



By David Knibb

The Alpine Lakes area is within the North Cascades Grizzly Bear Recovery area, one of six official recovery areas in the West. Grizzlies in five of these areas are listed under the Endangered Species Act as threatened. They were removed from that list in Yellowstone last year in a controversial decision that remains under challenge.

Almost everything about grizzly bears is controversial. Disputes in the Cascades first started when the area was evaluated as a potential recovery area. Some thought any recovery area should be limited to the North Cascades National Park. They lost that argument, but more boundary disputes arose when the recovery area was finally created in 1991.

No one denies that grizzlies once lived in the Cascades, but there is also an on-going debate

Grizzly Bears in the Cascades

about whether they still do. Wildlife officials estimate there are five to twenty grizzlies on this side of the border. British Columbia's last count was slightly over a dozen on its side. Of course, there is nothing to stop bears from wandering back and forth.

People regularly report sightings of what they think are grizzlies, but the reliability of these sightings can start other arguments. Sightings are ranked, after investigation by a trained wildlife biologist, according to their reliability. Class 1 means definitely a grizzly, Class 2 means probably, Class 3 means not sure, and Class 4 means definitely not a grizzly. Over the years, Class 1 and 2 sightings have been documented throughout the Cascades, with several on the Cle Elum and Leavenworth Ranger Districts. Sightings tend to cluster in places that people frequent, but that probably means more people were looking, not that more bears live in those areas.

Other disputes have been over whether simply to leave the current grizzly bear population -- whatever its size -- alone, the importance of grizzlies to the ecosystem, whether so few bears can sustain themselves, and what to do about it. Because the North Cascades are cut off from other

grizzly bear populations, most biologists agree that the only realistic way to save the present population is to augment it with more bears. The genetic pool is simply too small to survive. Yet, Washington State passed a law in 1995 that attempts to ban importing grizzlies into the state. But that can only apply to state agencies; it cannot tie the hands of the federal government.

So the disputes rumble on. As Doug Zimmer, information specialist for the US Fish and Wildlife Service in Olympia, notes: "Nobody's neutral. Pro or con, everybody has strong feelings about grizzly bears."

Grizzlies are managed under a recovery plan, with separate chapters for each recovery area. The effort to recover grizzlies is overseen by the US Fish and Wildlife Service, although it works closely with other land managing agencies, such as the US Forest Service, Park Service,

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Grizzly Bears

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Dave Knibb, former ALPS trustee, has written a book about the controversies surrounding the effort to save grizzly bears. *Grizzly Wars, The Public Fight Over the Great Bear*, is due to be published in early October. In this book Knibb uses the North Cascades



(including the Alpine Lakes) to illustrate many issues about grizzly bear recovery.

Tuesday, November 11, 7-9 p.m., Knibb will present a class for Seattle Audubon entitled "Grizzly Bears: The Debate over Saving Them." It will be held in the Douglas Classroom at The Center for Urban Horticulture. 3501 NE 41st Street, Seattle (Laurelhurst neighborhood). Cost: \$20 Audubon members, \$35 non members. For registration and location details, see: <http://www.seattleaudubon.org/education.cfm?id=104>

Knibb will also appear Thursday, November 13, 7 p.m. at University Bookstore, 4326 University Way N.E., Seattle for a book reading and signing. Later that evening friends are hosting a small event to celebrate the debut of his book. Details will be available at the bookstore. ALPS members are invited.

Knibb is also the author of *Backyard Wilderness: the Alpine Lakes Story*, which recounts the struggle to create the Alpine Lakes Wilderness.

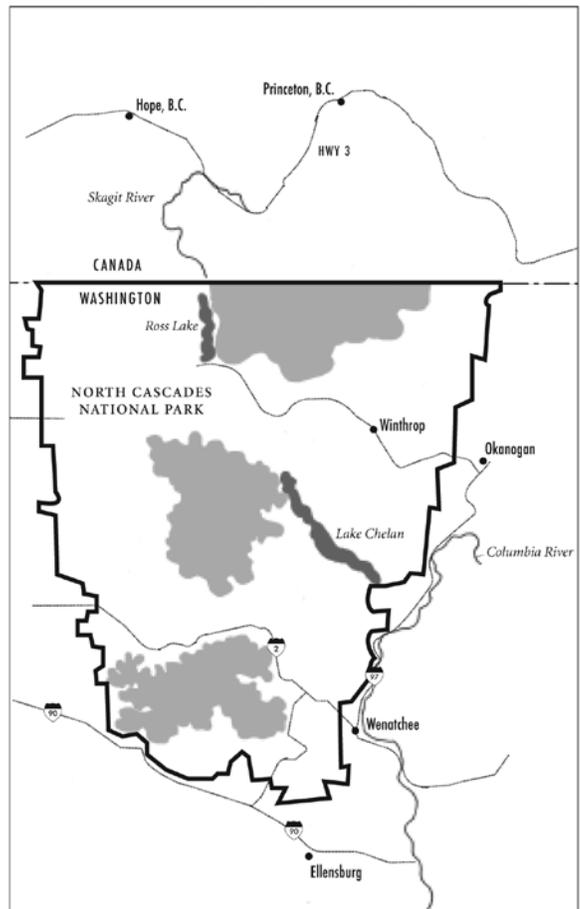
the state Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the state Department of Natural Resources. Officials from these agencies belong to an umbrella group called the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee, or IGBC. It meets several times a year.

