wilderness; even a properly built trail is an intrusion, but only an infinitesimal fraction as much as the crudest of roads.

In contrast with the many reasons for closing certain roads, the singular opposing argument is the dramatic claim that we are being "shut out" of the wilderness. The map says otherwise. While the furthest one can presently get from a road in Washington is only about 15 linear miles, there are three major year-round highways and two seasonal highways crossing the Cascade crest, in addition to the Mt. Baker Highway and Mountain Loop Highway, many Forest Service trunk roads, and many spur roads that are unlikely to be decommissioned. These provide a tremendous amount of actual and potential opportunity for casual recreation, day hikes, and quick access to spectacular high country.

Let's be honest. Many people do not want to hike an extra day or two, or may lack the experience safely to do so, but physical ability is not in question for most of us, families included. We tend to sell ourselves short, and the lightweight materials and designs of modern equipment make backpacking easier and more comfortable than ever. My children, who began hiking at the age of two, enjoyed their first 50-miler when my daughter was six, hardly a seasoned athlete. We went over Suiattle Pass, took wonderful side

trips to Miners Ridge, Cloudy Peak, and almost to Spider Gap, then walked the trail to Lucerne. My son turned eight during our hike. (A shortened Suiattle road may have altered this itinerary or forestalled it a few years. None the less, my point stands). Three 50-milers and many shorter

backpacking trips have followed. This may not be the norm, but it isn't unique. If my children and I could be considered part of an "elite few" then our society is in really huge trouble. There is nothing physically special about my family nor most of the other great people I have ever met enjoying the wilderness. It's all about attitude, of course.

Some people believe they can't afford longer hikes, or do not have time, and are therefore "priced out" of favorite places by road closures. This has much more to do with life choices or situations than with infrastructure. As to health and mobility, every one of us is inexorably following the "circle of life." This is an excellent argument for minding our priorities while we are still ambulatory! When I am no longer able to go on long hikes, I will continue to derive great comfort from wilderness by fact of its existence, as I do now every day, between outings.

It is strange logic that says roads into the wilderness are necessary to preserve advocacy, as in, "Keep the entire Suiattle road open, deep into the mountains, so that people won't stay home, turn a blind eye, and allow Kennecott to.... build roads deep into the mountains." As the kids say these days, "really?"

If an extra three, five, or ten (easy) approach miles of hiking would keep hikers from visiting, exploring, loving, reveling in, and fighting for places such as the only wilderness volcano in the Lower 48, then we're sunk.

Even those demanding a rebuilt Stehekin Road presumably wouldn't want it extended to the original terminus, at Black Warrior Mine. (Here is more of that strange logic; let's rebuild a road deep into the heart of the wilderness, just not too deep). Cost aside, would any policymaker dare suggest in the 21st century, at the risk of derision, building a road from Rainy

Pass down Bridge Creek (with a "land swap" so there would be no "net loss" of wilderness)? We could drive to Horse-shoe Basin and picnic under the ring of waterfalls without getting all sweaty! Does this narrowly averted nightmare not seem utterly absurd to us now? The formerly existing road to Cottonwood, through miles of superb wilderness, was just exactly as absurd.

If they did not already exist, could the building of roads to Johannesburg or Sulphur Creek possibly be supported by anyone in the hiking community? Could the North Cascades Highway be built in 2011? I know, the highway isn't going anywhere, but that's beside the point. It's a thought exercise. We tend to accept things we would otherwise stringently fight against simply because they're already there. The grandfather clause might be a great thing for legal codes, but not for conservation, where it seems to cause blind complacency.

As conservationists, defending inappropriate roads is quite illogical, given that a hiker's Subaru does not belong inside *de facto* wilderness any more than does a noisy ORV or destructive mining equipment, as a matter of principle. This glaring incongruity seems to be unnoticed or ignored (or accepted in the interest of unity) by many true conservationists (but not by our political opponents who feel that we are granola-munching hypocrites). It's not just the various stripes of developers that wilderness needs protection from!

Every remaining scrap of wilderness, and the intrinsic characteristics thereof, ought to be preserved, holistically, both for its own sake and for the enjoyment and edification of man. Highways that sever the wilderness remain necessary for transportation between regions of the state, but old logging or mining dead-end "cherry stem" roads which never should have existed in the first place, such as the upper Stehekin and Suiattle roads, serve no such purpose. It is very encouraging when such roads are decommissioned or abbreviated, saving money and enhancing the ecosystem and the hiking experience. Vehicle access ought to be to or toward wilderness, not into wilderness. Rather than protesting the mitigation of past mistakes, let's move forward in a positive direction on the real access issue in the North Cascades, that of building and maintaining walking trails.

**Even if you are not in range to hear, see, or smell cars, a road changes the way a place feels that is difficult to ignore, like a mosquito in your shelter.**

# Swamp Mountain:

## Perspectives on the Skagit River, source of Northwest life, livelihood and quality of life

By Tom Hammond



When I plan my big trip of the summer, I usually have a goal in mind as early as January and certainly by April for a climb in the high North Cascades. This year was different—I didn't choose Porcupine Peak until mid-May. As with the past few years, my destination is influenced by conservation work, in this case American Alps Legacy ([americanalps.org](http://americanalps.org)). I wanted to get right to the heart of the area that is currently unrecognized as anything more than a scenic highway. I should hope you'll find these pictures and words show something more than a strip of pavement.

May is late to select a destination, because much study of maps and consideration of route, climb and variables, not to mention a healthy dose of excitement/anticipation, go in to the pre-trip planning. As it turned out, I didn't make the final call on approach/route until the night before I left. And I scored a direct hit! Instead of going for the overland, no-trail

route to a set of steep 200' pitches to reach base camp on a narrow ridge, I went with a more relaxed approach up Cutthroat trail, acknowledging my true climbing days are coming to an end, and I wasn't going to summit Porcupine Peak. I was going to (be in) a place to live and experience over the course of days—a mountaineering concept I've always embraced. That place is an unnamed ridge/mountain I've taken to calling "Swamp Mountain," as this 7,500' running ridge defines and is defined by Swamp Creek and Porcupine Creek—the true headwaters of the Skagit River, the third-largest river on the west side of the contiguous 48 states, and home to some of the largest runs of wild salmon remaining in the lower 48.

