

On the Death of the Cashmere Mountain DUSEL Proposal

By Bill Beyers

In 2001, the UW Physics Department proposed building a Deep Underground Science and Engineering Laboratory, called DUSEL by the National Science Foundation (NSF). This project was led by Dr. Wick Haxton, a UW Physics Professor with a long interest in research in such locations. Initially, he was the head of a group supporting this type of lab at the Homestake Mine in South Dakota. When problems at that site put it out of contention, other sites were proposed, and early in 2005 Haxton's group submitted a new proposal to develop the laboratory under Mt. Cashmere in Chelan County. The lab would have had its entry near the head of the Icicle Creek Road out of Leavenworth. Its cost would have been much higher than other projects proposed to NSF due to the cost of drilling tunnels into Mt. Cashmere. Other options that were proposed would have used existing tunnels.

Haxton and others lobbied people in Chelan County to support this proposal, but some residents in the county were strongly opposed to the project. ALPS opposed it primarily because the project would have been located



Icicle River.

NATALIE WILLIAMS

inside the Wilderness boundary, and ALPS also had concerns about environmental impacts of the project.

This summer NSF dropped the UW proposal from the sites being considered for DUSEL. NSF noted the relatively high cost of the Cashmere Mountain site and environmental considerations as their primary bases for eliminating the UW proposal, while simultaneously acknowledging that the scientific qualifications of the UW team were outstanding.

If NSF had recommended that the UW proposal be considered for funding, there would have been significant hurdles. Its cost would have triggered careful consideration by the NSF National Science Board, as it would have been nearly 10% of the entire annual budget of

NSF. This would have required that it become a line item in the federal budget. NSF funds thousands of proposals each year, and one project taking this much money would have a low chance of surviving politically unless the science was really compelling. Congress would also have to act on this as a line item, an action that would have a low priority, given competition for "big science" projects with a smaller "big ticket" cost. ■

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Opportunities to Serve: ALPS Seeks Board Candidates and Volunteers for ORV Committee



Studying geography and more near the Ingalls Lake trail.

The Board of Trustees of the Alpine Lakes Protection Society is continuously on the lookout for

ALPS members who would like to become more active in the organization by serving on the Board.

The Board carries out the ongoing business of ALPS. We currently have opportunities to fill Board positions. Board responsibilities including attending Trustee meetings that take place five or six times per year. In addition, Trustees may take on various tasks associated with the management of the national forests within the ALPS area of interest. Such activities include involvement in forest plan development, comments on Forest Service management actions (timber sales, road system maintenance, recreation developments, Wilderness studies, etc.). We are also heavily involved in actions associated with private land acquisition.

In addition to the above, the Board is exploring the idea of forming a standing Off-Road-Vehicle (ORV) Committee to focus on ORV issues within the Alpine Lakes Region. We foresee that such a committee would perform a number of tasks including working with the Forest Service to implement the new national regulations dealing with ORV use and working on ORV issues in general, as well as carrying out periodic trips into the field.

If anyone is interested in either a Board position or working on the proposed ORV committee, please contact Don Parks at 425-883-0646, dlparks@verizon.net. ■

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ALPS Reaches Compromise Solution with Forest Service over Lowe Creek Road Decision

By Rick McGuire

ALPS trustees, along with members of the North Cascade Conservation Council, met recently with the Forest Service and agreed on a plan for gating the Lowe Creek road. The old road follows the south side of the South Fork Skykomish River downstream from the Money Creek campground, between Skykomish and Index. The Forest Service plans to rebuild the road to provide access to private lands owned by Longview Fibre Company.

ALPS and others initiated an appeal of the rebuilding because of the adverse effects of re-introducing vehicles to the road, much of which has been undrivable for years. ALPS also didn't like the idea of scarce public money being spent for the benefit of the Longview Fibre Company when the Forest Service cannot maintain the roads it already has.

Faced with the prospect of a possibly long, expensive, and uncertain legal battle, ALPS decided to accept a compromise whereby its legal appeal was withdrawn in exchange for the Forest Service placing a permanent gate to keep vehicles off most of the road, including segments currently open. Keeping vehicles other than Longview's trucks off the road will help insure the safety of the Coho salmon spawning grounds adjacent to the road. Spur roads off the main road will also be blocked and culverts enlarged. Lowe Creek will get a bridge instead of the ford that had been proposed initially.

