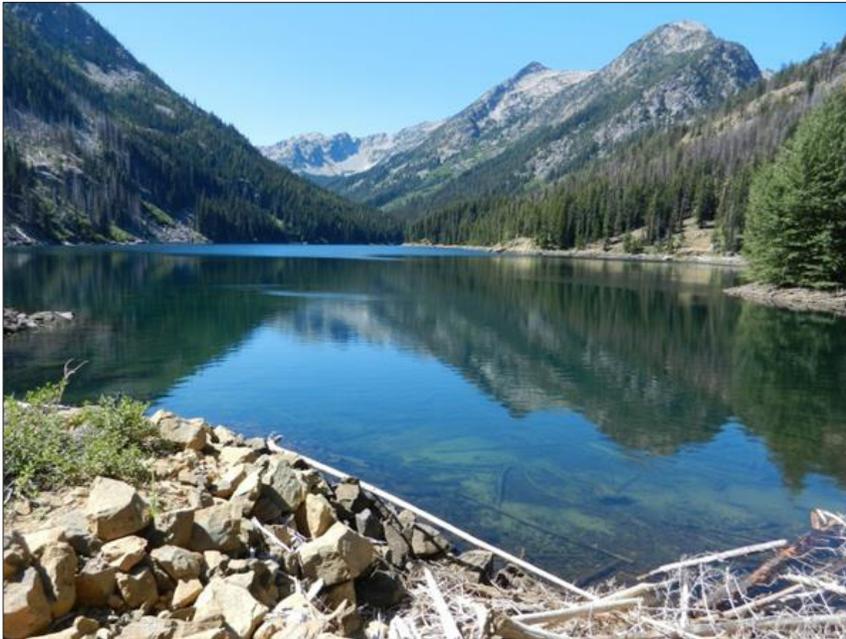


Water Users Propose Icicle Creek Water Projects in Wilderness

By Gus Bekker



GUS BEKKER

View of Eightmile Lake from dam intake.

On December 4, 2012 the State Department of Ecology's Office of Columbia River (OCR) and the Chelan County Natural Resources Department (County) convened a meeting to form a Work Group to identify opportunities for improving the health of the Icicle Creek Basin for both instream and out-of-stream needs. Both OCR and the County feel that there are opportunities for collaboration on Icicle Creek water resource issues that would address some longstanding conflicts in the basin as well as provide solutions to future water issues related to the Wenatchee River watershed of which Icicle Creek is a sub-basin. The vision of the facilitated Icicle

Creek Work Group (IWG) is to find collaborative solutions for water management within Icicle Creek and to provide a suite of balanced benefits for existing and new water users. The IWG wants to ultimately develop a comprehensive water resources management plan that leads to implementation of high-priority water resource projects within the Icicle Creek sub-basin.

The County, operating under a grant from OCR, has developed a preliminary set of issues of concern in the basin with a list of projects that have been or are being considered that could address these concerns. OCR is charged with using money from the Columbia River Basin Water

Supply Development account to address water needs within the Columbia River system. OCR is also in a position to request State capital funding for projects related to the Icicle Creek sub-basin. Fifteen organizations deemed to have a direct interest in managing water resources in Icicle Creek were initially invited to participate as IWG members. The U.S. Forest Service and the Alpine Lakes Protection Society (ALPS) were not on the original list of invited interests but have been attending IWG meetings since May 2013. The Forest Service later became a formal member of the IWG; ALPS declined to become a member, but is still monitoring the IWG and providing constructive input.

Of particular interest to ALPS is the "Alpine Lakes Optimization, Modernization and Automation project"

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Icicle Creek Water Projects proposed in Wilderness

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(ALOMA) and the “Eightmile Lake Dam Restoration project” (ELDR) which are part of the Icicle Creek Comprehensive Water Management Strategy that identifies potential projects that could be implemented to solve some of the water resource issues in Icicle Creek and the Wenatchee River watershed. At the first meeting that ALPS attended in May 2013 we learned that the ALOMA and ELDR projects were on a list of ten possible “base projects” that together (all ten projects) were projected to provide flow and storage benefits of 69cfs and 22,500 acre-feet, respectively, with an investment of around \$50 million and a cost per acre-foot of around \$2,250.