Even without a summit, there was so much snow that "the trail route" was no picnic. Here the mountains are much larger, much more challenging, and far less visited, at least with the healthy snowpack, so that I didn't see another person for three days. Above Cutthroat Lake there

*Swamp Creek flows away to join the Granite Arm of the Skagit River. All facing peaks and both valleys fall outside federal protection or recognition, a primary focus of American Alps. —TOM HAMMOND PHOTO*

were failing footprints leading to trackless snowy forest. Route-finding is key to any mission, and while not lost, I was feeling a bit uncomfortable as I wandered through the forest trying to pick my way—I had not studied this approach for months and have only hiked it once in my life. But using cues from surrounding peaks and a few goat tracks, I quickly got my bearings and had a wonderful ascent directly to the place I had hoped to be—a lovely flat spot on a ridge close to the summit of Swamp Mountain (7,552').

Not even I, the Cornice Camp Kid, could imagine how great this camp would be. A double-cornice was waiting for me. On one side, the cornice was some 4 meters

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*Continued from page 7*

high/thick, overhanging 130 meters of free air above Swamp Creek. On the other side was a 35° snow slope for about 30 meters; both sides sculpted by winter/spring winds to make for a flat spot I didn't need to groom at all. Awesome.

The snow conditions were the best I've ever seen: firm and consistent throughout all elevations. I only punched through a few times down low in the forest, and up high, I used crampons until noon each day. I celebrate what many view as a constraint. No bugs, plenty of water, and a nice flat camp.

I counted more than 150 named peaks while on the summit, a narrow ridge with a billowing double-cornice that I kept well clear of other than to scoop out some snow for drinking water. Living up there for three days and getting to know the landscape, it was hard for me to grasp that nothing I was looking at in the proximate

area or even the middle distance is recognized on a federal level as national park or wilderness. These mountains and valleys are key to the largest rivers in the region—the true source of life, livelihoods, and quality of life for everyone from fruit farmers on the arid east side of the Cascade crest to sport fishermen on the west side.

Many of my friends and colleagues on the NCCC board lament they can't do what I can. In their 70s, 80s or older, they stay engaged and work as hard for these summits as they ever have, trying to secure the proper protection and recognition so suitable for this incredible landscape. I am thankful that I'm still able to do as much backcountry travel as I do, and hope to never lose my sense of wonder and desire for exploration. I appreciate and am fortunate for the perspective my fellow NCCC board members provide—we recognize that our abilities diminish and accept it as a fact of life. I suspect it will not make us more inclined to call for trams or roads to summits.

*Swamp Creek and Porcupine Creek, shown here, form the ultimate headwaters of the Skagit River in the United States. Cutthroat Peak at left. This entire valley and the surrounding peaks fall outside National Park and Forest Service Wilderness.*  
—TOM HAMMOND PHOTO

I hope you'll stay interested, too, for while you may not camp or climb these crags, they do contribute to your everyday life if you live in the state of Washington. Become involved, join the North Cascades Conservation Council, and help us in recognizing these lands.

[www.northcascades.org](http://www.northcascades.org)  
[www.americanalps.org](http://www.americanalps.org)

# Massive overbuilding threatens North Fork Sky Road

By Rick McGuire



**S**nohomish County has announced plans to reconstruct the North Fork Skykomish or “Index-Galena” road washed away by floods in 2006. Since then, motorized access to the upper North Fork valley has been via the Beckler River and Jack Pass, a longer but serviceable route. The proposed reconstruction would restore direct access from Index upstream in the North Fork valley.

The project’s pricetag is something around 26 million dollars. Some wonder whether that is a wise investment given the many problems with roads and bridges in the rest of Snohomish County, in places where people actually live. From the county’s point of view, it is “free” money, coming from the Federal budget through the Federal Highways Administration (FHWA.) It is an awful lot of money to spend for the benefit of a few dozen cabin owners, especially considering that there is another, albeit less convenient, way to drive in. But does anyone worry about a

mere 26 million dollars in this era of trillion dollar bailouts? Snohomish County’s government doesn’t seem concerned.

The most glaring environmental problem with the proposal is the 40-mile-per-hour design speed. If implemented, this will mean a backwoods freeway, with massive cuts and fills, and huge amounts of earth moved. It will mean a wide new swath carved out of the forested slopes of the North Fork valley, forever changing its character for the worse. A low-impact road would have a design speed of twenty miles per hour or less.

FHWA’s insistence on such massive overbuilding is simply its ingrained culture, where projects are never designed to use a thousand dump truck loads if they can use ten thousand. FHWA always builds as big as possible. Little regard is given to economy, and none to fitting roads to their surroundings. The catalog of once-pleasant places made ugly by FHWA projects

*North Fork Skykomish valley looking south from Scott Peak, Index and Persis in background. FHWA highway building would disfigure the slopes on the left side of the river in the mid-ground.*

—JOHN ROPER PHOTO

is a long one, with places such as the Cle Elum River valley and the Icicle Creek valley disfigured by past projects. The North Fork Skykomish looks to be the next addition to the list.

It’s unfortunate to see resources squandered in such fashion when it appears inevitable that petroleum fuels will become much more expensive within not very many years. It seems as though the last of the cheap oil will be spent on things like uglifying the North Fork Sky and digging automobile tunnels under Seattle. People will likely puzzle over such decisions in years to come, and wonder why so little was done to prepare for the post-oil age.