Although ALPS would have preferred no rebuilding of the road, settling for the gate addresses

ALPINE



RICK MCGUIRE

A fish that found its way home again — to Lowe Creek.

most of the concerns, and allows ALPS to focus on other efforts. A gated Lowe Creek road will make

an attractive lowland winter walk or bike ride, with the possibility of watching spawning salmon in lower Lowe Creek. ■

Middle Fork Snoqualmie Paving EIS Expected Soon

ALPS trustees recently accompanied representatives of the Federal Highways Administration on a tour of the proposed paving project for the Middle Fork Snoqualmie River road between North Bend and the Taylor River. ALPS is guardedly optimistic that it might be possible to pave this stretch of road without cutting a huge swath up the valley. Although the paving of currently unpaved roads is not something which ALPS generally supports, the heavy recreational

use of the Middle Fork road, with extreme levels of dust in summer, and the all-year problem of gravel from the current road entering the river, may make this an exception. A new campground will soon be opened in the vicinity of Taylor River, and it is hoped that a number of new trails may be constructed in the Middle Fork valley, the closest mountain valley to Seattle. If done correctly, a paving project here could be a net gain. ALPS will be closely monitoring the process. ■

Forest Service Closing Many Old Plum Creek Roads

The district agreed to incorporate many of ALPS' suggestions, but emphasized the need to get started with on-the-ground work prior to the end of the fiscal year on September 30. ALPS said it would be satisfied with a subsequent Forest Service letter listing the planned changes.

What would you do with miles of old logging roads that just happened to come along with forestlands you've recently acquired?

If you were the Cle Elum Ranger District, you'd close them. That's just what the district has been doing, and intends to continue doing according to an August 2005 Environmental Assessment with the ironic title of *Plum Creek Acquired Road Restoration*. Actually, the roads involved would be "restored" in various ways: to accommodate continued motorized travel, converted to trails, or taken

back to their natural condition (obliterated).

The roads are on lands the Forest Service has acquired from Plum Creek Timber Company since 1999 through the I-90 Land Exchange, money from the Land & Water Conservation Fund, and from groups like The Cascade Conservation Partnership. However, the district is currently limiting the road EA to only 35 square-mile sections in the Upper Yakima and Cle Elum River watersheds, leaving the remaining sections for a time when more money becomes available.

Within those 35 sections, the district proposed to obliterate 41.2 miles out of the 49.5 miles studied, and convert another 1.5 miles to winter trails. The remaining 6.8 miles, most of which provide access to private inholdings and to power lines, would be maintained for high-clearance vehicles. The winter trails are on either side of Stampede Pass Road 54, just downstream from the Keechelus Lake Dam.

ALPS applauded the district's actions and supported it in an August 28 letter to District Ranger Rodney Smoldon. However, the letter criticized some aspects of the EA's content and presentation. We wrote that it was quite confusing and suggested ways to make it more understandable. They included:

- Identifying all lands that have been acquired and will be analyzed when funding allows. The lands in this particular study would have their own identification.

- Showing the status of all roads in aerial photos of each section, which were part of the EA. Many roads in the photos were not part of the study, which gave the impression that they were to be left open. ALPS later learned from district personnel that some had already been closed by the Forest Service, and even Plum Creek, primarily for safety reasons. Others will be left open, at least for now, but some may be closed after further study.

- Giving a more thorough explanation of the criteria used to select which sections were to be analyzed and which roads were to be left open, converted or obliterated.

ALPS also urged that the district cut back on some of the roads being retained, such as terminating them at a power line rather than letting them continue on. In another case, the district intended to close all roads to the trailhead for Silver Creek, Easton Ridge and Mt. Baldy, except for a recent high-clearance Plum Creek road coming off the Kachess Lake Road 4818. That road should be maintained for passenger cars.

In a follow-up conversation, the district agreed to incorporate many of ALPS' suggestions, but emphasized the need to get started with on-the-ground work prior to the end of the fiscal year on September 30. ALPS said it would be satisfied with a subsequent Forest Service letter listing the planned changes.

We will keep our members informed of this progress and plans for the rest of the road "restorations". ■



Foggy forest.

BILL BEYERS

Hang Gliders and Sightseers on Rampart Ridge?

By Jim Chapman

As you approach Hyak on east-bound I-90, Rampart Ridge is straight ahead, staring you right in the face. If you're lucky, you might even see bird-like objects soaring above the ridge in late summer and early autumn.

But they are not birds; they are hang gliders and paragliders using the ridge-crest's steep slope to lift off, catch the air currents and soar over Lake Keechelus before gradually dropping down and gently landing along its shoreline. For those not in the know, hang gliders are supported beneath lightweight wings while paragliders use special parachute canopies. The paragliders can take off at a lower speed and soar further.