The ALOMA project is specifically designed to automate and optimize releases of water from six lakes located in the Alpine Lakes Wilderness (ALW). The six lakes are:

1. Nada Lake
2. Upper and Lower Snow Lakes
3. Colchuck Lake
4. Eightmile Lake
5. Upper and Lower Klonaqua Lakes
6. Square Lake

The current estimated cost to implement the ALOMA project is \$1.1 million with a net estimated benefit of 14.57cfs or 2,163 acre-feet of water.

The ELDR project proposes to restore the deteriorated, nonfunctional Eightmile Lake intake dam to allow storage of more water up to the permitted level. This would mean that the Eightmile Lake pool level would rise from the current 1200 acre-feet to approximately 2,000-2,500 acre-feet of stored water. The Icicle-



Eightmile Lake dam structure.

GUS BRAKKE

Peshastin Irrigation District (IPID) claims to have the water rights to permit IPID to dam Eightmile Lake up to the 2,500 acre-foot water level. The current estimated cost to implement the ELDR project is \$1.2 million with a net estimated benefit of 8.7cfs or 1,300 acre-feet or water.

In late 2013, IPID had plans to draw down the water level at Eightmile Lake to evaluate the work needed to restore the dam. IPID has also stated that it is the “land owner” of Eightmile Lake and that it is going to “fix Eightmile Lake whether people like it or not.” There is also some question as to whether IPID actually has the water rights it asserts, and the possibility that some water rights IPID may have once had were subsequently relinquished. In February 2014, ALPS recommended that the Eightmile Lake expansion project be removed from the IWG process and not treated as a consensus project, due to the many unanswered legal and factual questions about the extent and validity of IPID’s current water right, and what expansion would entail.

At the May 2014 meeting of IWG, IPID said it is moving forward with its ELDR and ALOMA projects, and will start to look at structural issues with the Eightmile Lake dam and will also soon apply to the Forest Service for permits for an ALOMA feasibility study. The study will not be looking at pool raise, and will cost \$200,000. IPID is also looking for funds for helicopter flights to the lakes, and wants to figure out how to automate the structures at each lake. Currently when a lake dam is opened by hand it takes approximately 24 hours to see the flow results downriver at the IPID intakes. IPID does not know what the refill rate is for these lakes, i.e., how much water can be released from the lake and still allow it to refill. The Leavenworth National Fish Hatchery takes water out of Snow and Nada Lakes and stated that it can take 50cfs over 75 days and still refill those lakes.

At its May 2014 meeting, the IWG also decided to pay the manager of IPID a salary of \$25,000 for his participation in the IWG.

For more information on the Icicle Work Group, see its website: www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/cwp/icicle

Federal District Court Decision May Bring Changes to Management of Snowmobiles

By Charlie Raymond

Presidential directives dating from the Nixon and Carter administrations (Executive Orders 117644 and 11989) require the US Forest Service to “establish policies and provide for procedures that will ensure that the use of off-road vehicles on public lands will be controlled and directed so as to protect the resources of those lands, to promote the safety of all users of those lands, and to minimize conflicts among the various uses of those lands.” The orders include both wheeled off-road vehicles (ORVs) and over-snow vehicles (OSVs with snowmobiles being of most concern).

After much delay, the National Forest Service (NFS) issued the national “Travel Management Rule” in 2005 aimed to implement the Executive orders. The Rule requires that all National Forest lands be closed to off-road vehicular travel except designated open routes and limited areas clearly identified on published maps issued by each National Forest. After a complex process over the intervening years, the Okanogan Wenatchee National Forest is scheduled to release a Travel Plan Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) later this year. The DEIS will outline various Alternatives for the Forest including the Alpine Lakes area (see related article in the Alpine for 2012, Issue 1). There will be a period of 60 days following the publication for public comment.

