



Rick McGuire

Pratt River valley now in Alpine Lakes Wilderness

By Rick McGuire and Donald Parks

After over forty years of work by the Alpine Lakes Protection Society (ALPS), the Sierra Club and several other conservation organizations, the Pratt River valley and nearby areas are now protected within the Alpine Lakes Wilderness. Parts of the Middle Fork Snoqualmie and Pratt were also designated as Wild and Scenic Rivers. Our bill was included in the catch-all “National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA),” and signed into law on December 19, 2014. This unusual vehicle was used to package our bill and a number of other lands and waters bills

because of difficult politics in the US Senate.

Background and Early History thru 1976

The road to permanent protection for the low elevation Pratt valley, the center-piece of this legislation, has been long and twisting. The Pratt valley suffered from a checkerboard pattern of alternating federal and private ownership resulting from the 1864 Northern Pacific Land Grant. The railroad subsequently sold its lands in the Pratt and many other parts of the Cascades

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Pratt River valley now in Alpine Lakes Wilderness

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to Weyerhaeuser. Its subsidiary North Bend Timber Company logged lands in the lower and middle Pratt, both private and National Forest sections, from the 1920s through 1941.

Early railroad-based logging was not very thorough, and much old growth survived. Low wood prices during the Depression years meant that only the best trees were worth the effort to cut and haul out. Thus many areas were simply bypassed. Logged areas were never artificially replanted, and have now grown back nicely into diverse, naturally regenerated, mature second growth forest, with many trees now more than 3 feet in diameter and 150 feet tall. The Pratt valley and much of the Middle Fork are well on their way to becoming old growth, “ancient forest” again. Although perhaps not literally true, local legend has it that scrap iron from rails torn up after the Pratt logging went toward building Admiral Yamamoto’s *Kido Butai* (mobile striking force) that attacked Pearl Harbor in Hawaii, bringing America into World War II.

Conservationist interest in this area started at least 50 years ago when a 334,000-acre Wilderness proposal was developed to replace the Alpine Lakes Limited Area that was established by the Forest Service in 1946. The North Cascades Study of 1965, a joint National Park Service and Forest Service effort, resulted in an early Forest Service proposal to protect the Alpine Lakes area with a two-unit Wilderness of 195,000 acres that was mostly rock and ice.

The Forest Service initiated a study of the Alpine Lakes Region in 1971 and developed management alternatives for the area. The study team eventually

developed a larger single-unit Wilderness proposal that encompassed 374,342 acres. But many important places were left out, so conservationists worked out their own proposal. By 1974 ALPS and a coalition of conservation groups had proposed a 565,000 acre Wilderness including more checkerboard land and more forests than the Forest Service had proposed. This proposal by conservationists included the entire Pratt River and much of the Middle Fork Snoqualmie area.

But when Congress finished drawing final boundaries for the Wilderness in 1976, encompassing 393,400 acres, the Pratt valley was not included. This was because this forest was considered “high quality timberland”; it was in checkerboard ownership requiring additional funding for the legislation; and it had been cut only 30-40 years previously. ALPS and its allies tried to include as much forest in the Wilderness as possible, but the politics of the day were heavily influenced by the timber industry, thus much low elevation forest was excluded.

Defending the Pratt 1977–2006

Conservationists viewed the 1976 bill as a start toward protecting the region, not the end. The recent legislation takes a big step toward finishing the job started in the 1970s. ALPS has worked steadily to protect the forests surrounding the Wilderness ever since it was established, advocating for administrative protections, and supporting purchases and exchanges to acquire critical private lands, such as the checker-boarded sections in the Pratt valley, which are now entirely in public ownership.

The Forest Service prepared a management plan for the Alpine Lakes Area as directed by Congress in 1981. While this plan did administratively

protect a number of unroaded areas, including many that were contiguous to the designated Wilderness, many other areas were not protected, including the Pratt which was left vulnerable.

The 1976 Legislation did however set in motion a major effort to adjust the ownership pattern in the region, resulting in an Alpine Lakes Land Exchange that was formalized in 1979 and took several years to carry out. Weyerhaeuser took advantage of the situation and exchanged out of a number of significant areas including all of its holdings in the Pratt River Valley.

With the Pratt now entirely in federal ownership and Alpine Lakes Area planning completed, the Forest Service unveiled plans in 1987 for several massive timber sales in the erstwhile North Bend Ranger District that included the Pratt Valley. A major USFS sponsored field trip was held in the Pratt in the late summer of 1987. ALPS swung into action, forming a Pratt River-Middle Fork Steering Committee, and mobilizing widespread opposition to the new cutting plans. Then-Congressman John Miller introduced a bill to designate the Pratt as a Wild & Scenic river. Although it did not pass, broad public opposition to roading and logging the Pratt eventually caused the Forest Service to back away from the plan. The Forest Service ended up with much more than it bargained for from its Pratt sale proposal. After the sale was stopped, Pratt defenders came to the realization that the real prize was not just the Pratt, but the entire Middle Fork Snoqualmie valley itself.

During the development of the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie Forest Plan, completed in 1990, protection of the Pratt was a high priority for the environmental community. In fact the Pratt generated more specific calls for protection than any other

area on the national forest. But the Forest Service ignored these inputs and continued to allocate the Pratt for road construction and timber cutting.

But in April 1990 everything changed when the Jack Ward Thomas report on the northern spotted owl proposed major areas of national forest land in Washington, Oregon, and California to be withdrawn from timber production. This proposal included the Pratt Valley, and it was listed in every major subsequent owl study. The pressure to log the Pratt was greatly reduced.