*SAVE THE DATE!*

September 24:

# American Alps Challenge

**Welcome to the American Alps Challenge:  
A day of fun, learning, and conservation history**

Be a part of the Challenge. Learn more about what the North Cascades has to offer. Help protect this incredible wild place.

## Family Nature Events

Birding hikes, big canoe trips, and nature hikes will be offered throughout the day. View the beautiful fall colors, while learning more about what makes this wonderful wild place tick.

**Registration: Send email to: [ncccinfo@northcascades.org](mailto:ncccinfo@northcascades.org), tell us how many participants and for which events.**

The North Cascades are for families to enjoy. View North Cascades birds and wildlife, explore old-growth forests, glide on a mountain lake, and dunk your head in a waterfall. Experience all of the fun activities that will entice you and your children to return again and again to the North Cascades.



and return by 11:00 a.m.

The second hike will explore the Blue Lake area near Washington Pass. This high altitude hike visits the sub-alpine zone with unique habitats and

birds. Carpools for this four-mile round-trip hike with 1,000 feet elevation gain will depart Newhalem at 11:00 a.m. and return by 3:30 p.m.

### • Family Canoe Trips

Large 20-person canoes will offer a unique and fun opportunity for families with children to explore beautiful Diablo Lake. The guided canoe trips will leave from the North Cascades Institute's Environmental Learning Center (ELC) at 11:30 a.m., 12:30 p.m. and 1:30 p.m.

### • Nature Hikes

Two front-country nature hikes will be offered by the North Cascades Institute's ELC on Diablo

### • Birding Hikes

Two birding hikes will be offered in collaboration with Skagit Audubon. Anyone interested in birds is welcome, from beginner to expert. These hikes are at vastly different elevations, highlighting the variety of habitats and birdlife in the North Cascades. Go to [www.fidalgo.net/~audubon/](http://www.fidalgo.net/~audubon/) to visit the Skagit Audubon website and find more information on these birding hikes when it becomes available.

The first hike will explore low elevation Skagit river forests west of Newhalem, including the Ag Ponds and County Line Ponds. This is a favorite birding area with a high diversity of species. The tour bus will depart from Newhalem at 8:00 a.m.

Lake. The hikes will explore old-growth forests, pristine streams, and a beautiful waterfall. Tour buses to the hikes will depart from Newhalem at 11:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m.

A backcountry wilderness hike will explore a new lake created by a dramatic landslide along Goodell Creek. Learn more about North Cascades biodiversity and how this low elevation ecosystem functions. The tour bus will depart from Newhalem at 1:00 p.m.

### **Important Details for Nature Event Participants**

Leave the driving to us. For birding hikes, family canoe trips, nature hikes, and the ELC picnic, participants have the option of carpooling in small buses to trailheads and the ELC. All buses will depart from the parking lot north of the highway in Newhalem. Departure times are indicated under each event description above.

Birding hikes, family canoe trips, nature hikes, and the ELC tours are all free. Participants will have the option of purchasing American Alps t-shirts and will be asked to make a donation toward covering bus costs associated with our energy saving carpool plan.

All hike and tour participants should wear shoes suitable for hiking and should bring snacks, water, binoculars, rain gear, and layers of clothing appropriate for the elevation. If you will not be enjoying the ELC picnic, please bring a lunch. Canoeists should bring an extra set of clothing, although we would really prefer you did not fall into the cold water of Diablo Lake.

## **Environmental Learning Center (ELC) Picnic and Tour**

The North Cascades Institutes' ELC will offer a BBQ picnic (featuring food from local farms) and guided tours of the ELC campus as part of their 25th anniversary Celebration. The picnic and tours will be available from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Visit the ELC website, [www.ncascades.org/picnic](http://www.ncascades.org/picnic), where you can find more information on their 25th anniversary celebration, picnic, and tours.

## **American Alps Legacy Proposal**

All participants are welcome to join us at the North Cascades Institute's Environmental Learning Center on Diablo Lake at 3:00 p.m. for a presentation on the American Alps Legacy Proposal. The presentation will make it clear how much was left out when the North Cascades National Park was created in 1968. Old growth forests, low elevation wildlife habitats, pristine rivers and streams, magnificent mountains, and family recreation sites remain unprotected by national park status. The American Alps Legacy Proposal will add more than 230,000 acres to the Park. To learn more, go to [www.americanalps.org/campaign/index.htm](http://www.americanalps.org/campaign/index.htm).

## **Overnight Lodging and Camping**

American Alps Challenge participants wanting to stay overnight on September 23rd and/or 24th will have several options. Motels, lodges, and private campgrounds in the area will likely have space available in late September. Park Service and Forest Service campgrounds will also be available. A limited number of rooms are available at the Environmental Learning Center. Reservations should be made directly with the providers, [www.americanalps.org/challenge/lodging.htm](http://www.americanalps.org/challenge/lodging.htm).

## **Note regarding the previously announced relay race**

The American Alps Challenge relay race has been canceled for 2011. We apologize for any inconvenience. Check back next year to see if the relay race from Washington Pass to Marblemount will be part of the Challenge.

## **Event Sponsors**

North Cascades Conservation Council, The Mountaineers, The Mountaineers Foundation, North Cascades Institute, Skagit Audubon, Seattle Audubon, Republicans for Environmental Protection.