The 2005 National Travel Management Rule allows a National Forest to opt out of doing Travel Management for OSVs. Indeed, only a few National Forests chose to engage management of snowmobiles as

part of Travel Management. The Okanogan Wenatchee National Forest was one of many Forests that chose not to include motorized winter recreation in the Travel Management process. Thus, the coming Travel Management DEIS will provide no management for snowmobiles.

The exemption of OSVs from the mandatory requirements of the National Travel Management Rule is clearly in conflict with the Presidential directives. The exemption and its serious consequences motivated action by the Winter Wildlands Alliance and many supporting environmental and winter recreation groups. In September of 2009, they petitioned the NFS to remove the OSV exemption from the national Travel Management Rule. The petition was denied. The Alliance then went to the United States District Court of Idaho with a suit. In spring of 2013 the Court ruled that the OSV exemption is illegal. It directed the NFS to issue a new Rule including management of OSVs under common criteria for other off-road vehicles.

The Court ruling has huge implications for management of snow-clad areas throughout the National Forest System. The Alpine Lakes Area in the Wenatchee National Forest is no exception. Over the last few decades, ever-more powerful snowmobiles in increasingly large numbers have invaded vast areas - especially along the southeast margin of the Alpine Lakes Wilderness Area in the Cle Elum Ranger District. Snowmobilers appear to claim ownership of all areas outside of the designated wilderness as traditional users. Snowmobile incursions into the

wilderness have become frequent. The winter landscape has been transformed from one of peaceful quiet to a place of tension with levels of noise, air pollution and travel speeds that are more intense than found on most roads and places in cities. Quiet recreation in natural surroundings has become very hard to find in winter from most access points along the I-90 corridor. There was no formal open environmental review or public decision process attending this transformation of the Forest. The US Federal Court decision should bring the environmental analysis and broad public participation that has been bypassed and eventually lead to a more fair balance between motorized and non-motorized winter recreation.

In mid June (2014), the NFS announced proposed amendments to the 2005 Travel Management Rule guiding management of OSVs. ALPS along with other environmental groups find the proposed amendments seriously lacking with a clear leaning toward preserving the status quo of huge areas open without restraint to OSV riding. The amendments do not hold OSVs to the central foundation of the 2005 Rule, in particular the uniform policy of “closed unless designated open” on all NSF lands. The justification provided by the FS for exceptional leniency for OSVs is that they do not normally travel directly on the ground and leave no lasting track. While that may be true, it is not sufficient as an over-reaching distinction between wheeled ORV and OSV policy. Motorized vehicles do not have to be directly on the ground to produce serious

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DNR Snoqualmie Corridor Efforts Continue

The Washington State Department of Natural Resource's South Puget Sound district is continuing and expanding its efforts following on from the Snoqualmie Corridor planning process, in which ALPS has actively participated. The Snoqualmie Corridor effort began by examining the land use and recreational possibilities on more than 50,000 acres of DNR managed lands stretching from Tiger Mountain in the west to the Middle Fork Snoqualmie in the east. It also includes about 10,000 acres of recently acquired lands in the Raging River watershed southeast of Tiger Mountain and state Highway 18.

DNR's main near-term focus areas are the Middle Fork, with hiking trails in places like Mailbox Peak, Granite Creek, and Mount Teneriffe, and also eastern Tiger Mountain, where mountain bike trails would be located. Trails for hikers, bikers and horses are all planned for the Raging River valley, but full development there will need to wait for the state to make improvements to Highway 18.



View from Dog Mountain.