One decision by the IGBC subcommittee for the North Cascades has already affected how federal lands are managed. The Forest Service and Park supervisors have agreed on no net loss of what they call "core areas." These are bear management units that lack roads, trails, or other forms of development. Research shows that grizzlies are sensitive to and try to avoid human activities.

Hence, an important part of making the Cascades hospitable for grizzlies is to protect these core areas.

ALPS trustees have seen the effects of this policy in action. It means no new trails or roads in trailless and roadless areas, or at least if a new trail or road is contemplated, then a comparable trail or road must be closed in some other place so that the net amount of core area remains the same.

It will not surprise anyone familiar with wildlife or land use management to know that these policies frequently involve politics. The grizzly recovery effort has been riddled with them. Attempts to roll back the Endangered Species Act, Washington's ban on



grizzly imports, riders attached to appropriation bills to block introduction of grizzlies into Idaho's Bitterroots, Interior Secretary Gail Norton's decision to shelve a grizzly recovery plan for the Bitterroots, even John McCain's criticism during the current presidential campaign of funding for grizzly DNA studies -- the list goes on.

Many environmental programs in recent years have languished for lack of funding. Wildlife generally and grizzly recovery in particular have suffered. A major DNA study of grizzlies in Montana's Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem -- the same study that Senator McCain criticized -- was in danger of shutting down for lack of funds until local forest supervisors

NRCA Expansion Likely for Middle Fork

By Rick McGuire

cobbled together enough money to keep it going. Scientists claim this study is critical to grizzly recovery in the area around Glacier National Park.

Two things are about to happen in the North Cascades. First, a five year review of the current recovery plan is underway. It will likely result in public meetings around the state sometime next year. As part of this review, the US Fish and Wildlife Service may “uplist” grizzlies in the Cascades from threatened to endangered. The dwindling population would justify this change.

Second, some people are beginning to think about a subject that has been off the table for many years -- funding for the environmental review needed to launch a recovery for the remnant grizzly population in the Cascades. Whether this will move forward, insiders say, largely depends on the national election, but the state has already appropriated some funds and at least one member of Washington State’s congressional delegation is anxious to start the process.

Whatever the short-term outcome of these events, grizzly recovery in the North Cascades, which has been out of the headlines for a number of years, may be a bigger issue in 2009. ■



ALPINE

Prospects look good for the Washington Department of Natural Resources, manager of over 15,000 acres of land in the lower Middle Fork Snoqualmie valley, to conduct a “trust land transfer” moving 7600 acres of those lands from timber production to Natural Resource Conservation Area status.

The lands are on the southeast side of the Middle Fork and include most of the Gifford and Granite Creek valleys, as well as extensive stretches of wild lowland forest in the Middle Fork valley between Granite Creek and the Pratt River. DNR is already transferring essentially all of their lands on the northwest side of the river to NRCA. This further expansion, if successful, would protect almost all of the remaining DNR lands in the Middle Fork valley.

Ten years ago, former ALPS trustee Jack Wheeler and I stood atop Peak 5454, the summit of the Russian Butte massif, and watched a grizzly bear rooting around for food not far below. This was a once in a lifetime experience in the Cascades, a lucky moment, made all the more memorable because we could see downtown Seattle far in the distance in the opposite direction. Peak 5454 stands above the Pratt and Middle Fork valleys, along the border between Forest Service and DNR lands. With the Reichert bill to designate the Pratt as National Forest Wilderness, and the likelihood of trust land transfers protecting lands on the state side, we could soon have a large extent of newly protected lands stretching through all life zones from low to high, with much of it less than 2000 feet in elevation.

