

NORTH CASCADES UNDER ATTACK BATTLE LINES DRAWN

by
The Kerosene Kid



If any conservationist felt he was honorably discharged from the wars upon passage of the 1968 North Cascades Act, he lacked knowledge of the history of the American National Park system. He may have said to himself, "Whew! I'm glad that's over. Now I can forge my pens into pitons -- trade my typewriter for a tent and start enjoying this country I've been fighting for."

To any such cat we say, "Man, that was only an armistice, not a peace! We just put you in the active reserve, and we need you NOW!"

By their very nature, units of the National Park system are constantly vulnerable to those segments of our society which would exploit their resources. Olympic National Park is probably the best example of a dedicated area whose integrity has been repeatedly threatened. At periodic intervals since its creation in 1938, well-organized attempts have been made to raid its resources. Each attack has been mounted with impressive support from industry, chambers of commerce, county commissioners, state agencies, the press, sometimes even from those federal officials whose

duty it should have been to protect the park. Each such campaign has been accompanied by barrages of propaganda that the resources of the park were essential to the continued growth of the surrounding area or that new roads were needed along the wilderness beach or across the park's wilderness core "to open it up for the peepul." Each time the friends of Olympic have rallied, mounted counter-attacks and saved the park.

We have no reason to believe the history of the North Cascades over the next third of a century will be any different. But, to paraphrase Mr. Churchill, the North Cascades Conservation Council (N3C) was not organized to preside over the dissolution of the North Cascades. We expect attacks and we confidently expect to win.

To prevent Seattle City Light from implementing its destructive proposals in the Ross Lake National Recreation Area will require as tough a fight as conservationists ever have waged. The nature of the adversary contributes to the difficulty of the battle. Seattle City Light is no ordinary despoiler of wilderness. In fact, it's hard to say just what Seattle City Light is.

Normally, it is the Department of Lighting of the City of Seattle, subject, like all departments, to the control of the City Council. In actual practice, it has become a free-wheeling bureaucracy, making decisions and policy that affect not only Seattleites but citizens of the whole country as well. We will not attempt to explore here the history of Seattle City Light's growth to its present position of power. This was ably done recently in a series in the Seattle Post-Intelligencer. Suffice it to say that without evidence of guidance from the City Council, City Light has pursued an aggressive marketing campaign, both in and outside the city limits, that has created such an energy demand that it must expand its generating facilities. And this is where we come in. The first two of its proposed projects are High Ross Dam and Thunder Creek Diversion Project.

COVER: Big Beaver Valley by Bob and Ira Spring

Conservationists have not forgotten that as a result of the lobbying by John M. Nelson, City Light's Superintendent, the lower 3 miles of Thunder Creek were removed from the North Cascades Park as proposed by the administration and placed in the Ross Lake Recreation Area. This action created not only a continuing menace to the finest low-level wilderness approach to the southern unit of the park, but posed a threat to the integrity of the park itself. If City Light is permitted to bring its construction road 5 miles up from Thunder Arm, the Park Service will be hard put to deny access to the owners of the mining claims at the valley's head.

Electric John denies any similar lobbying to delete Big Beaver Creek from the North Cascades National Park. Everybody, he says, from congressmen to city councilmen, had always planned to exclude the valley from the park.

We wonder. The North Cascades Study Team proposed a single-unit North Cascades National Park with all of Diablo and Ross Dams included within its boundaries. When Senator Jackson introduced the park legislation a year later, the park was in two parts, separated by a Ross Lake Recreation Area that neatly encompassed City Light's Skagit projects. Too neat, perhaps for mere coincidence.

Anyway, we knew we had been had. In his message to North Cascades Conservation members hailing passage of the legislation, President Goldsworthy sounded a note of warning. He asked, "How can Seattle City Light be persuaded not to construct a dam on Thunder Creek, excluded from the park for this reason? How can this power company be kept from raising Ross Dam and flooding the North Cascades' most magnificent grove of virgin cedar trees, also excluded from the park in anticipation of the enlarged reservoir?"

At frequent intervals during the summer of 1969, City Light's PR staff planted stories about Seattle's impending power shortage and the urgency of going ahead with High Ross Dam and Thunder Creek Diversion Project. During the summer conservationists learned that City Light's 1970 budget would contain funds for engineering studies of the two projects, and they bombarded the Seattle City Council with demands for a public hearing.