At present, access to the lower end of the Raging River valley requires left turns across heavily traffic on that congested highway. DNR cannot develop facilities that rely on such poor and dangerous access. Future plans include an overpass, to be built at Holder Gap, and other major works at the junction of Hwy 18 with I-90. These will allow safe access into the valley at its lower end. In the interim, access is from Snoqualmie Point off I-90 to the east of

Highway 18, although this requires a climb and descent of about 600 feet on the way in and the way out.

DNR is looking at even more trail possibilities, including to the 5800-foot summit of "Cloudcatcher Peak" at the head of Granite Creek, which would be accessed from the Dirty Harry's Balcony area along I-90. ALPS has been part of DNR's recreation planning for nearly twenty years, and looks forward to many more years of cooperation. ■

ALPS Welcomes New Eastside Trustee

Since the last *Alpine* came out, Gus Bekker of Wenatchee has been appointed to fill the vacancy left by Mike Pierson's resignation. We're sorry to lose Mike, but are delighted to have Gus as an active board member. Readers will find some of his work in this issue, with his article on water control projects (dams) in the Icicle River system.

Gus has worked in the natural resources field as both a Forester and Wildlife Biologist since the late 1970s. He started his natural resources career on the

Boise National Forest in Idaho working as a U.S. Forest Service Silviculturist and then went on to the Helena National Forest in Montana where he worked several years on a fire crew. He then moved to Washington and was a Research Wildlife Biologist at the U.S. Forest Service's Pacific Northwest Research Station in Olympia. In Olympia Gus conducted a small mammal prey base study for the Northern Spotted Owl at research sites on the Olympic Peninsula and on the Umpqua National Forest in South

Central Oregon. Gus followed up that study with a two-year research project on the habitat and ecology of pine martens on the Mt. Baker Snoqualmie National Forest which involved trapping and radio-collaring live martens. Gus completed two years as a Peace Corps Volunteer where he worked as an Extension Forester and Environmental Educator in Northern Ecuador. Gus is the founder and president of "El Sendero," a Wenatchee based

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Alpine Lakes Bill Passes House Resources Committee

After what has seemed like an eternity without actions, the Reichert / DelBene / Murray legislation to expand the Alpine Lakes Wilderness by about 22,000 acres and designate the Middle Fork Snoqualmie and Pratt rivers as Wild & Scenic has finally started moving. On July 30th, the House Resources Committee passed the measure with a favorable recommendation to the full House of Representatives. The bill has already passed the Senate, so now everything depends on whether the House will act before the end of this Congress.

Since its first introduction in 2007, the bill has passed the House, and passed the Senate, but not in the same Congress. It is now as close to the finish line as it has ever been, and ALPS and other conservation groups are hoping that 2014 will be the year it finally passes.

The bill would protect over 10,000 acres of low elevation mature and old growth forests in the Pratt River valley and in parts of the Middle Fork Snoqualmie valley. These forests are directly



TOM O'KEEFE

Russian Butte and Middle Fork Snoqualmie.

contiguous with a further 10,000-plus acres of forests already protected on State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) lands in the lower Middle Fork valley. If and when the Alpine Lakes expansion bill passes, the combination of protected low elevation forests on National

Forest land and in Natural Resource Conservation Areas on DNR lands will together form the largest extent of protected lowland forests in the Cascades. It will be an unbroken stretch of solid green, unsurpassed by anything outside of Olympic National Park.

Not all the news is good, though. The version of the bill reported out by the Resources Committee has some ambiguous language adversely affecting the Wild & Scenic river corridor. About 300 acres in the Middle Fork valley along the route of the Pratt connector trail between Taylor River and the Pratt River are deleted from the Wilderness in the House version.