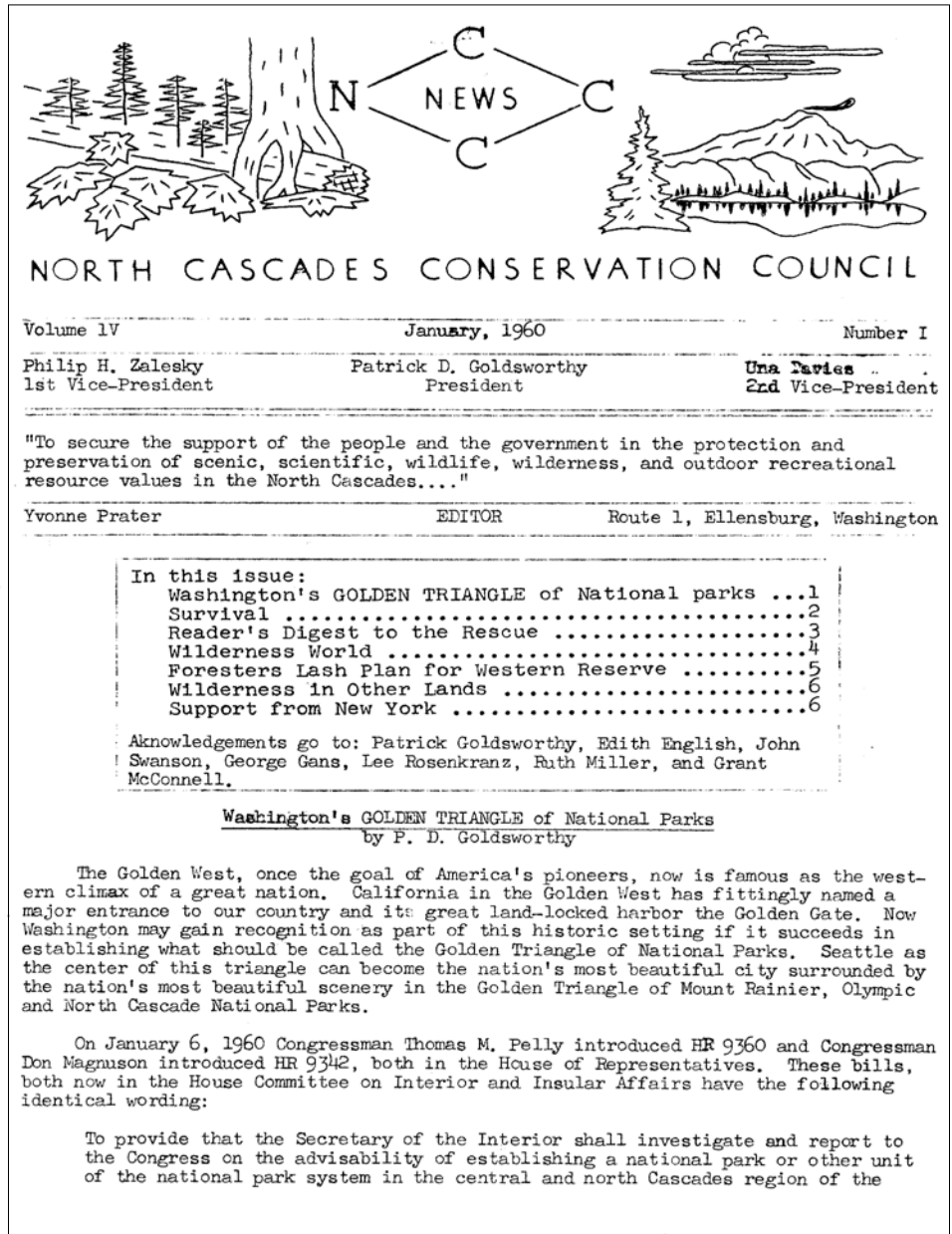
# A brief history of *The Wild Cascades*: A call to action

By Tom Hammond

Betty Manning, Editor in Chief of *The Wild Cascades*, is stepping down from her position of running the publication. The editorial committee has been charged with taking on her duties, though not even a group of us can seem to accomplish what Betty has done since 1992. As the transition chugs along, we decided to chronicle the history of this publication, to take this time to reflect on where we've been, and where we're going.

My wife Athena and I met with Betty and Patrick Goldsworthy at the Manning Cougar Mountain hut to have a chat about remembrances. As we discussed *The Wild Cascades*, we noticed the conversation kept coming back to the future, and how our meeting was really a call to action for all of our membership. Sorry folks, but this article ends up with some "action items" and homework for all of us.

Patrick Goldsworthy, with Laura and Phil Zalesky, founded the North Cascades Conservation Council. The NCCC publication, *The Wild Cascades*, began in 1957 as NCCC News, a monthly report of the issues and concerns being worked by the NCCC. Usually about six pages, this mimeographed, stapled newsletter was the *de facto* journal of record of the NCCC, through which the organization reached out to members, constituents, lawmakers and adversaries alike.