Although the sighting of that single grizzly was a fluke, it did bring home to us the fact that the available habitat in the Cascades could support far more grizzlies than the 10 to 20 currently estimated to be hanging on. Protecting undisturbed “core security” habitat - places where few people go, such as the Pratt valley - is the key to helping them recover. ALPS is strenuously opposing Forest Service plans to construct a trail along the Middle Fork from Taylor River to the Pratt valley, and wants the Pratt to stay hard to get to (a river ford, difficult in spring when habitat values are highest, but easy in summer, is necessary to reach the lower Pratt River trail.) ALPS is proposing that new trails be built instead to viewpoints above the Middle Fork rather than to the Pratt. Such trails would not only have less impact on wildlife habitat but would offer far more attractive hiking opportunities.

DNR’s actions in protecting thousands of acres of low elevation habitat in the Middle Fork will be a great boost to the chances for grizzly recovery and will help many other species as well. Fifteen years ago, the idea of protecting these lands would have been unthinkable - a measure of how far ALPS and its partners have come in preserving the Middle Fork Snoqualmie, the closest mountain valley to Seattle. ■

How We Spent Our Wedding Anniversary

A Spectacular Drive Around Devil's Gulch

by Jim Chapman

Most couples like to do something special on their wedding anniversaries. This year, Carol suggested we spend the night in Leavenworth. Fine with me.

That also gave me an idea for an adventure I wanted to do for years. Take a special drive up into the nearby mountains.

I have a 1965 state highway map that shows many more roads than modern-day maps do. Some of these roads don't even exist any more and others have been closed to the general public. We used this map to explore roads around Puget Sound in our early days here and I inked in every road we drove with the idea that I would someday have traveled on every road in the state. I even had the map reproduced at full scale to preserve it.

Every time I drive to my family farm in northeast Oregon, I try to go on a new road. Right now, I've inked in every road south of I-90 to Ritzville & over to Colfax and east of The Dalles, Oregon.

The route I selected for this trip would take us south out of

Cashmere, up Mission Creek to within a few miles of the Mission Ridge Ski Area, then circle around a tributary of Mission Creek called Devil's Gulch. It would essentially follow the Chelan-Kittitas County line to the Table Mountain area, and then drop down to the old gold mining community of Liberty. From there it was only a mile or two to Highway 97 then back around to Cle Elum and home.

What does this have to do with the Alpine Lakes? While Devil's Gulch is not part of the congressionally designated Alpine Lakes Area, ALPS did add it to our recreation area proposal to Congress in 1975. This was at the request of the late Archie Mills, who was a recently retired Wenatchee National Forest official at the time. Since then, ALPS has continued to treat Devil's Gulch as part of its Alpine Lakes area.

We did have a great time in Leavenworth. We stayed at an inexpensive lodge overlooking the Wenatchee River on the east end of town, dined at an Italian restaurant and walked along its Waterfront Park. A highlight was seeing a Moffit Brothers tour bus from my hometown of Lostine, Oregon.

We also took time to see the washed-out road up Icicle Creek. The road is blocked off at Ida Creek campground, but you can walk on further. Around the first bend, there it is – water covering the entire road. It's not running fast and you can stay dry – if you're wearing hip-wader boots. A sign posted back at Ida Creek explains the cause: a debris avalanche south of the creek that blocked it.

Aerial photos show that the slide originated at the top of a late 1970s Murray Pacific clearcut.

Now to the drive. The road out of Cashmere quickly left the apple orchards and entered a canyon that gradually grew deeper and narrower. About seven miles out at Little Camas Creek, the pavement ended and we entered national forest. Soon we began seeing some of the large sculptured gray sandstone outcrops for which the area is noted.

At about 3,000 feet elevation, the valley floor ended and we began climbing another 3,000 feet to the ridge top. At a viewpoint three-quarters the way up, we met a couple of Canadian bicyclists, a man and a woman, who were going to the top.

At 4,150 feet, near the Beehive Reservoir, we reached the shoulder of the ridge. The view from there was spectacular. We could see north to Wenatchee and the Columbia River beyond, as well as south on down the river.

Soon thereafter we came upon a section of the road that was practically a highway – smooth gravel surface with few sharp curves. It was a short-lived pleasure.

The road kept climbing for about four miles until, at about 5,700 feet elevation, the good surface ended and the adventure began.