Both groups have been using the southwest nose of Rampart Ridge as a launch site for several years. Each has its own lift-off site, with the paragliders launching about 100 yards up the crest from the hang gliders. The two sites are about a half-mile southwest of the Alpine Lakes Wilderness boundary. While the upper site was always national forest, Plum Creek Timber originally owned the lower site. It was purchased and added to the national forest system in 2000, thanks to the efforts of the Mountains to Sound Greenway.

The gliders reach their launch sites by a series of roads Plum Creek and the Forest Service built to log Rampart Ridge and the Rocky Run Creek valley just to the east. Now the logging is finished, and all the land on the ridge and in the valley is national forest. Some of the roads have been

largely abandoned and the others have very little maintenance. FS Road 141, which switchbacks up Rampart Ridge from Rocky Run, is steep, narrow and exposed. Parts could fall away. Only the efforts of the gliders keep it open and they may eventually be fighting a losing battle.

The launch sites have great potential for more than just the gliders. They offer fantastic viewpoints overlooking Lake Keechelus, the upper Yakima River valley, and as far as Mt. Rainier. Therefore ALPS and six other groups have outlined a plan to not only keep the launch sites for the gliding groups, but to open it up to the general public. At the same time, it would put practically all the non-access roads to bed and build a new trail up to Lake Lillian from Rocky Run. The plan's elements include:

- Developing and executing a site plan that would accommodate, yet separate, the gliders and the general public.
- Upgrading FS Road #141 to Level 3 so that passenger cars could use it.

- Closing all other roads accessing Rampart Ridge and Mt Margaret from Rocky Run Creek. They would be put to bed and then re-vegetated with help from various conservation groups. FS Road #136, which switchbacks up to Mt. Margaret to the east of Rocky Run, would be pulled back a half-mile back from the switchback to an old landing. This would become a trailhead for Lake Lillian and Twin Lakes.
- Building a new trail from Rocky Run to Lake Lillian Trail #1332. It would replace the existing straight-up-the-hill fisherman's trail.
- Applying to the state Inter-agency Committee for Outdoor Recreation (IAC) for funding.

Besides ALPS, the other collaborators are Cloudbase Country Club, The Mountaineers, NW Paragliding Club, Sierra Club, US Hang Gliding Association, and Washington Trails Association. We will present this plan to Cle Elum District Ranger Rodney Smoldon in the near future. ■



The Pacific Crest Trail Less Travelled



ART DAY

Twilight Lake, source of the Cedar River.

By Art Day

This past August I joined friends Ed and Larry on a lonely traverse of the Pacific Crest Trail, otherwise known as the PCT. Er – lonely? How can that be? Wilder is some places than others, the trail is certainly one of the most popular around, and attracts thousands of hikers and horsemen each year. The answer to that riddle is to look to what may be the least-loved part of the PCT in Washington, the part running from Chinook Pass up to Snoqualmie. That’s about 70 miles on foot and takes in many clearcuts and roads, but also some spectacular views, quiet old growth forests, “good” stretches of wilderness in the Norse Peak area, lots and lots of flowers, and about ten miles of trail within the official boundary of the Alpine Lakes Area. Larry had done the trip before and vouched for its worthiness. If you hike this trail you will probably see more animals than people.

The southern part of our hike included some of the best hiking

on the trip. The trail was busy for a few miles from Chinook Pass on to Sheep Lake. Then everyone else seemed to drop out, and it was just the three of us. Cruising over a ridgeline we came to a meadow above Basin Lake and set up our first camp some ways below the trail. As daylight faded we walked down to the lake. This was nice, but we were really more taken by the sight and sound of bull elk bugling challenges to one another while apparently headed our way. Soon we were watching as a herd of twenty or more took the PCT southbound, noticing us but going about their business with just a pause. Now that was fun.

The next couple of days took us through the fine Norse Peak area, past Crystal Mountain, into Government Meadows (with historic Naches Pass), and then on to the beginning of logging country. Our guidebook and maps were not current enough to include all of the roads, which led to confusion and borderline desperation to find wa-

ter and a campsite near Green Pass. It being August and there being no lakes through a forty-plus-mile stretch, you can imagine that water remained a primary concern until near the end of the trip. A miserable night was spent at a trashy hunter’s camp under Blowout Mountain, but the next morning we had excellent views from the top and mostly gentle downhill for most of the day. One of the nice things about this trip heading northbound is that the topography is kind, with the trail ending lower than it begins and never pushing uphill for long.

It would also be fair to say we had the place to ourselves. On a typical day we saw a single pair of guys racing along the trail as part of a season-long border-to-border trek. They walked in some other dimension of hiking entirely, barely sensing the trail as they cruised through this zone of obligation.