In late September the City Council announced a public hearing on City Light's budget for October 3. Simultaneously we learned that City Light had hired Professor Grant Sharpe of the University of Washington College of Forest Resources to study the effects of High Ross. Mr. Sharpe declined to discuss his findings with President Goldsworthy, but he hinted ominously to other acquaintances that he had made discoveries above the "high water mark" that made the lower Big Beaver look like a patch of second-growth.

The morning of October 3 found the City Council chambers on the 11th floor of the Municipal Building filled with more than a hundred intended speakers or interested spectators. Several councilmen expressed surprise at the size of the crowd, as budget hearings usually attract no more than a few witnesses. The hearing opened with Electric John dropping a bombshell. He stated that City Light was not requesting funds for the Thunder Creek Diversion Project. (A temporary reprieve; the utility apparently lacks engineering staff to handle both projects simultaneously.) The superintendent went on to explain that City Light must go ahead with High Ross -- they had always planned to build it, and they already had 6 million bucks sunk in the project because of heavier design factors. Also we were paying British Columbia a lease of \$35,000 annually for the land to be flooded in the upper Skagit. Also we had to have the extra juice because Seattle's power needs were growing so rapidly. After Mr. Nelson's little speech, the hearing proper began.



"ELECTRIC" JOHN NELSON

Councilman Hill asked if Mr. Nelson's expert, Dr. Sharpe, wouldn't like to make a statement. Professor Sharpe allowed as how he wouldn't -- that he didn't make value judgments -- but that he would answer any of the Council's specific questions. Council President Ted Best jumped on Mr. Hill for trying to change the hearing rules, and he called the first witness.

The hearing differed greatly from any we had ever attended before -- Wilderness Bill hearings, Study Team hearings, Senate, Congressional, or State hearings. It was almost completely one-sided. Speaker after speaker presented lucid statements of valid objections to City Light's proposals. Every local conservation organization was represented -- The Mountaineers, Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs, North Cascades Conservation Council, Puget Sound Group of the Sierra Club, Audubon Society, Washington Environmental Council, and Washington Roadside Council, as well as Allied Arts, and CHECC (Citizens Choose an Effective City Council). Many individuals also spoke.



Cedar, 32 feet, 10 inches in circumference (photo by J. W. Miller)

Finally, at the end of the morning, an individual who said he was an electrician got up and said he thought City Light was a great outfit. Then a lady who said she had been a Mountaineer for 17 years arose and said all Mountaineer decisions were made by an "elite group" and nobody had polled her for her opinion on High Ross Dam. Further, she said, she had hiked all through that country and had never seen any big cedars and she really didn't care whether Thunder Creek was flooded out. Further the N3C was real sneaky in not bringing up its opposition to the Skagit projects during the park hearings, and all this business was really just a plot to make the citizens of Seattle pay higher electric rates. Guess there's one lurking in every organization!

Excerpts follow from a few of the many excellent statements made:

JACK B. ROBERTSON -
WASHINGTON ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL

"We recommend that Seattle City Light be instructed to make an annual comprehensive report on alternate sources of power and make

the information available to the Mayor's Office, the Seattle City Council, the public, and the press. Such reports will help to build a foundation of information which will be needed when the time comes to make an irreversible decision. In short, what we are advocating herein is the development of alternate plans for power so that the city will truly have freedom of choice at the time for decision. The Seattle City Light program does not appear to afford this freedom of choice to the city. Such freedom of choice could prevent the city from experiencing once again the low-power brown-outs of the 1950s.

"Today in the absence of comprehensive information concerning alternatives, the Seattle City Council is virtually in the position of having no real choice but to rubber stamp the Lighting Department's power generation program.

"From the Smith, Barney Report, June, 1969, we have learned that the High Ross Dam and the Thunder Creek Diversion Projects have their chief value as sources of peak power (140,000 kilowatts). The value of the two projects for steady power is quite limited (56,000 kilowatts). Further, the Smith, Barney Report shows City Light's peak load increasing from 1,760,000 kilowatts in the 1974-75 power year (the first year that output from High Ross Dam could come on the line) to 2,080,000 kilowatts in the power year 1980-81. This means that the output of the High Ross Dam project, even augmented by the Thunder Creek Diversion project, is so small that it will only supply the additional power needs for some 30 months or less, after which time Seattle City Light will have to look elsewhere for more peaking power.