I knew, from the dashed lines on the national forest map, that the road would probably be rough but that was an understatement. It wasn't so much the rocks in the

road; it was the sudden dips into and out of washouts. Our Subaru Legacy wagon had to go through them at a crawl. Even then, it bottomed out several times. At one point, Carol said she was getting out of the car. I told her that, if that was the case, then she could make herself useful and help guide me through the dips.

She then talked about turning around, but that didn't seem possible. The road was too narrow, the ground fell away below us and there were huge boulder fields above us. I couldn't see behind me well enough to back up. The choices were to drive on, walk out, or be carried out.

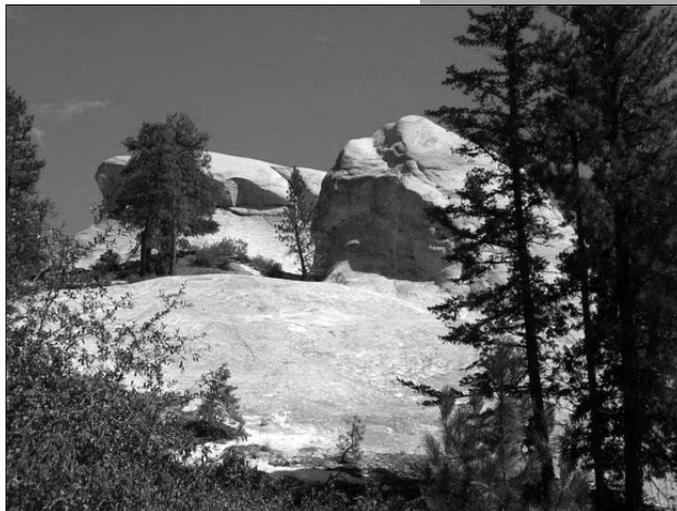
But the view below made the drive well worth it. Never lower than about 5,500 feet, we could look down and see all of Devil's Gulch with its shining slabs of rock and the Columbia River beyond. The gulch begins at about 4,800 feet elevation and drops to less than 1,800 feet at its mouth, so we were looking several thousand feet down into it.

Finally, near the trailhead to Mt. Lillian, the road began to improve. We veered away from the gulch and soon started passing meadows with post fences, a sure sign of horse country. Once we reached the saddle north of Table Mountain, the road was like a freeway and we made it down to Liberty and home with no further problems.

If you're looking for a nice Sunday drive, consider this one. But come prepared for adventure.



The Icicle Creek Road and River become one.



Spectacular rocks overlook the Mission Creek/Devil's Gulch area.



From the road looking into Devil's Gulch — all view, no traffic.

Alpine Lakes Map — 4th Edition Update

The Alpine Lakes Wilderness map has been revised, and is ready for printing. The 4th edition has about 100 changes, ranging from new trails to deleted roads. It includes the boundary of the Wild Sky Wilderness, and a revised text on the back side of the map. The new map has a revised road hierarchy that is clearer than used on the last edition. ALPS published the 3rd edition in 2002, with a

printing of 7,500 copies. This edition was produced digitally by Allan Cartography, and they have done the revisions contained in the 4th edition. We will again print the map on waterproof stock, and it will be printed by Pikes Peak Lithography. The Alpine Lakes Foundation received a gift from the Oakmead Foundation to defray the cost of revising and printing the new map. Income from the sale of the

map helps ALPS fund its efforts to protect the Alpine Lakes region. The new edition of the map should be on sale before the end of this year. We will also print a limited number of flat maps on paper stock. Our editors for the new edition were trustees Bill Beyers and Rick McGuire, who received invaluable help from Forest Service district staff as well as other ALPS trustees. ■

Hike report — Silver Peak

By Art Day

Was I the last ALPS member to hike up Silver Peak? With it being one of the closest-in and most visibly obvious landmarks from the I-90 freeway near Lake Keechelus, it could be true. But as I discovered on an August weekend this year, the foot traffic leaving the PCT and taking the sidetrip to Silver can be remarkably light, while the hike itself was a just-right outing for someone (me) who never really did toughen up for the hiking season.

Plenty of families were on the PCT, headed either to Mirror Lake or just walking until the kids gave out. The real surprise was the number of trail runners passing me at the end of the day. This mystery was solved when I returned to the trailhead and found support vans waiting with friends and spouses, all associated with the Cascade Crest 100 Mile Endurance Run. Not my cup of tea, but at least it wasn't passing through remote camps become suddenly civilized through the presence of



ART DAY

A pleasant stretch of the Silver Peak trail

Nike swooshes. I've heard of such things in the Enchantment Lakes area, and hope never to encounter it in person.