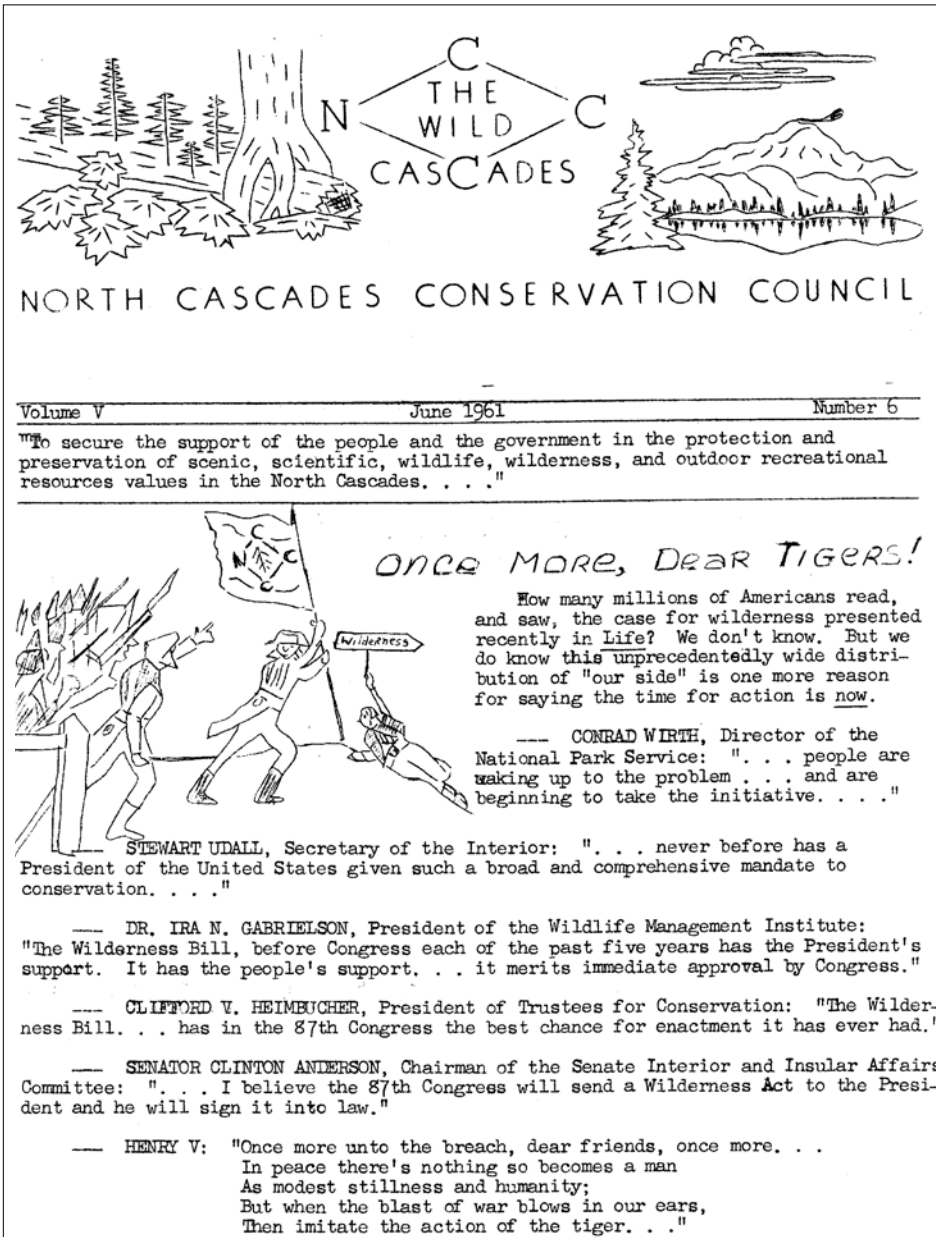


As seen here, NCCC News became *The Wild Cascades* in June of 1961, a momentous occasion in the history of North Cascades conservation efforts.

Patrick remembers typing page upon page, then running the mimeograph machine, and having board members come to his home to manually assemble and staple the newsletter. What doesn't appear on these reproductions is that the paper used was a mellow yellow color.

Enter the Mannings. The journal came out sporadically in the early years. Harvey

Manning became editor in the early 1960s. Harvey lent the considerable force of his pen to the publication, at times as The Irate Birdwatcher, at times as himself. The phrase, "Irate Birdwatcher" is now synonymous with "fighting conservationist." Harvey wasn't alone—Joe Miller, aka The Kaopectate Kid, unleashed his sharp wit on poor public lands policy, calling connected citizens to action. He is remembered, with his wife Margaret, for studying and saving the Big Beaver Valley from the threat of a higher Ross Dam.



From September of 1962 until August of 1992, *The Wild Cascades* appeared much as you see it today—grayscale with a more formal cover and look, though with smaller dimensions of 6.75" x 9.5".

Betty Manning took on the role of editor in 1992.

The professional and consistent layout that we see today was first done in February of 1993 with the help of former board member Kevin Herrick. Contributors are generally NCCC board members, an im-

pressive collection of scientists, professors, lawyers, engineers and other informed professionals and regular citizens passionate about our way of life here in the Pacific Northwest. Pat Hutson, a former Stehekin resident now living in Oregon, does a fantastic job of graphic design.

Throughout its evolution, *The Wild Cascades* has served as the means by which we inform and educate on the values of the NCCC and what we see as important to our region. There's a need for publica-

tions that adhere to high standards of journalistic integrity and honesty now more than ever. The issues brought forth in this publication are important and worthy, because the North Cascades and all who depend on these glorious mountains are important and worthy.

Despite the growth of online/computer media, we are happy *TWC* continues to fill its crucial role in championing and informing conservation ethics and efforts. And here's where all of you come in. We'd like to get to know you. We would like to see our membership become more engaged in all of our conservation efforts. We invite our membership to contribute in ways suited to your talents and abilities, not just with money. We have a blog, we have a website, we have this publication and we have a need for your energy and passion to protect tens of thousands of acres that remain outside national park and Forest Service Wilderness designation.

And what's the point, you might ask, of all this nostalgia? Is NCCC looking back just to praise itself and its heroes for past accomplishments? Far from it! We'd like to grow the membership, but more importantly, engage the membership, and *The Wild Cascades* is a perfect venue for that. Our vision for conservation of the Cascades includes *YOU* — and we need to hear from you! There are many pressing issues beyond those we've covered in past issues, ones you know and care about. Places you go that deserve better protection, ones that only you can tell us about. Help *YOUR* NCCC to help you pursue those issues *YOU* believe in!

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## *In memoriam:* **CONWAY LEOVY**

**B**oard member Conway Leovy succumbed to liver cancer July 9. Conway joined the University of Washington Atmospheric Sciences Department in 1968 with a PhD in Meteorology from MIT. He was an expert on the atmospheres of Mars, Venus and Jupiter, and modeled the climatic effects of clouds over oceans here on Earth. He was awarded NASA's Exceptional Scientific Achievement Medal as well as other notable awards in his field. He directed the University of Washington's Institute for Environmental Studies 1986 - 89. A thoughtful and wise member of the NCCC beginning in 2002, Conway played a key role in preserving Heybrook Ridge from logging. Early plans for the proposed borders of the Wild Sky Wilderness were hatched in his chalet in Index, where he had an intimate knowledge of the lay of the land.