"Hydroelectric power systems are ideal for the supply of peak power because the water flow can be easily regulated to provide changing power outputs, while thermal-electric plants are best used at a steady power level to supply the base power loads. Thus we believe that a realistic and professional study of alternate power sources will reveal that Seattle City Light's existing hydroelectric power system will be used more and more to supply peak power and that thermal-electric plants, yet to be built, will supply the base power. Further, we believe that such a study will show that it is not in the public interest to cause widespread destruction in the Ross Lake National Recreation Area for such a small gain in peak power capacity.

"Therefore, we oppose the High Ross Dam project and the Thunder Creek Diversion project because we believe there are better solutions to the Lighting Department's peak power needs. Without the benefit of a comprehensive report on alternative power sources, the Seattle City Council, the public, and the press will not be able to judge whether that which Seattle City Light has proposed in the 1970 budget is the best of the alternatives, the worst of the alternatives, or merely mediocre."

HARVEY H. MANNING -
FRIENDS OF THE EARTH

"I am here representing Friends of the Earth, a new organization with national and international membership and concerns, devoted to preserving the total livability of the planet Earth, the only home any of us will ever have. David Brower, president of Friends of the Earth and acknowledged as the outstanding conservationist of our times, wanted very much to attend these hearings in person but because of the short notice was unable to rearrange his schedule. He has asked me to speak for him and for Friends of the Earth.

"I think it is of great significance that one of the first public actions of this new group is to announce its opposition to the plans of Seattle City Light to raise Ross Dam and dam Thunder Creek. I'm sure you know of Dave Brower and his works -- among them, leading the successful campaign to prevent the flooding of the Grand Canyon. It is important for the City Council to understand that what it does in the North Cascades matters not only in Seattle but in San Francisco, Denver, New York. What City Light does will be known in those places and others. This is not a local affair.

"As a matter of fact, one Council member has expressed the feeling that because I live on Cougar Mountain, a dozen miles east of Seattle, even I am a sort of carpetbagger, poking my nose in business that doesn't concern me.

"The flooding of the Big Beaver valley would be a recreational, scenic, and ecological tragedy of the highest magnitude. Until 2 years ago, I had not visited the valley but had long been curious about what was there.

Our 2-day walk down the valley trail was one of the most exciting experiences I've ever had in the North Cascades -- and we had just spent a week amid the great walls and glaciers of the Pickets. It was not just the magnificent groves of ancient cedars and the quiet solitude of the beaver ponds. Indeed, it was not any one thing we specifically saw, but rather what we felt. We knew we were amid a large and rich community of life, of marsh grasses and trees, of bugs and birds and mammals.



Mouth of Big Beaver Valley
(photo by J. W. Miller)

"Yes, there are other cedars, other beaver ponds than those that would be flooded by High Ross. But the distinctive quality of the Big Beaver is the very size of the natural community of life. Lose the 6 miles of wild valley and the essential quality of the Big Beaver is lost.

"We are told by Mr. Nelson, to quote, 'Recreation experts agree that where you don't have water surfaces, these days, you don't have a recreation area.' I disagree with Mr. Nelson's experts, whoever they may be. We in the Northwest have an abundance of 'water surfaces', including Puget Sound, lowland lakes, and inland reservoirs. There is no shortage of 'water surfaces' for recreation. There is a growing shortage of free-flowing rivers, of undisturbed low-elevation forests.

"The raising of Ross Lake would also flood all, or nearly all, of what remains of Ruby Creek, near the North Cross State Highway. We walked the Ruby Creek trail this summer and immediately saw that here will be one of the most popular short walks in the area. From the new highway visitors will be able to reach the undisturbed portions of this beautiful stream in a few minutes. The nature trail will literally have to be 4 feet wide to accommodate the visitors -- unless, of course, Ruby Creek is destroyed.

"There are other valleys, including Little Beaver, Lightning Creek, Devil's Creek. I've walked these valleys, and don't want to lose even another single yard of free-flowing stream.