Hopefully these problems can be addressed when the House and Senate versions are reconciled. ALPS and sister conservation groups are hopeful that 2014 will be the year that the Alpine Lakes expansion bill finally passes, finishing the campaign begun by ALPS in 1987 to keep the Pratt River valley and its forests wild. ■

Trustee *Continued from page 4*

Backcountry Ski and Snowshoe Club and leads backcountry winter trips for the club during the winter. Currently Gus serves as a committee member of the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest's Provisional Advisory Committee and the U.S. Forest Service's Region 6 Recreational Advisory Committee. Gus has a Bachelors of Science degree in both Wildlife Management and Forest Management from the University of Idaho. ■

Decision May Bring Changes To Snowmobile Management

Continued from page 3

impact on resources, disturb other recreational users or pose safety concerns. Indeed, in some ways OSVs can have even larger impacts than wheeled ORVs. The Executive Orders and the associated judicial record do not give deference to OSVs in comparison to other motorized vehicles.

The NFS allowed a 45-day comment period, ending on August 4, 2014. We hope that the comments received, including those from ALPS and other environmental viewpoints, will foster revised amendments returning peace and quiet to the National Forests in winter. ■

Middle Fork Snoqualmie Paving Project Begins

By Rick McGuire

After twenty years of being right on the verge of starting, the long debated and long awaited Federal Highways Administration project to upgrade and pave the Middle Fork Snoqualmie road has finally begun. The road will be paved from the current end of pavement at Valley Camp, up eleven miles to the campground at Taylor River.

The benefits of the project are expected to be easier access for the public and for law enforcement. It will also reduce the terrible dust that coats vegetation for miles every summer, reduce gravel runoff into streams, and provide fish passage on a number of currently blocked creeks.

ALPS has always been of two minds about this project. It will obviously remove the filter of the bad Middle Fork road, and allow much more use in the valley, for

both good and bad. Twenty years ago, the Middle Fork was a much different place. Wild shooting, garbage dumping, and vandalism made it a good place to avoid. Leaving a car to go on a hike was always a worry. Back then, anything seemed preferable to the state of decay into which the Middle Fork had fallen, and ALPS and other conservation groups were open to the idea of the paving project.

Concerted efforts over the intervening years have made the situation much better. The biggest change came from closure of the many spur roads, which led off the main road, often to squalid, muddy garbage strewn dump sites. The Washington Department of Natural Resources took the lead on closing these eyesores. It took years of work to get the Forest Service to do the same, but

eventually they did.

Today's Middle Fork still suffers some of the old problems, but not nearly to the extent it once did. The main concern now is simply the level of use that is expected once the road is paved. As fuel grows more expensive, and old logging roads on Forest Service lands continue to be abandoned, use in the Middle Fork will skyrocket. New trails and facilities are planned, especially on DNR managed lands (see item below), but there is great concern that it will never be enough, and that sheer numbers will overwhelm the valley. New, creative solutions to the problem of people management need to be found. We'll have to hope that the Middle Fork won't become a place where, as Yogi Berra supposedly said, "no one goes there anymore. It's too crowded." ■



TOM O'KEEFE

Kayaking the Middle Fork near Taylor River, Gateway Bridge beyond.

Teanaway Lands Purchased By State

By Rick McGuire



KARL FORSGAARD

Clearcuts of Teanaway Community Forest from Red Top.

Management efforts are now underway for the “Teanaway Community Forest,” approximately 50,000 acres of land purchased from American Forest Resource Corporation in the lower Teanaway watershed near Cle Elum. The price paid for these lands, once owned by Boise Cascade, was just under 100 million dollars.

While ALPS is a big supporter of public lands acquisitions in general, this purchase has raised a number of disturbing questions not just for ALPS but for many other conservation groups as well. This purchase is a central part of the “Yakima Integrated Plan,” an effort to provide more water to Yakima valley irrigators. Although there is nothing in the legislative language describing it as such, the Teanaway purchase is a political quid pro quo for the destruction of 1000 acres of ancient forests for a new dam at Bumping Lake in the South Cascades east of Mt. Rainier.