The Middle Fork is the closest mountain valley to Seattle, but by the late 1980s it had degenerated into a sort of mountain slum. Shooting, dumping and vandalism gave it a well-deserved reputation as a place to avoid. But ALPS members and others formed the Middle Fork Outdoor Recreation Coalition (MidFORC,) and began a campaign to “take back” the Middle Fork and make it a place that people could safely enjoy. For over 25 years, ALPS and MidFORC have been working to further consolidate public ownership in the Middle Fork, close off spur roads and clean up the messes left by vandals. In addition, work was done to get a new campground built, trails constructed, and the Middle Fork road paved. Today’s Middle Fork is far different than it was 25 years ago.

Adding the Pratt valley to the Alpine Lakes Wilderness has long been a priority for ALPS and its allies whose members kept the idea alive and worked to inform and educate Congressional members and staff about its desirability. These outreach efforts started in the 1980s with Congressman Rod Chandler whose eighth district encompassed the Pratt at that time. But no result was produced from these first conversations.

Final Push for the Pratt, 2007-2014

Ultimately, these outreach efforts did bear fruit when Congressman Dave Reichert introduced an excellent bill to add the Pratt and parts of the Middle Fork and South Fork Snoqualmie valleys to the Wilderness in 2007. After the passage of Wild Sky in 2008, Senator Patty Murray took up the cause, introducing a revised bill in the Senate, adding the Middle Fork Snoqualmie River as a Wild and Scenic River. Reichert and Murray were later joined by Suzan DelBene after the 2010 redistricting placed the Pratt-Middle Fork area into the new First Congressional District which she now represents. The three worked as a strong and effective team to gain passage of this legislation.

The bill passed the House, and passed the Senate, but never in the same Congress until 2014, when it finally made it through the House Resources Committee, followed by Senate passage in December, when it was attached to the NDAA, a “must pass” catch-all bill thousands of pages long, to which all kinds of non-defense-related measures were added. Some provisions, like the Pratt, were excellent, while others, like the transfer of many thousands of acres of old growth forest out of Alaska’s Tongass National Forest were harmful. In addition to the Pratt Wilderness, the bill also designated Illabot Creek in Skagit County as a Wild and Scenic River.

Passage of the bill closes a chapter for ALPS after more than four decades of work. Of particular note is the roughly 5,000 acres of low-elevation mature second-growth forest now protected in the Pratt and Middle Fork Snoqualmie, following the inclusion of about 6,000 acres of similar forest in Wild Sky. Also worth noting is nearly 25,000 acres of forest protected in the immediately adjacent

Middle Fork Snoqualmie and Mt. Si Natural Resource Conservation Areas just downstream on state DNR managed lands. The combination of Pratt Wilderness and Middle Fork NRCAs now includes what many believe to be the largest extent of protected lowland forest in the Cascades. All of this is located less than an hour east of Seattle.

ALPS wishes to thank those who took the lead to protect the Pratt, especially Senator Patty Murray, Congressman Dave Reichert, and Congresswoman Suzan DelBene. Many others played important roles also, including King County Councilman Reagan Dunn, and Neil Strege, in his capacity as a staffer first with Congresswoman Jennifer Dunn and later with Councilman Reagan Dunn. Strege took an interest in the Middle Fork and was the right person in the right place to take the initiative in catalyzing the whole process. Other conservation groups helped immensely in this final push, most notably the Sierra Club, American Whitewater, and Washington Wild, whose conservation director Tom Uniack managed much of the day to day campaign work over the seven years the bill was in play.

Much work remains in the Middle Fork and the remainder of the Snoqualmie watershed. A detailed management plan must be developed for the Middle Fork and Pratt Wild and Scenic Rivers, requiring significant public involvement. There are unroaded lands that are not inventoried and in need of protection. Paving of the Middle Fork road will mean a huge increase in visitation. Many more trails and facilities are needed. ALPS will continue to work with land management agencies and others to promote appropriate, low impact development in the Middle Fork, with special emphasis on forest and wildlife habitat protection. The job in the Middle Fork is far from over. ■

Low power hydro project threatens North Fork Snoqualmie

By Rick McGuire



KATIE WOOLSEY, DNR

Looking downstream in North Fork Snoqualmie canyon, Mt. Si beyond.

The North Fork Snoqualmie river is under threat from a low power hydroelectric proposal calling itself "Black Canyon Hydro LLC." The project, currently under review for licensing by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) would divert water out of the North Fork and into a pipe

running about 1.4 miles, bypassing what is variously called "Ernie's Canyon" or "Moon Gorge" at the extreme northwest corner of the Mt. Si Natural Resource Conservation Area (NRCA). ALPS and other conservation groups are opposing the project.

ALPS believes that there is no need to dam up and divert the last of our free flowing streams for the sake of a few unneeded kilowatts. As their name implies, low power hydro projects produce little energy compared to the harm they do. Proponents, including backers of this one, always use wildly optimistic "nameplate" ratings, touting how much power might be generated during the small amount of time at high river flows when a project might be running full tilt. And even when such projects can run at maximum, it is when all other hydro facilities are running at capacity and there is no need for additional power.

This particular proposal flies in the face of several protective designations. The section of the North Fork that would be dewatered forms the extreme northwestern boundary of the Mt. Si NRCA. Land southeast of the river (left bank) is within the NRCA and land northwest of the river (right bank) is mostly part of the Hancock Snoqualmie Tree Farm. The state Department of Natural Resources (DNR) owns the beds of navigable rivers. This section of the North Fork is run by kayakers, so it is a navigable river, owned by DNR and part of the NRCA. The project proponents seem to have a curious disregard for the fact that the North Fork is within the NRCA. ALPS believes that NRCAs were established for conservation, not hydroelectric development, and views this as an important test case.

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission has just licensed two similar projects not far from this one, on Calligan and

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Helicopter operations threaten Alpine Lakes Wilderness

By Rick McGuire

The U.S. Army at Joint Base Lewis-McChord has announced its intention to begin greatly increased helicopter training operations in the Cascades. Formerly confined mostly to Colorado, the army claims these operations need to be expanded and that the Cascades offer the right kind of terrain suitable for training crews for operations in far flung corners of the world such as Afghanistan.