Returning to my subject, this hike starts out where the Crest Trail intersects Forest Road 9070 behind Mt. Catherine. After

following the PCT for about a mile and a half, there are some cairns about 200 feet north of a stream crossing that mark a fairly obvious path westward and upward. (There's also a poor route that starts closer to the stream. Go farther north.) With a few short exceptions, it's a decent if unmaintained trail from there to the top, which takes perhaps 45 minutes from the PCT. There is nice meadow along the way, and then a south-facing talus-covered slope that is also tolerably walkable provided it's not attempted in summer heat. Low-lying huckleberries line its lower reaches. Views arrive from Rainier, Seattle, and dozens of peaks of the Alpine Lakes area as you go up.

I returned the way I had come, but for a longer trip one can loop around Twin Lakes after returning to the Crest Trail and add several miles and new views. This trip is featured in my 1985 edition of 100 Hikes in the South Cascades and Olympics as the Cold Creek-Silver Peak Loop. ■

National Forests ORV Travel Management Update – July 2008

(reprinted from *The Wild Cascades*, newsletter of the North Cascades Conservation Council)

By Karl Forsgaard

Our National Forests are midway through a four-year process of ORV “Travel Management Planning,” to implement the Travel Management Rule. The rule is the long-delayed implementation of the Nixon-Carter Executive Orders on off-road vehicle (ORV) route designations. Each Forest needs to publish a Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM) by December 2009, showing designated routes.

In the Travel Management process, ORV interests will seek to entrench ORV use on as many miles of trail as possible (including existing hiker/horse trails), in as many unprotected roadless areas as possible, to prevent future Wilderness designations. Many Americans care about these unprotected roadless areas in our National Forests – the Clinton roadless rule comment period drew more public comments than any other federal rulemaking (environmental or otherwise) in U.S. history. Most would not want to see the roadless areas turned into ORV sportsparks -- but that is what some ORV users want.

In Washington State, the Forest Service is also beginning to use the 2005 “Hinkle bill” (HB 1003) that allows road managers to allow non-street-legal ORVs on designated dirt roads (like National Forest logging roads as well as local county and town roads) on a case-by-case basis.

On the east side of the North Cascades, the Okanogan and Wenatchee National Forests have the heaviest ORV use of the

National Forests in Washington State. Okanogan and Wenatchee held public meetings in the summer of 2006 and again in the summer of 2007. NCCC members attended these public meetings, scrutinized the web-based draft maps of possible new routes, and submitted detailed comments which the Forest Service is now processing. The 2007 draft proposals included 1,007 miles of new miles where non-street-legal ORVs could ride on existing roads, plus 113 miles of proposed new ORV routes other than existing roads, and only 5 miles of trails where ORV use would be reduced. This would constitute a doubling of the miles where one could ride a non-street-legal ORV in Wenatchee and Okanogan National Forests, while ORV closures were proposed for one-half of one percent of the current total. We are concerned about the enormous environmental and social consequences of such a massive change, especially with the Forest Service’s lack of resources to monitor damage and enforce its own rules – consequences such as wildlife habitat degradation and fragmentation, noise impacts on natural soundscape, displacement of quiet recreationists out of these areas, and other significant impacts.

The Forest Service has been conducting a safety analysis of the proposed changes, including the proposed “mixed-use” roads, which should result in some of the proposed new routes being dropped for safety reasons. Washington State does not have a statute setting an age limit on non-

street-legal ORV use (there is no drivers’ license required for kids to drive a 4-wheeled ATV “quad”), so mere children could be driving these machines at high speeds on roads that are also used by logging trucks, passenger cars, etc., with increased potential for tragedy.

In the fall of 2008, the Okanogan and Wenatchee Forests plan to issue maps of their “proposed action” while publishing a Notice of Intent in the Federal Register to begin the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process of environmental review, probably through one or more Draft Environmental Impact Statements. NCCC will be actively engaged in the NEPA process, and will notify its members when the public meetings and comment periods are scheduled.

On the west side, the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest has not yet publicly announced the process, although it still plans to complete it by the end of 2009. The MBS and Olympic National Forests are considering proposed actions that minimize the NEPA issues by making no changes in the current management direction in those forests. Unlike the Okanogan & Wenatchee Forests, the MBS and Olympic Forests have relatively few trails currently open to motorized use, and are not proposing a major opening of logging roads to “mixed use” by non-street-legal ORVs. ■



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A field of bees and daisies.



The newsletter of the Alpine Lakes Protection Society (ALPS). ALPS is dedicated to protection of the Alpine Lakes area in Washington's Cascades.

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