"I don't concede that the drowning of the Skagit River has improved the valley scenically and recreationally, but I will concede -- since the drowning is a fact of life I must live with anyway -- that Ross Lake, when it is full, has great beauty. But several years ago, on Memorial Day, I took my family to visit the north end of Ross Lake, at Hozomeen. Only there wasn't any lake to be seen. Miles and miles of stumps and mud, a scene so incredibly desolate it had a surrealistic quality. What a foreground for the peaks of the North Cascades! And what a recreational resource! We were alone in the campground. We didn't stay long.

"Keep in mind, in case the City Light recreation experts have not noted the fact, that when a reservoir is drawn down, its recreation value rapidly diminishes to the vanishing point. City Light says, to quote, 'There will be less, not more, exposure of mud flats... under normal conditions.' Now, what are 'normal conditions'? If an 'abnormal condition' occurs as frequently as one year in five, and for part or all of a summer the higher Ross Lake cannot be filled, the City of Seattle will stand condemned by all the visitors who come from around the nation and the world.

"To conclude, Friends of the Earth, led by Dave Brower, is an implacable FOE of the City Light proposal for the Skagit and urges that the City Council of Seattle now put an end to it for once and all."

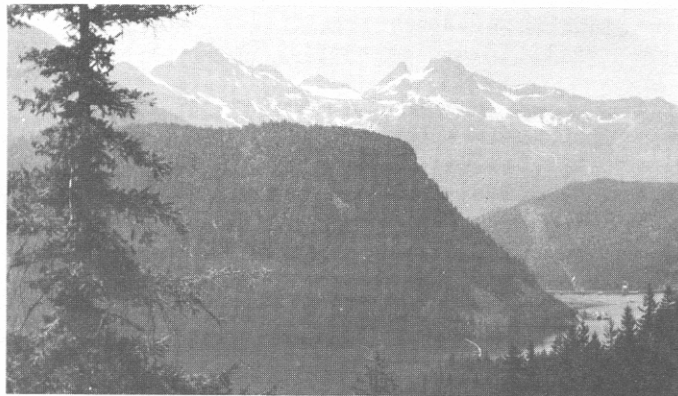
BROCK EVANS -

FEDERATION WESTERN OUTDOOR CLUBS

"The Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs has consistently taken strong stands throughout the long history of Congressional proceedings for maximum protection of the scenic, recreational, and wilderness values of the North Cascades. At the annual convention of the Federation held in Cazadero, California, this past Labor Day weekend, we reaffirmed our position of complete opposition to the raising of Ross Dam and the proposal for a Thunder Creek Dam.

"We oppose these projects because of the immense damage that they will do to the scenic and natural environment of the area. They will destroy significant and accessible natural features which make this presently such a wonderful area to visit and in which to seek recreation. The valley of Big Beaver Creek now extends some 12 miles from its mouth to the very heart of the famous Picket Range in the new North Cascades National Park. Because of its size, relative flatness, and width, it is different from any of the other valleys in the entire northern unit of the park. Much of the lower part of the valley contains extensive stands of magnificent pure cedar forest -- a sight very rarely seen any more in the state of Washington. Our forefathers knew this kind of forest, because it once existed in great quantities in the Puget Sound lowlands. All that, of course, is gone now.

"The proposed High Ross Dam will create a reservoir which will flood out the first 5 miles of this great valley -- the most natural wilderness highway into the Picket Range. Besides destroying this impressive forest of giant old cedar, extensive beaver ponds and bogs of great scientific interest will be lost.



Ross Lake and Colonial Peak (photo by J. W. Miller)

"The High Ross Dam project will also cause the flooding out of at least the lower part of Ruby Creek. Ruby Creek is a large and extremely scenic stream, on the south side of which is found the new North Cross State Highway high up on the slopes. The north side of the creek contains a trail, a beautiful forest walk through several miles of giant old Douglas fir and hemlock, connecting the Granite Creek guard station with the highway by a wooden footbridge. This trail and its surrounding forest, which presently provides very scenic and accessible recreation opportunities for those who drive the new highway, will be flooded by the reservoir.