The flights will be numerous, and could happen 365 days a year, at any time of day or night. Areas on both sides of Lake Chelan are proposed for landing zones. Of special concern to ALPS is Icicle Ridge southwest of Leavenworth, where a landing site is proposed

right on the border of the Alpine Lakes Wilderness.

These flights would mean that the Alpine Lakes Wilderness and other areas will be far less tranquil than in the past. Helicopters are not quiet machines, and will produce a lot of noise and vibration merely flying over the Wilderness and nearby areas. Large, double rotor Chinook helicopters appear to be what they will be flying. It may be possible that the V22 Osprey will also be used at some point, a breathtakingly complex and deafeningly noisy tilt wing airplane-helicopter hybrid that has been plagued by problems, suffered horrible accidents and is

regarded as an epic boondoggle by many defense observers. So far, V22s have been used by the Marines rather than the army.

ALPS and other organizations are very concerned about the potential impacts to the Wilderness and the rest of the Cascades. In July we sent an ALPS letter and also co-signed a joint letter to the Army acknowledging the need to train our military personnel for battle, asking that Wilderness values be taken into consideration, and that alternative mountainous terrain away from Wilderness be used to meet the Army's training needs. ■

Hydro project,

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Hancock creeks, both tributaries of the North Fork. There is also an existing project on Rachor Creek nearby. So if this project were approved that would mean four such installations within a few miles of each other. No cumulative effects have ever been considered – FERC looks at each project in isolation.

This part of the North Fork Snoqualmie is designated as protected from new hydroelectric development by the Northwest Power and Conservation Council, the regional power planning entity established by Congress in 1980. NWPCC's designations do not carry force of law, but they are the only effort so far to look at the region as a whole and plan for which areas might be

suitable for new hydroelectric development, and which areas are not. This project will also be a test of whether those protective designations mean anything.

If the backers of this project can build it where they propose to build it in spite of multiple layers of protection for this reach of the North Fork Snoqualmie, then there is little hope of stopping any such project anywhere. And with no one looking at the cumulative effects of these as one goes in here, one goes in there, the day may not be far off when we find ourselves like Switzerland, with majestic mountains but where virtually every stream is diverted into a pipe. There is no shortage of electricity and absolutely no need for that to happen here. This project needs to be stopped. ALPS is committed to keeping the cascades in the Cascades. ■



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New Wilderness sign on the Pratt Connector Trail.

Yakima Plan update

By Karl Forsgaard

ALPS and other conservation groups are continuing their active opposition to the most destructive parts of the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan. A significant recent accomplishment has been the State Legislature's funding of a benefit-cost study of Yakima Plan component projects, including proposed irrigation dams. This was necessary because the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation had refused to prepare a benefit-cost analysis under the federal Principles and Guidelines for each water project in the Plan. The State-mandated study has now been completed, and it identifies those projects in the Yakima Plan that are not economically sustainable.

The Legislature directed that the study be conducted by the State of Washington Water Research Center (SWWRC). Established by the U.S. Congress in 1964, the SWWRC is one of 54 water research institutions or centers in the United States. The Water Resources Research Act Program is administered by the U.S. Geological Survey under the general guidance of the Secretary of the Interior. SWWRC's Director, Jonathan Yoder, is a respected Professor of Economics in the WSU School of Economic Sciences.

The SWWRC report mandated by the State Legislature was released December 15, 2014, and can be reviewed at:

http://swwrc.wsu.edu/documents/2014/12/ybip_bca_swwrc_dec2014.pdf

The SWWRC report concluded that most Yakima Plan storage components miserably fail a benefit-cost test:

"Based on moderate climate and market outcomes, storage infrastructure projects implemented alone and without

proposed IP instream flow augmentation result in the following estimated out-of-stream net present value and B/C ratios, none of which passes a B-C test":

- *Bumping Lake Expansion: Benefit/Cost (B/C) ratio of 0.18* [i.e. a return of 18 cents on the dollar]
- *Wymer Dam and Reservoir: B/C ratio of 0.09* [i.e. a return of nine cents on the dollar]
- *Keechelus to Kachess Conveyance: B/C ratio of 0.20* [i.e. a return of 20 cents on the dollar]
- *Kachess Drought Relief Pumping Plant: B/C ratio of 0.46* [i.e. a return of 46 cents on the dollar]

The public cannot afford to subsidize new water projects that don't make economic sense.

Meanwhile, State Senator Jim Honeyford (R-Sunnyside) introduced SB 5628 to create a \$3.8 billion grant program to fund irrigation water storage and flood control projects. It provided that in ranking projects for grants, Ecology "shall prefer projects that are consistent with or designed to implement an integrated plan, as defined in RCW 090.38.010" (which specifies the Yakima Plan). The funds would be raised with a new statewide property assessment ranging from \$35 on a single-family home on less than one acre to \$375 for a commercial property on more than five acres. The bill provided that the assessment would be submitted to voter approval in a statewide referendum. However, the bill was not passed by the 2015 State Legislature. In June, a guest opinion in the *Seattle Times* by State Rep. Hans Dunshee said "While the Yakima plan nobly creates a coalition of interests, it lacks a funding plan other than to ask state taxpayers for more."

In March 2015, ALPS submitted comments on the 842-page Draft EIS for two I-90 components of the Yakima Plan, the Kachess Inactive Storage Pumping Plant and the Keechelus-to-Kachess Conveyance (a.k.a. K-to-K Pipeline). In April, Kittitas County commissioners met with Lake Kachess residents to discuss their opposition to these projects.