Many believe that the tradeoff is a bad deal for the public and for the cause of forest preservation. Although only one-fiftieth the acreage of the

Teanaway purchase, the forests at Bumping are arguably far more valuable, and are some of the very best remaining in the state of Washington. Celebrated by William O. Douglas in “Of Men and Mountains,” the Bumping Lake forests are home to species from both sides of the Cascades. A natural multi-aged mosaic, with some trees over 800 years old, they are all the more rare for growing on mostly flat ground.

The newly purchased Teanaway lands could hardly be more different. Apart from a few very small areas where state regulations to protect spotted owls kept cutting at bay, the Teanaway lands are among the most heavily cutover in the state. Everything of value has been taken. Supposedly preserved as a “working forest,” the lands have been so thoroughly logged over that even proponents admit that there will be nothing to cut for at least 50 years.

The Teanaway lands are jointly managed as a “community forest” by the state Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Fish and Wildlife. Any management activities will be a net

drain on state coffers for the next half-century. Some of the lands are at the dry lower limit of where trees can grow, at the forest/shrub-steppe boundary. Logging has been so severe in these marginal areas that trees may not grow back, with shrublands forming instead.

Questions have also been raised about the breathtaking \$2000 per acre price paid for the Teanaway lands. Although there is some residential development potential on a limited number of choicer sites, the price per acre is more than eight times that paid by King County for the development rights to the Hancock Snoqualmie Tree Farm, which is far more developable and much closer to Seattle.

The amazing price paid for the Teanaway lands at a time of extreme budget stress for the state is just one of the many mysteries and problems with the Yakima Plan. The Plan also calls for the establishment of large National Recreation Areas (NRAs) dedicated to off-road vehicles, north of I-90 in the Teanaway and south of I-90 in the Manastash area. Both areas are already suffering greatly from ORV impacts, which will multiply if the NRAs are established.

Ironically, the Yakima Plan’s main beneficiaries, the agribusiness operations of the Yakima valley, are unlikely to actually see their water allocations increased. The watershed above Bumping Lake is neither large enough nor rainy enough to justify a dam bigger than the one already there. An expanded reservoir would not fill reliably, a fact that caused the federal Bureau of Reclamation to twice reject the idea in the past. As with most of the rest of the \$5 billion Yakima Plan, wishful thinking seems to trump realities. ■



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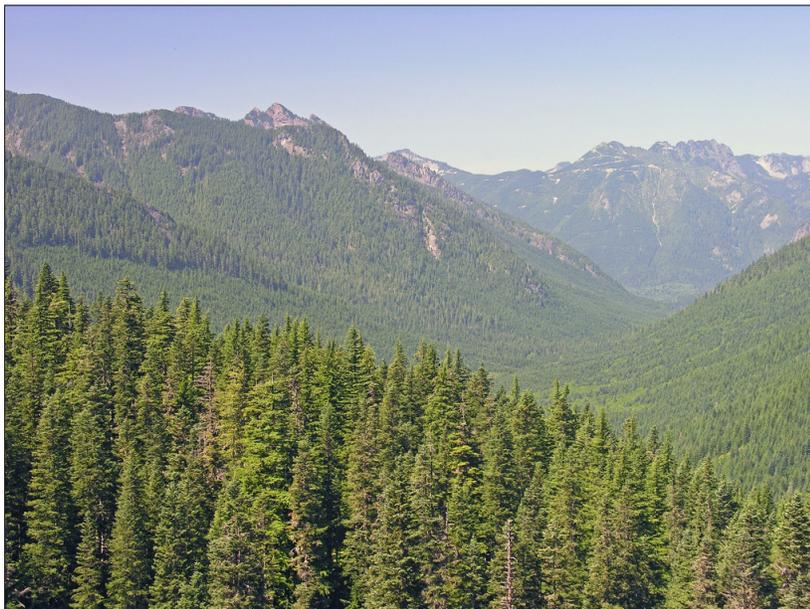
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View looking down Pratt River Valley.



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