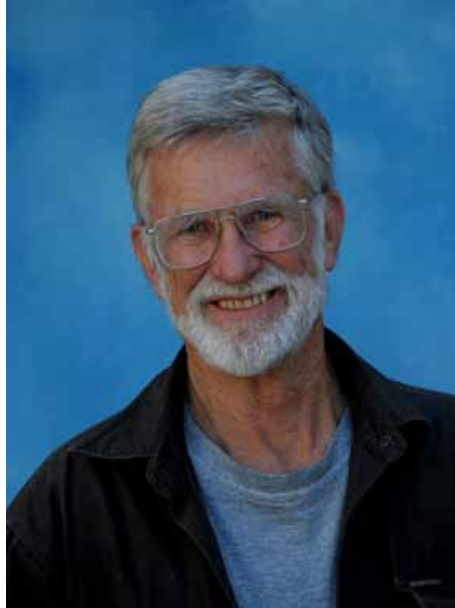
*John Edwards*

### **A scientist, conservationist, and a gentleman: NCCC board appreciations**

I first met Conway Leovy as a student at the University of Washington. Professor Leovy gave a guest lecture in a glaciology class, and opened up my eyes to more than just glaciers. Conway had a way of "connecting the dots" and explaining the complex processes that go into making a glacier. Conway was a true planetary scientist, a unique awareness I was fortunate enough to glimpse as he shared his wealth of knowledge. Later, I was pleased and excited to find out Professor Leovy was on the board of the NCCC. Indeed, his presence is one of the main reasons I joined. Thanks for all you've done for Planet Earth and human understanding of what is really important, Professor Leovy!

*Tom Hammond*

Conway Leovy had many accomplishments beyond the North Fork Skykomish valley. But just the things he did there were far more than most people ever manage to do. Some of the first meetings ever held to discuss the idea of protecting low-elevation forests and salmon streams were held at the Leovy place right on the bank of the North Fork Sky-



komish river in the town of Index. Conway had no particular desire to draw lines on maps and protect yet more mountains and high country. He wanted to protect and preserve low country, the biologically rich places largely missing from most Wilderness areas enacted before then.

And what better place to strategize than the North Fork Skykomish, where salmon ascend farther up into the mountains than just about any other Cascade river? Although much of the lower valley had been logged back in the 1920s, it was again cloaked in mature, naturally regenerated second growth forest. Not old growth, but well on its way to becoming so again, and splendid forest nonetheless.

Nobody had ever put significant second-growth forest into wilderness before in Washington state. There were those who were shocked at the idea. But not Conway. He thought it made perfect sense to protect low-elevation forests, even if they weren't old growth, and even if wilderness hadn't been done that way before. And as things turned out, so did Senator Patty Murray, who enjoyed a breakfast at the Leovy place one morning before going out to look at those very same forests. And so it came to be that the Wild Sky Wilderness became the first one in Washington state to protect 6000 acres of second-growth forest, along with 25 miles of salmon streams.

Around the same time as the Wild Sky effort finished up, a new threat emerged on Heybrook Ridge. If the North Fork Skykomish valley is the back yard of Index, then Heybrook Ridge is its front yard. A low ridge sitting directly south of town, it is the foreground for Index's splendid views of Mounts Index and Persis. It is also covered in the same kind of mature second-growth forest that had just been protected. Unlike Wild Sky, it was private land, and the owners announced it would be logged unless some way could be found to purchase it. The prospects of saving Heybrook looked hopeless when the people of Index took on the task. Conway got going when things looked grim. With unrelenting effort, and by refusing to give up when there looked to be no possible way to raise enough money, the means were found to protect Heybrook. It stands today, along with the Wild Sky Wilderness, as tribute to those whose efforts saved it, Conway included.

The North Fork Skykomish was but one of Conway's interests, but there can be no doubt that thanks to his efforts, it is a far better place today than it would have been without him.

*Rick McGuire*

Conway Leovy was as fine a gentleman as you could ever find. Laura and I appreciated his friendship because he was a man of high character and warm and gentle personality. This made him a friend to all who knew him. After attending the Heybrook Ridge victory celebration—which I believe was attended by every citizen of Index—it was noticeable that he was respected by all in Index for his participation in the conservation project and the great role he played. It was not an easy undertaking since there were so many different interests to reconcile and so much money to raise.

He was always a strong advocate for wilderness and all wild places and continued to receive the Pilchuck Audubon Profile after he felt he could no longer participate with the NCCC. This organization as well as many of us will miss him.

*Phil Zalesky*

# NCCC joins intervention against Black Canyon hydro proposal

By Rick McGuire

NCCC has joined with American Whitewater, American Rivers, and the Alpine Lakes Protection Society in filing an intervention with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) against the “Black Canyon” hydroelectric project proposed for the North Fork Snoqualmie river at the northwestern foot of Mt. Si, a few miles north of North Bend.

Much less well known than the Middle and South Forks of the Snoqualmie, the North Fork has been called “the forgotten stepsister” of the Snoqualmies. From its headwaters around Lennox Mountain it flows west then south along the Cascade front range toward Mt. Si. It joins the Middle and South Forks at Three Forks Natural Area just west of Mt. Si. (For a detailed look at the North Fork Snoqualmie see the Winter 2009-2010 issue of *The Wild Cascades*.)

Not far above that confluence, the North Fork flows through a steep canyon below the northwestern scarp of Mt. Si. Known

traditionally as “Ernie’s Gorge” and now as the “Black Canyon,” the North Fork drops precipitously in a cauldron of whitewater. As a kayak route it is considered very challenging. Just above the river’s east bank, a small but spectacular area of old-growth forest has survived on benches that cliff bands put just out of reach of early day loggers who worked the slopes above. A number of Douglas fir trees reach 250 or more feet in height, with big muscular limbs. They must be well over 500 years old. They are protected within the Mt. Si Natural Resource Conservation Area (NRCA), the state lands equivalent of wilderness.