By late spring, low snowpack in the Cascades was bringing increased attention to the water supply. On June 25, Senator Maria Cantwell introduced S.1694 in the U.S. Senate, including some troublesome language (later deleted) about implementing the 2012 Yakima Plan "in its entirety," despite everything we've learned since 2012. As the *Seattle Times* reported, conservation groups and impacted homeowners were not invited to testify at the July 7 Senate hearing on S.1694. Fortunately, mark-up of the bill was postponed while ALPS, Sierra Club, Kachess homeowner groups and other critics of the Yakima Plan worked with Senate staff to begin revising the bill, including more explicit provisions that authorizations and appropriations for future components would be contingent upon feasibility, environmental reviews and cost-benefit analyses. In the process, we were informed that Yakima Plan proponents are no longer seeking federal funding for the Lake Kachess and K-to-K components, and will seek private funding for them, so the bill would allow the federal Bureau of Reclamation to accept private funds for them. The bill would also extend federal funding begun in 1979 and 1994 statutes for fish passage and conservation projects. On

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State could expand motorized use in the Teanaway

By Dave Knibb

The state has bought and now manages private timberlands in the Teanaway. This may sound like progress, but questions remain over how good a neighbor this new “Teanaway Community Forest” will be to the adjoining Alpine Lakes.

Why did the state buy these lands? One view is that this 50,272-acre Community Forest was created to protect habitat, water supply and fish under the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan because the private owner planned to convert much of the area to non-forest uses (and any future private owner would likely do the same). Another view, expressed by Rick McGuire last year in a previous edition of *Alpine* – is that the purchase was a tradeoff or some form of mitigation for raising Bumping Lake, as part of the Yakima Plan. The 2013 state law authorizing the land acquisition contained a “poison pill” – it gave the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) authority to sell the Community Forest (or downgrade it to common school trust forestland) if 114,000 acre-feet of Yakima Plan water storage projects are not permitted and financed by 2025.

The state paid \$97 million for these lands. Now DNR and the Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) manage them as Washington’s first “community forest.”

This area is the front lawn for one of the most popular gateways into the Alpine Lakes. The Teanaway Community Forest attracts a lot of use in its own right with horse and mountain bike riders, hunters, and fishermen. On weekends the campgrounds at 29 Pines and Teanaway West Fork



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Motorcyclist on trail at Reiter Forest.

are often full, and during holidays and hunting season they overflow. These take some of the pressure off adjoining national forest lands including the Alpine Lakes Wilderness.

For our furry friends who don’t read signs, the Teanaway Forest is simply part of a seamless habitat stretching from the ponderosa pine lowlands, up through the hills to the alpine crests along the Kittitas-Chelan county line. Like few other places in the Cascades, this is a land for all seasons. The south-facing, low elevation Teanaway Forest with its natural cover and freedom from development is critical winter and spring range for elk, deer, wolves, and other wildlife.

When the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee designated the North Cascades (including the Alpine Lakes) as a grizzly bear recovery area, it worried aloud about the shortage of unoccupied spring range. The Teanaway is one of those few places. Now that

federal agencies are evaluating how to recover grizzlies in the Cascades, areas such as this will assume new importance.

Boise Cascade owned and managed the Teanaway Forest as a tree farm for decades. As a result, most of this forest is now in second growth. Ten years ago Boise Cascade sold all its timberlands in the Teanaway. American Forest Holdings became the new owner.

Boise Cascade’s policy was to gate all logging roads to keep out off-road vehicles (ORVs) except on three trails. American Forest continued that policy and, so far, the state has too. Despite a few trespassers, the Teanaway Forest has remained quiet, and the wildlife, less troubled than some of us by logging, like it. But now loud ORV advocates want to open up this area to motorized trail bikes. Language authorizing purchase of the Teanaway land specifically allows snowmobiling – the extent of it yet to be decided. But the

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Greenway National Heritage Area Bill re-introduced



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Bipartisan legislation was re-introduced in June 2015 to designate the Mountains to Sound Greenway as a National Heritage Area (NHA). Senate bill 1690 was introduced by Senators Maria Cantwell and Patty Murray, and House bill 2900 was introduced by Congressmen Dave Reichert and Adam Smith.

The NHA bill had been introduced in the prior session of Congress, and had moved out of committee in both houses, but at the end just missed being included in the final lands package that enlarged Alpine Lakes Wilderness in December 2014.

NHA designation will not impact any current legal structures, and does not provide for acquisition or transfer of any lands. It does not affect private property, water, hunting, or fishing rights. Its intent is to

create a voluntary framework for stakeholders to better fulfill their missions, to increase the visibility of the Greenway and conserve the landscape for future generations. NHA designation would do the following:

- Encourage interagency collaboration on trails with multiple land owners for maintenance and signage.
- Allow ecological restoration across multiple jurisdictions, property owners, and watersheds.
- Enable agencies to share staff, such as a wildlife biologist or conservation corps crews.
- Allow cost sharing for things like trailhead gate locking and unlocking, or shared bathroom maintenance at nearby trailheads.
- Enhance funding opportunities through partnerships between private and public entities.

through partnerships between private and public entities.

- Create a branding campaign for the Greenway to increase tourism.
- Increase the visibility of the communities in the Greenway through an enhanced sense of place, history and natural heritage.

The Greenway encompasses 1.5 million acres from the Seattle waterfront to Ellensburg, including the southern half of Alpine Lakes Wilderness (the Snoqualmie and Yakima River watersheds of the Wilderness). For a map and more information, see the Greenway Trust's webpages on the NHA: <http://mtsgreenway.org/heritage> ■

Olallie meadow view of Granite Mountain and Denny Mountain.

Hansen Creek vegetation project Snoqualmie Ranger District

By Don Parks



ALW Additions in the South Fork of the Snoqualmie River in the Granite Mtn-Bandara Mtn area. The lower slopes, heavily forested, were parts of the ALW Additions that would have been logged in the Hansen Creek affair if they did not end up the the Wilderness.