On the fifth day we reached the Stampede Pass weather station, which features lots of curious weather gear, a house and garage, and, most important to us, easy water - from a spigot. Soon we saw our first lake in days, tiny and unlovely Lizard Lake. Many more dry miles eventually brought us to an old road-end camp, picked only because we were long past tired and there was a little water nearby. To its credit, the road appeared long-abandoned, and had grown the best crop of wild strawberries I had ever seen. Bear tracks showed we were not the only ones to make the discovery.

A few miles of walking the next day brought us through some fine old hemlock and silver fir just north of Stirrup Creek. In and out of shadow again, depending on the

vagaries of checkerboard clearcuts, we soon reached Yakima Pass. The pass was part of an important Indian route across the mountains; we saw no traces, but it was interesting to imagine the place as it might have been. Also there is pretty little Twilight Lake, whose outlet tips westward to become the source of the Cedar River watershed. Nearby signs explain that watershed managers are taking out excess “reprod,” dense plantings from maybe 15 – 20 years ago, to allow for better regrowth.

The next few section-line crossings offered little relief in the way of shade. In fact it was damn hot, with my pack thermometer showing nearly 90 degrees. Worse, we were into a stretch of real uphill with the sun at our backs and

had to stop frequently to “blow.” Without trees to drop needle duff the trail had gone to hot, powdery mineral dust. And flies. Really, if you are looking for a place to be mad about forest mismanagement you couldn’t find a better spot. As we came up to an overlook of this mass destruction I spotted three large gray stumps, sitting like sad old chiefs who will fight no more.

Almost suddenly, things got good again when near the top of that climb we came into green forest as welcome as water. Another half-mile and we were at Mirror Lake. This was our destination for a final night’s camp and pretty much the Promised Land. Guarded by Tinkham Peak rising from the southwest shore, it has a few small but comfortable campsites, and we

quickly noted the lake is cool and deep enough for a small but hard-working fish population. Later we watched the same two or three fish patrol the shallows under our camp for hours.

The final day began in rain that persisted to the end, heavily at times. The hiking was fine though; we were soon climbing to a shoulder of Tinkham Peak and traversing under Silver Peak, past Mount Catherine, Olallie Meadows, and Lodge Lake, and eventually up and over Dodge Ridge to the ski area. I’ll want to come back to re-visit this part of the trail and several others as short trips. I may wait a while before doing the pass-to-pass thing again, but there is something to be said for knowing something of the whole as well as the parts. ■

Fish & Wildlife Service Grant to Pick Up Swamp Lake Properties

The Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the Trust for Public Land (TPL) recently announced the receipt of a \$2,950,745 Habitat Conservation Program grant from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service that will enable DNR to purchase 297 acres at Swamp Lake. TPL has been holding much of the land pending the grant approval and has an option on the remaining land.

The Swamp Lake parcel is located a half-mile north of I-90’s Cabin Creek interchange. It is a key part of the wildlife corridor, and provides excellent cross-country skiing.

Its legal description is T21N, R12E, Sec. 13 and it’s crossed

by two major roads. FS Road 49 comes in from the Stampede Pass interchange to the west, and then intersects FS Road 4826 (from the Cabin Creek interchange) in the parcel’s northeast quarter before continuing on to the Box Canyon Campground at Lake Kachess. The new acquisitions will be north of Road 49 and east of Road 4826.

The parcel used to be owned by members of the Monahan family, which had already subdivided its northeast portion and were marketing it as *Amabilis North*. The federal government purchased the 221 acres between the two roads in 2002 to mitigate impacts from the Bureau of Reclamation’s repair work at Lake Keechelus Dam. Completing the conservation acquisition of the additional 297 acres

will leave the remaining 122 acres, almost all in the northeast quarter, available for development.

Swamp Lake had long been targeted by The Cascades Conservation Partnership, which worked with TPL to either find money to buy it outright, or to find conservation-minded buyers who would keep logging to a minimum. Development rights to 224 acres were purchased with Forest Legacy funds in 2004.

At the same time, The Nature Conservancy and the Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife announced a \$2,397,060 Habitat Conservation Program grant for WDFW to purchase 7,093 acres along the Tieton River, another Partnership goal. ■



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alpine lakes protection society
PO Box 27646
Seattle WA 98165

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BILL BEYERS

Shooting real film from Kendall Peak.



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Layout: Pat Hutson

**For membership
information, contact**

Natalie Williams

5627 47th Ave. SW

Seattle, WA 98136

dlparks@verizon.net