"These are the primary impacts of the High Ross Dam as we see them at the present time. It will flood out something which is in very short supply in the new North Cascades National Park and Recreation Area complex -- low-elevation flat valleys with their associated tremendous forests. It will replace them with something which is already in large supply -- an already existing reservoir, with existing boat/camp facilities, and many places for new ones. The tragedy is that once these irreplaceable resources are destroyed in the name of more power production, other means of electric generation will still be needed and used.

"We know that City Light is already going to other projects. It is considering nuclear plants. We assume and hope that it is considering fossil fuel plants as well. Nuclear plants indeed do have problems, both with siting and with thermal pollution. However, these problems can be overcome by spending more money, for cooling towers, for example. Just to use one example, it would be quite possible for City Light to construct additional nuclear facilities at the existing Hanford site in eastern Washington. The land is already available, and there will be no issue over siting. The issue would be thermal pollution, which can be controlled by the use of cooling towers.

"Fossil fuel plants also pose some problem in the field of air pollution, with which we are, of course, greatly concerned. However, the latest technology permits the removal of 99.5% of all particulate material from the atmosphere, thus substantially reducing the visual impact of these facilities. They can also be located in remote places next to the coal fields which they use, and in areas which are not of great conservation importance.

"These are just a few of the alternatives available to you and to our servant, Seattle City Light. The point is, these developments are going to take place in any case, and within the next decade. We believe the valleys of Thunder Creek, Big Beaver Creek, and Ruby Creek are well worth 2 years of Seattle's additional power needs."



Big fir in the Big Beaver Valley
(photo by J. W. Miller)

JOSEPH W. MILLER - INDIVIDUAL

"Because I plan on retiring from government service next May, my wife, a biology teacher at Sammamish High, decided to find a post-retirement project to keep me occupied (and out of trouble.) She conceived the idea of offering our combined services to the National Park Service to do any kind of scientific projects they needed done and for which funds were lacking. We felt that since we were fairly well acquainted with the North Cascades area, we should first volunteer to the Superintendent of the North Cascades National Park.

"Superintendent Contor advised us that our offer was welcome, that practically nothing was known of the area other than its geology and glaciology, and that there were enough projects to last several lifetimes. We had suggested two possibilities for studies -- a survey of the lower Big Beaver Valley and a

plant survey of the proposed Ruby Mountain tram terminus. At a meeting with my wife, Mr. Contor and the Park Naturalist proposed that our first project be an ecosystem survey of the Big Beaver Valley, with the ultimate goal being the preparation of an ecosystem overlay map.

"We accordingly spent 15 days of my vacation in July and August of this past summer in the Big Beaver Valley. We packed 120 pounds of scientific and camping gear and food down from the new North Cross State Highway to Ross Lake where a ranger met us and carried us and our supplies to Big Beaver Campground. We spent the entire time doing field work in the lower 5 or 6 miles of the valley and have just well scratched the surface. It was the best (and almost the most arduous) vacation I've ever had. Next summer we're going back in again as soon as school is out and continue our work.

"I wish to emphasize that I do not represent the Park Service at this hearing in any capacity, official or otherwise. My only connection with the Park Service is that they have given us a collecting permit and authorized us to perform a natural sciences research project within the boundaries of the North Cascades Park complex. We intend to give our reports, maps, and herbarium collection to the Park Service. Any data we have developed will, of course, be public information, and I am happy to share a small part of it with you today.

"We are in the midst of writing a preliminary, illustrated report and identifying and mounting the extensive herbarium collection we made. The maps I have given you are small versions of the large-scale base map upon which we shall overlay the plant and animal communities and aquatic systems. It was prepared from the City Light survey blueprints of 1936 with revisions of water bodies made in the field. Contour lines above 1725 feet are schematic only and are based on aerial photos and field observation. Topographic engineers don't often work gratis, so this is the best map we could prepare.

"Unlike the other side streams entering Ross Lake, Big Beaver Creek flows through a hanging valley. Before the construction of Ross Dam and the flooding of the Skagit, Big Beaver Creek dropped 300 vertical feet from the floor of its valley to the Skagit in a series of spectacular falls. The valley has undergone extensive glaciation and exhibits the typ-

ical U-shape left by a valley glacier. A resistant granitic intrusion at the mouth of the valley has defied the erosive efforts of the glacier and the stream and is chiefly responsible for the unique characteristics of the valley -- its long, flat floor and its meandering stream.