In August 2015, the USFS arrived at its final decision on the massive, and massively controversial, Hansen Creek timber sale (so called Vegetation Project) in the sensitive I-90 Corridor west of Snoqualmie Pass. The sale calls for the logging of about 33 million board feet (mmbf) of trees from about 1000 acres. This intensity of cutting, described by the USFS as “thinning” amounts to about 30,000 board feet of timber per acre, virtually the same as clear cutting by any standard. It should also be pointed out that 2/3’s of this volume will come from Northwest Forest Plan Riparian Reserve, a land allocation not originally intended for to produce significant timber volumes. The entire Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest ‘Probable Sale Quantity’ (PSQ) is documented

as 7 mmbf, so this single sale represents nearly five years of PSQ volume.

In the end, the final decision deleted the most controversial cutting units (Unit 18.1 and 18.2) that were located along the Pratt Lake & Granite Mountain Trail (T1007/T1016). This area also included forest stands well over 100 years old, hardly candidates for “thinning.”

So basically, the Forest Service wised up, in a small way at least, by dropping its plan to cut delightfully old, big tree forest right along a heavily used trail. Let’s hope that they continue in this vein and reconsider whether, at a time when almost every real need is going unmet. it is wise to put so much of their dwindling resources into a timber sale like this.

The Forest Service was understood to have modified and reduced the cutting plan in Unit 16 near the Ira Spring Trail (T1038). However, much of the cutting continues to be planned for the general area of the Ira Spring Trail (see Final EA Figure 8, map 2 of 10). A review of the ‘fine print’ in the Decision Notice reveals that only the logging system was changed (from uphill skyline to down hill skyline) in only unit 16w, so that the trail would not be temporarily used to conduct this sale.

Altogether, a sad business.

For Reference

From Decision Notice Dated 3Aug15 the USFS, the final selected alternative will differ from the “Alternative 4 in the Final EA dated 23July2015”:

First, Units 18.1 and 18.2 will not be treated as a part of this decision. These stands are adjacent to the Pratt Lake Trailhead and Trail. *As the units would be dropped in their entirety, all logging and transportation systems specifically meant to access these stands would no longer be necessary.* (Emphasis added.)

Second, the end of *Forest Service Road (FSR) 9031, Ira Spring Trail (a dual-purpose road/trail), would not be used for harvest activities. The logging system for Unit 16w would change from uphill skyline (to the road/trail) to downhill skyline (to nonsystem road 16t).* If some portion of Unit 16w cannot be accessed by skyline, it would be accessed by helicopter, instead. The Ira Spring trailhead would still be used for harvest activities, including but not limited to expansion of the adjacent rockpit and decking of timber. (Emphasis added.)

ALPS and other groups file lawsuit to stop ATV routes on Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest

ALPS, along with Kittitas Audubon Society and the Sierra Club, filed a lawsuit on June 30 in federal court in Seattle, in hopes of reversing an outrageous Forest Service plan to open up 350 miles of Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest roads to wheeled all-terrain vehicle (WATV) use. These roads have until now always been closed to off road vehicles (ORVs) such as dirtbikes and ATVs. This far reaching decision by the Forest Service was made outside the public eye, and outside of all established procedures. If allowed to stand, it will convert huge areas of the Okanogan Wenatchee National Forest into unrestricted and unpoliced ORV playgrounds, with horrible consequences for soils, wildlife, and peace and quiet.

Until now, only certain trails and roads have been legally open to ORVs. ORV is a term that includes two-wheeled motorcycles, three- or four-wheeled all-terrain vehicles or "quads," as well as souped-up jeeps and "monster trucks." With limited site-specific exceptions, regular forest roads have generally been closed to these machines. This sudden and far reaching change by the Forest Service was done behind closed doors with essentially no public notice or input, and in complete defiance of NEPA, the National Environmental Policy Act. It was done entirely outside of the ten-year-old, broad and inclusive Travel Management process which was designed as the means to make such decisions.

Just why the Forest Service would make such a radical and destructive change to the existing rules is a mystery. Many of the



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*Lake Wenatchee and Fish Lake from Entiat Ridge
WATV Route.*

roads newly opened to WATVs were chosen to link up trails that were already open to ATVs, creating large loops. It has been speculated that the Forest Service decision may have been partly driven by WATV sale and rental interests eager to sell or rent machines to neophyte riders.

Whatever the motivation, if this decision is allowed to stand it will mean huge changes across big parts of the Okanogan-Wenatchee. Places which have been quiet and peaceful until now will be quiet no more. Just driving on forest roads will become an entirely new experience as one will need to watch out constantly for these "thrillcraft." The Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest will be a very different place.

The Forest Service says it cannot commit any funding to any kind of monitoring or policing. Supposedly, only

licensed drivers will be permitted to operate WATVs on these newly opened roads, but no one will be checking. ORV riders are notorious for ignoring rules, yet the Forest Service says it will rely on "volunteers" - ORV riders themselves - to monitor conditions and report violators. Such a situation would be laughable if it were not so worrying. How long will it be before some WATV rider, thinking he has stepped into a real life video game, comes flying around a blind corner straight into an oncoming car or truck? Will the Forest Service, and thus the taxpayers, be liable for allowing such an obviously unsafe situation?

ORVs always create significant adverse environmental impacts. The whole point of "recreational" ORV riding is to race around and tear up the land. It is all about

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North Fork Skykomish road costs keep soaring

The estimates just keep climbing for building a new, roughly mile-long section of the North Fork Skykomish, or “Index – Galena” road, where it washed away about five miles or so above the Town of Index in 2006. The latest unofficial number is a breathtaking \$27 million dollars. Snohomish County now says work may happen sometime in the decade starting in 2020.