The proposed project would take water out above the canyon, send it through a pipe to spin a turbine, and return it to the river below the canyon. The canyon would be left with greatly reduced flows. Projects like this generally produce very little electricity, and most of what they do produce is generated during times of high runoff

when need is lowest. They extend industrial infrastructure deep into wild country. An extreme case of what can happen when many of these are built can be seen in the Swiss Alps, where it is rare to see a free-flowing stream. Just about everything has been diverted into pipes, and the sound of falling water, so pervasive in the Cascades, is absent. (For more on the threat of small hydro see the Spring 2010 issue of *The Wild Cascades*.)

NCCC and other intervening groups believe that the small amounts of energy generated by these projects are not worth the damage they do by extending roads, dams and power lines into undeveloped areas, and by taking water out of streams and rivers. NCCC believes this one is particularly bad because it targets a mainstem river. A few extra kilowatts at a time of year when power is plentiful are not worth dewatering the North Fork Snoqualmie. Watch future issues of *The Wild Cascades* for updates.



*Ptarmigan on Ruth Mountain — PHILIP FENNER PHOTO*

# The Suiattle lawsuit: why it happened, what is at stake, and what comes next

By Kevin Geraghty

In spring 2011, NCCC sued the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest to halt the imminent reconstruction and re-routing of the upper Suiattle river road on the grounds that legally required analysis of options had not been conducted. We were joined in the suit by the Pilchuck chapter of the Audubon society and by a civil engineer, Bill Lider. The suit succeeded—the FHWA withdrew its decision, and construction planned for summer 2011 will not occur.

This outcome was more a necessary waypoint than a conclusion. We filed the suit because we felt the agencies were skirting the law and hastening down a destructive, expensive, and ill-considered path with significant environmental and financial consequences. Because the agencies had bypassed NEPA requirements for formal and public analysis, usual avenues of influence such as formal comments or administrative appeals were closed to us. We assume that over the next few months, a more deliberate and public NEPA analysis of management options for the road will commence.

The Suiattle is the closest thing we have in the North Cascades to pristine west-Olympic rivers like the Queets. It's a powerful glacier-fed river that jumps around energetically in a half-mile-wide floodplain. Old forest covers lower slopes and the valley bottom. It harbors visible wild populations of all its original salmonid stocks. The valley sticks in the imagination; it's a good place to savor natural landscapes and the power of a wild, unregulated river.

The river's dynamism makes it an uncomfortable neighbor for parallel valley-bottom roads. Between 1974 and 1999, the main Suiattle road washed out, and was repaired, thirteen times—a failure every other year on average. The present unrepaired washouts to the Suiattle road (seven in all) result from the one-two punch of the October 2003 and November 2006 floods. October 2003 was the largest flood recorded in the 99-year history of the Sauk gauge, and the 2006 flood was the third-largest. In fact, of the five largest peak flows recorded on this gauge, four have occurred since 1980. The hydrologi-

cal record clearly suggests a trend toward larger and more frequent floods.

Repairing road washouts has environmental costs as well as monetary ones. Washouts to the Suiattle road generally occur when the river migrates laterally into the road, or undermines benches or slopes which the road traverses, causing slumps or landslides. Aquatically speaking the appropriate repair strategy is generally to get out of the way, that is, to move the road laterally some distance from the river. But if the river is squeezing the road between the edge of its floodplain and adjacent slopes, this can only be accomplished by carving new road up onto adjacent hillslopes, leading to steep grades and large cut-banks. Keeping the road on or near its failed alignment usually demands riprapping and bank-armoring, or attempting to shove the river back to its former course. These are all aquatically destructive. Aquatic harms aside, the Suiattle's federal wild and scenic designation forecloses these traditional road-engineer strategies. Building road on new alignments can require destroying significant quantities of old-growth forest and filling in wetlands, even if there is space on flat ground to move the road well away from active river channels.

At present the road is drivable as far as MP 12.2, roughly half of its almost 24-mile maximum length. The history of chronic washouts, the climatic trends, and the environmental and monetary costs of road reroutes beg an obvious set of questions: How much do we need this road? Should it be reopened to its former end at MP 23.8? To some intermediate point? Or permanently closed back to the current head of driving at MP 12.2? Regrettably the responsible agencies have been intent on ducking these questions. They have assumed axiomatically that the road should be rebuilt to its very end. In defiance of common sense and of federal statutes they have unilaterally declared that there are no environmental issues of any consequence, and no need to do formal analysis of options; in short, nothing to see here, move along, just a little routine road repair.

Thanks to use of the Freedom of Information Act, to on-the-ground scrutiny, and to many conversations, we know not only that the environmental costs and risks of

the FHA's specific contemplated repairs are significant, but also that the agency has showed inadequate concern for minimizing these costs. A few examples:

- A quarter-mile long swath cut through old-growth forest for a road re-route at the MP 14.4 washout is on average 100 feet wide. The running surface of the road in the vicinity is about 16 feet wide. The swath (and the destruction of old forest) is three to four times as big as the minimum necessary. This is the only ground activity actually carried out before work was halted.
- A planned half-mile long reroute through old-growth forest near MP 13 would lead to the loss of roughly three acres of old-growth forest.
- A planned lateral shift of the river-adjacent road into the hillslope adjacent to Downey Creek could potentially destabilize the whole slope. Over the past decade, roughly 40 percent of Chinook salmon spawning in the entire Suiattle system has been in the lower few hundred yards of Downey creek, and a landslide into this stream reach would represent a severe blow to a unique (and federally listed) fish stock.