The original plan for a new road here called for a 40 mile-per-hour design speed and massive cutting and filling – a real highway in every sense. Could it be that Snohomish County and the Federal Highways Administration have begun to realize that maybe it isn’t such a good idea to spend so much money on this one road when there is an alternate route (via Beckler River and Jack Pass) into the upper North Fork valley?

Plus, the river is pointed straight at another section of the road not far below where the new section would be built.

Snohomish County is falling farther and farther behind just maintaining roads and bridges in places where people actually live. For a long time it seemed that providing quick, easy, and above all, fast road access for the few dozen cabins in the Galena area trumped all other concerns. Could it be that the county has realized that spending nearly a million dollars per cabin might not be the best use of dwindling tax dollars? The North Fork Skykomish is an important recreational valley, with a number of trailheads. It remains to be seen whether FHWA and the county can ever get beyond their “massive highway or nothing” mindset and look at a range of alternatives.

ALPS obtains tax-exempt status

Good news! The Internal Revenue Service granted tax exempt status to ALPS under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. The IRS also determined that ALPS is a public charity under the Code. The effective date of the exemption is May 15, 2010; contributions made after that date are deductible.

We are grateful to our long-time treasurer and fellow board member, Frank Swart, for preparing the application and diligently pursuing it through the 2½-year application process.

Thank you Frank! ■

Lawsuit

Continued from page 10

operating a powerful, noisy machine, not about experiencing nature. ORVs degrade air and water quality, and impair the ability of everyone else near them to enjoy the sights, sounds and smells of nature. They can ruin the experience of anyone else. They also create safety hazards, especially where they are mixed in together with cars and trucks as the Forest Service is doing here. ORVs cause destruction wherever they go, and the Forest Service has just consigned a huge part of the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest to them, with

practically no chance for the affected public to comment or even know what they are up to.

ALPS, the Sierra Club and Kittitas Audubon were left with no alternative but to ask the courts to stop this destructive, illegal and inexplicable move by the Forest Service. Look for updates in future editions of *The Alpine*. ■

September 23, 2015 update:

As we went to press, the U.S. Attorney said the Forest Service is not going to file an Answer to the Complaint, and instead will withdraw its action, and will soon announce that publicly. In other words, we won the lawsuit. Look for more details in the next issue of *Alpine*.

Yakima Plan

Continued from page 6

August 18, ALPS, Audubon, other conservation groups and impacted homeowners met with Sen. Cantwell in Ellensburg to raise strong concerns that the Yakima Workgroup does not comply with federal laws on advisory committees, that the 2012 Yakima Plan cannot be relied on as the basis for future legislation, and that the 2012 Final Programmatic EIS did not comply with the National Environmental Policy Act. ■

New diversions and dams in Alpine Lakes Wilderness?

Excerpted from *Naiads* blog by Rachael Paschal Osborn

Genesis of the Icicle Work Group

The State Department of Ecology's Office of the Columbia River (OCR) is funding and sponsoring proposals to increase water diversions from seven lakes in Alpine Lakes Wilderness that flow into Icicle Creek: Colchuck, Eightmile, Upper and Lower Snow, Nada, Upper Klonaqua and Square Lakes.

In 2012, OCR funded Chelan County to form a "collaborative" Icicle Work Group (IWG), ostensibly to solve instream flow problems in Icicle Creek while obtaining more water from the system for out-of-stream uses.

The impetus for creating IWG comes from a City of Leavenworth lawsuit against Ecology regarding quantification of the City's water rights. That lawsuit is on hold while Ecology uses the IWG process to attempt to find water for Leavenworth. If the effort fails and the lawsuit moves forward, a court decision could undermine Ecology's authority to quantify water rights that pre-date the 1917 water code. The statewide implications are substantial; presumably Ecology would prefer to settle and vacate the lower court orders.

Funding IWG

To implement Leavenworth settlement efforts, OCR entered into a \$700,000 contract with Chelan County to run IWG and pursue water development projects. Chelan County subcontracted with Aspect Consulting for investigations (\$506,000); Dally Environmental Service for meeting facilitation (\$16,000); Cascadia Law Group (\$\$



Unlined Icicle Irrigation Ditch, with artificial riparian zone from water leakage.

unknown); and Icicle Peshastin Irrigation District (IPID)(\$25,000 per year for two years). OCR is now seeking another \$3.5 million to fund IWG into the 2015-17 biennium.

IWG Goals

In addition to finding water for Leavenworth, IWG goals include improving instream flows in Icicle Creek, making the Leavenworth National Fish Hatchery sustainable, protecting tribal rights to fish at the Hatchery, improving water reliability for agriculture, and improving ecosystem health.

All this must occur while achieving compliance with state and federal laws, including the Wilderness Act – no small feat.

IWG is a "quid pro quo" process. This raises the

question whether ecosystem benefits, including water quality improvements and restoration of instream flows for endangered species, may only be achieved if new water supply is provided for Leavenworth (along with other IWG goals). This in turn raises questions about whether state and federal laws (for example, Clean Water Act and Endangered Species Act permits) may be superseded by a stakeholder-based collaborative process.

Overview of Alpine Lakes Water Projects

Three current proposals relate to Alpine Lakes: (1) Eightmile Lake Restoration-Storage; (2) Upper Klonaqua Lake pipeline; and (3) Alpine Lakes Optimization-Automation. The latest consultant studies are on the Chelan County website.

IPID holds grandfathered easements and water rights to store and divert water from the lakes. Leavenworth Fish Hatchery (owned by US Bureau of Reclamation, operated by US Fish & Wildlife Service) also holds a water right for Snow and Nada Lakes. The scope of these interests is a matter for evaluation.

Alternative Conservation Proposal

Rather than divert additional water from Alpine Lakes Wilderness, water solutions for Icicle Creek could be found through more sustainable approaches. Approximately 117 cfs of new instream flow could be added to a 6-mile length of Icicle Creek (downstream of

Snow Creek) by moving IPID's take-out point downstream to the Wenatchee River.

Water conservation opportunities are substantial. Rather than looking to Alpine Lakes as the first option, the City of Leavenworth and other users should adopt an aggressive water conservation plan. These actions, combined with promoting water markets that facilitate selling and trading water rights, could supply future water uses, but they have received minimal consideration.

Public Outreach & Environmental Processes

Manipulating lake levels and allocating new water rights from Alpine Lakes Wilderness could be controversial. Although IWG was asked to create a Wilderness subcommittee, that idea was eliminated without discussion in December 2014.

Chelan County held a public meeting in Seattle in 2013, and a similar meeting may be held in February 2015. Meanwhile, scoping under the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) will be scheduled for spring or summer 2015. National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) processes are unknown at this time.

In addition to Alpine Lakes storage and water right proposals, IWG is evaluating several other projects to improve instream flow and habitat in Icicle Creek. There is also movement afoot by other water users in the Wenatchee Valley to capture Icicle Creek (including Alpine Lakes) water for downstream uses.

The ultimate "package" of projects will require public scrutiny and input.

Eightmile Lake Proposal

The Eightmile Lake Restoration and Expansion proposal evaluates the ability to increase water storage in Eightmile Lake by rebuilding a

dam, increasing pool level and/or drawing the lake down further.

The original dam and control works for the lake have collapsed and current usable capacity is 1,375 acre-feet of water.

The Eightmile Lake Storage Restoration Draft Appraisal Study (Nov. 2014) evaluates four options for increasing storage capacity: 2,000, 2,500 (2 options), and 3,500 acre-feet. All four options include re-building the dam to its original height, or higher, as well as drawing down Eightmile Lake pool below its current, semi-natural outlet. The proposal is based on assumptions about water rights and easements held by IPID, which actively manages four of the Alpine Lakes to serve water to about 7,000 acres of orchards and converted lands in the Wenatchee Valley.

IPID holds water rights dating from 1926 to store water in and divert from the lakes. The Eightmile Lake water right was adjudicated in 1929 at 2500 acre-feet annual volume, and 25 cfs rate of diversion. However, the Eightmile dam collapsed and IPID has not used the full (artificial) storage capacity for many years. There are questions about relinquishment of water rights over and above what IPID needs and has used in the past. At a minimum, Ecology would have to issue water rights for new and increased uses.

IPID holds easements that allow it to "store" water in several Alpine Lakes, although the scope of the easement for Eightmile Lake does not cover the entire lake. As described in a Review of Eight Mile Lake Storage Authority (Aspect Consulting, March 2014), IPID's easements cover only a portion of the lake.

Any increase in storage capacity would require U.S. Forest Service approvals. Section 4(d)(4) of the Wilderness Act of 1964 requires

Presidential approval to establish and maintain reservoirs within wilderness areas.

The appraisal study hypothesizes that the easement language will allow and perhaps even require the Forest Service to approve an expansion of Eightmile: "In performing maintenance, repair, operation, modification, upgrading and replacement of facilities, [IPID] will not without prior written consent of the Forest Service, which consent shall not unreasonably be withheld, materially increase the size or scope of the facilities."

The proposal raises questions about the scope of impacts on riparian zones and wilderness surrounding the lake, including trails, campsites and other public amenities. Eightmile Lake is one of the more popular trail destinations in Alpine Lake Wilderness, partly because of its easy accessibility. However, the Forest Service has not yet provided a public position regarding proposals to expand or draw down Eightmile Lake.

Upper Klonaqua Pipeline Proposal

The Klonaqua Lake proposal involves installing a siphon or pump or blasting a tunnel to drain Upper Klonaqua Lake into Lower Klonaqua Lake, detailed in the draft Bathymetry and Topographic Survey of Upper Klonaqua Lake and Conceptual Release Options (Aspect Consulting, Nov. 2014).

IPID holds some form of water rights and easements for Upper and Lower Klonaqua Lakes. IPID has never accessed water from Upper Klonaqua, and according to the report, has used only 1,600 acre-feet of its 1926 water right to 2500 acre-feet from Lower Klonaqua Lake. Nonetheless, the Upper Klonaqua study evaluates the natural storage capacity of

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Diversions and dams

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Upper Klonauqua, including how much water could be obtained by drawing down the lake.

Issues with this proposal include that any new water project in a wilderness area would require approval of the U.S. Forest Service (and, according to the Wilderness Act of 1964, possibly the U.S. President). And because this proposal would increase diversion from the Klonauqua Lakes, Ecology would have to evaluate relinquishment, and issue new water rights to accomplish the goal. Neither the Forest Service nor Ecology has expressed opinions yet about the viability of these proposals.

Alpine Lakes Optimization/Automation Proposal

The current IPID and Hatchery diversion methods are primitive: drain holes and gates at the lakes are manually opened and closed at the beginning and end of the irrigation season by IPID and Hatchery staff who hike into the Wilderness.

The Alpine Lakes Optimization and Automation Appraisal Study (O/A Study) (Aspect Consulting, Nov. 2014) evaluates the potential to install telemetry equipment at each of the seven lakes to allow IPID and the Hatchery to remotely control the water release structures from their offices. Rather than uncontrolled drainage, automation would allow the water users to fine-tune the quantities of water they remove from the lakes to meet both consumptive use and instream flow requirements. This would increase efficiency and potentially drain the lakes.