The true costs and tradeoffs of rebuilding the Suiattle road need a proper airing, and careful analysis. NCCC does not yet have a formal position on what should be done. We will be thinking hard about the issues over the next few months. But here are some preliminary thoughts:

It is hard to justify rebuilding the road past the vicinity of Downey Creek. Not

*Continued on page 17*

**Between 1974 and 1999, the main Suiattle road washed out, and was repaired, thirteen times—a failure every other year on average.**

# Grizzly bear sighting confirmed in the North Cascades last fall

By Mark Yuasa

*The Seattle Times*

Click here to read the article:

[http://seattletimes.nwsources.com/html/reeltime northwest/2015486648\\_grizzly\\_bear\\_sighting\\_confirmed.html](http://seattletimes.nwsources.com/html/reeltime northwest/2015486648_grizzly_bear_sighting_confirmed.html)

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## The Suiattle lawsuit, *continued from page 16*

only does the Downey-vicinity rebuild put the Suiattle river chinook stock at risk, but the financial cost (over a million dollars is the current estimate for a needed bridge extension) seems a very high price tag to keep the last two miles of a twenty-four mile road open to motorized use.

- There is a clear case to be made for leaving the roadhead where it is. Channel migration studies have shown that the roughly three miles of road upriver of the current MP 12.2 roadhead are at very high risk of future washouts. Some of the current washouts (including the two closest to the 12.2 roadhead) have no benign repair options, and involve building road on steep slopes and felling old-growth forest. Closed valley-bottom roads quickly become trail-like; the closed Suiattle road is already a fine walk or bike ride, particularly in early and late season when high country is under snow. The valley bottom offers

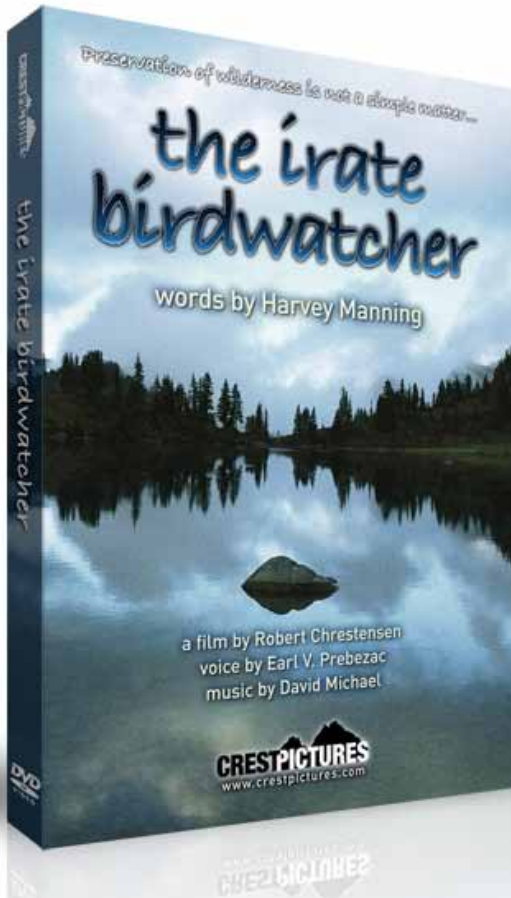
many views of a wild river and of old forest, which are better appreciated at a slow pace than glimpsed through a car windshield. Under such an option some former easy day trips (e.g. Green Mountain) would become challenging day trips, or overnights; Buck Creek would become a walk-in campground. Recreational users would adapt to a new reality, as they have in the Carbon valley in Mount Rainier National Park, or the Dosewallips valley in Olympic National Park and Olympic National Forest, two other valleys where main-trunk recreational roads have been closed by active rivers.

- Buck Creek campground (three miles upriver from the current roadhead), and the Green Mountain trailhead spur road (about seven miles upriver) had significant motorized recreation constituencies when the road was driveable that far.

- The two miles of road from the Green Mountain spur road up to the Downey Creek crossing are also at high risk of future washouts. A permanent closure of the main road right at the Green Mountain spur road around MP 19.8, shortening the road by about four miles, would substantially reduce the aggregate road washout risk, not put the Suiattle's chinook stock at risk, and still maintain motorized access to the two most popular destinations along the road (Buck Creek campground and the current Green Mountain trailhead). Such a choice would, however, still entail significant persistent washout risk and would require some painfully destructive re-routes of current washouts; it is thus a compromise between maintaining motorized access on the one hand and resource protection and reducing future repair costs on the other.

We welcome our readers' thoughts on these choices.

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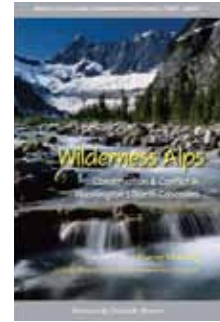
*"Harvey Manning's poetic expression of his love of the Pacific Northwest wilderness puts the listener deep into the backcountry, while Robert Chrestensen's mountain scenes envelop the senses."*  
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## BOOKS

### *Wilderness Alps: Conservation and Conflict in Washington's North Cascades*

by HARVEY MANNING AND NCCC

Published by Northwest Wild Books  
 2007 ISBN-13: 978-0-9793333-0-9

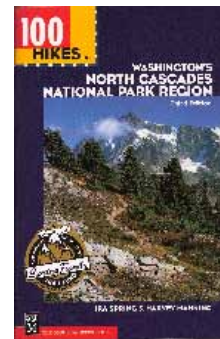


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## NCCC Membership Event

December 9, 2011

6 to 9 p.m.

The Mountaineers-Goodman B

7700 Sandpoint Way NE  
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Come meet the North Cascades Conservation Council board, honor longtime NCCC board members, and celebrate the American Alps Legacy Project Proposal during a special reception.

From 6 to 9 p.m., NCCC members and board members can get to know one another over light refreshments.

We'll pause to honor primary NCCC founder Patrick Goldsworthy and Betty Manning, Editor Emeritus of *The Wild Cascades*.

Renowned mountain climbers Jim Wickwire and John Roskelley will also share their experiences climbing in the North Cascades.

Your official invitation will be in your mailbox soon. Please share it with anyone you know with an interest in conservation in the North Cascades! See you there!

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