The original concept for the study was to evaluate more efficient use of water and refill rates. However, the scope of the O/A Study has expanded to include analysis of increasing storage at Snow and Eightmile Lakes. The study evaluates increasing storage at Upper and Lower Snow Lakes by 5 feet and drawing down Lower Snow by an additional 3 feet. The study also evaluates two options at Eightmile Lake. The first involves rebuilding the dam to its original height (adding 4 feet to current pool); the second adds another 1 foot above that. Both options also evaluate lowering the Eightmile Lake outlet by 19 to 22 feet below current drawdown levels.

The O/A Study then evaluates the water supply opportunities should six of the seven lakes be fully drained each year. (At present, IPID diverts on a rotating basis from the four lakes to which it holds rights.)

The proposals to install automation equipment, manipulate lake levels, and increase diversions from the lakes seem likely to require approvals from the U.S. Forest Service and the State Department of Ecology. To date neither agency has indicated their positions regarding these proposals, although as discussed above, Ecology's OCR has provided substantial funding to study new dams and diversions from the Alpine Lakes.

August 22, 2015 update:

The above article was posted online as a 4-part blog on January 7, 2015. In June, the State Legislature included the Icicle Creek integrated plan in the capital budget, which means the Icicle Work Group will be fully funded

to continue its work for the next biennium. OCR has indicated its spending plans include moving forward with feasibility and design studies for the Eight Mile Lake and Alpine Lakes Automation/Optimization projects. Also in June, the Icicle Work Group proposed amendments to its Operating Procedures, converting to a majority rule decision process instead of the prior consensus-based approach, and prohibiting litigation or public expressions of disagreement between Working Group members. In other words, Work Group members are now required to support Work Group decisions, without legal recourse or the opportunity to publicly state dissent. As a result, CELP resigned from the Icicle Work Group in July, and will pursue other efforts to protect Icicle Creek. As we went to press, the Work Group was reportedly deciding which "base package" of projects will go to SEPA/NEPA scoping and which will require additional feasibility work. ■

State could expand Teanaway motorized use

Continued from page 7

state is also considering whether to open the area to motorized trail bikes – a use not mentioned in the statute. To the wildlife who depend on this habitat, this is not good news.

And it would affect lands within the Alpine Lakes itself. ORVs already use the Middle and West Fork Teanaway within the national forest. If the state-owned Teanaway Community Forest allows trail bikes too, the entire region could become one big noisy playground attracting even more ORV use than it does now.

Rick McGuire also warned in his *Alpine* article last year that the Yakima Plan proposes a large National Recreation Area (now called National Conservation Recreation Areas) on federal lands in the Teanaway within the Alpine Lakes area. One purpose of this NCRA would be to allow ORVs. Creating an NCRA that encourages motorized use would draw national attention and thus encourage even more ORVs. Opening the new state-owned lands to motorized trail bikes would add yet more fuel to this bad idea.

The state law defines “community forest” broadly, but a key element is to protect “in perpetuity working forest lands that are at a significant risk of conversion to another land use.” This fits the Teanaway like a glove. American Forest was planning to convert much of this forest into a recreational town.

A community forest, says the state law, should also provide “ongoing, sustainable public recreational access, local timber jobs, clean air and water, carbon storage, fish and wildlife habitat, and open space.”

The statute authorizing purchase of the Teanaway directed the state to adopt a management plan that includes “recreational opportunities consistent with watershed protection for activities such as hiking, fishing, hunting, horseback riding, camping, birding, and snowmobiling.” It also directs the state “to conserve and restore vital habitat for fish . . . and wildlife, including deer, elk, large predators, and spotted owls.” It does not explain how to balance these conflicting mandates.

With the help of a citizen advisory committee, the state has now adopted a management plan. But it defers until later the critical questions about motorized recreation.

Some local officials argue that opening the Teanaway Forest to more ORV use would boost the local economy and thus help offset revenue lost by the state buying these private lands and taking them off the tax rolls.

Yet, if public ownership of the Teanaway Forest was designed in part to mitigate or compensate for raising Bumping Lake, opening the Forest now to trail bikes would conflict with the goal of mitigation. Raising Bumping Lake and allowing ORVs into the Teanaway Forest is a Lose-Lose proposition that stands the meaning of “mitigation” on its head. An expansion of ORV use would also conflict with the alternative explanation for why the state bought this land: to protect water supply and fish habitat.

The claim that more ORVs will boost the local economy is also suspect. It ignores the substantial sums that non-motorized recreationists already spend in Cle Elum and Roslyn and how much they would take their money elsewhere if ORVs take over the Teanaway.

Lastly, the state already has a Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program designed to compensate counties for tax revenue lost when

the state buys private lands. True, in recent years the legislature has shortchanged this program. But opening the Teanaway Forest to ORVs is a dubious solution to the legislature’s failing, and a clear case of how two wrongs don’t make a right.

Understandably local officials want compensation for lost tax revenue. But they should insist that the state fund the PILT program. That is what it’s for. That is not what the Teanaway Forest is for.

The new management plan for the Teanaway Forest leaves open two big questions. How much snowmobile use will the state allow? And will the state also allow motorized trail bikes?

According to the management plan: “DNR and WDFW will use the results of a recreation planning process to determine whether the use of two-wheeled motorcycles is appropriate in the Community Forest. All other motorized vehicles – ATVs, ORVs, wheeled all-terrain vehicles, and 4x4s – will continue to be prohibited from trails, closed roads, and cross-country travel.”

The citizen committee that advised the state on management of the Teanaway Forest recommended no increase in ORV use over current levels.

ALPS has a direct stake in these issues. It needs to monitor and influence this recreation planning process, not only because of the spillover effects in the Alpine Lakes Wilderness itself, but also to ensure that wildlife, which move back and forth between the Alpine Lakes and these lands, do not lose their vital winter and spring range.

■
Knibb is a former trustee and president of ALPS. He acknowledges the substantial help of Hal Lindstrom, another former ALPS trustee and president, in obtaining information for this article.



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