Sphagnum bog, Big Beaver Valley

(photo by J. W. Miller)

"The six ponds in the lower valley appear to be relics of a single large lake that probably existed in the valley at the end of the last glacial epoch. We were able to get to all these lakes except the largest one, and we climbed the valley walls and looked down on this one. They are excellent examples of what the ecologists term hydrarch succession -- that is, the orderly progression from open water to solid land.

"The body of water farthest upstream on this map is a very large, fairly recent beaver pond, abandoned now because the beavers' food supply ran out. The most interesting body of water from an ecological point of view is here, a sphagnum bog pond. Unlike the lower ponds, this one has a constant flow of fresh water. Its level is maintained by old beaver dams, and the supply of fresh water supports a population of sphagnum moss which floats in mats over 6 feet of water. We walked out on these mats -- a most eerie experience, since they tend to sink under one's feet. The flora here was truly outstanding. The rare insectivorous plant, sundew, carpets the moss so thickly as to give a reddish cast to the surface. Bog orchids up to 4 feet in height are also very numerous. We had only an hour to spend here on our last day in the valley, and we can hardly wait to get back to do a thorough investigation of this fascinating area.

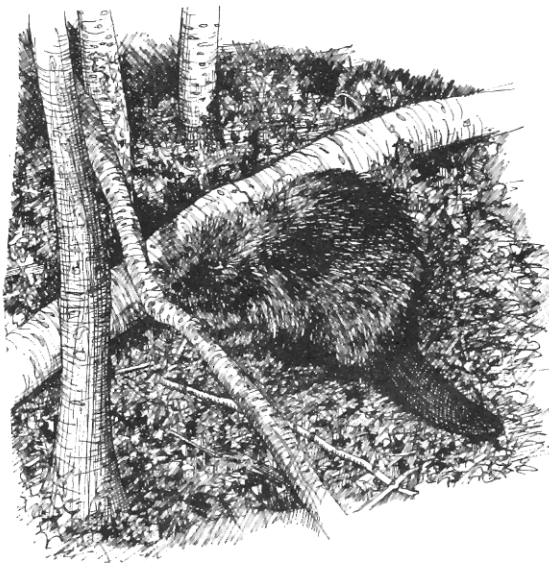
"Portions of the valley were burned in the great Skagit fire of 1926 which started in here and burned out of control all the way to the Canadian border. Those forest areas which burned have recovered well and offer interesting examples of natural succession following fire. There are also several areas of mature forest that were not touched by the 1926 fire. At the lower end of the valley the stream apparently acted as a barrier, and there is a mile of old-growth forest remaining here. This is an interesting open forest approaching the climax stage, and its habitat varies from very dry at the lower end to quite moist at the upper end. In the moister area are numerous cedars of 6 and 7 feet diameter.

"The best-known natural features of Big Beaver Valley, of course, are the groves of large cedars along the trail. We, like all visitors before us, were impressed by their enormous girth, and we spent quite a while measuring and mapping them. Trees of 8 and 9 feet diameter are common. We are anxious to do a series of increment borings and accurate age datings on these trees next summer, but based on what is known of cedars of comparable size in similar areas, these trees are probably at least 1000 years old. The forest in this area is open and has an attractive and unusually varied lower story. We feel that with increased visitor use of the valley, this would make a most desirable nature trail or outdoor botanical museum.

"We were primarily interested in learning what we could of the beaver which gave their name to the valley and which have had such a pronounced effect on the valley's water system. The beaver is a cyclic animal. In the absence of marked control by man or other predators, it tends to multiply until it exhausts its food supply. Then it migrates or dies and the area enters a cycle of few or no beaver. Big Beaver Valley is in such a low point of the cycle now. After intensive search, we found an occupied house in this area and saw a live animal swimming in this pond, with many fresh willow cuttings here. I previously remarked on this large beaver pond farther up the valley. The interesting thing here was that before the beaver left they got so hungry they were felling firs and hemlocks up to 2 feet in diameter and stripping them of their bark. In a lifetime of hill-walking, I have never seen anything to equal this beaver logging operation. The beaver's favorite food, willow, is beginning to grow back all over the

valley, and before long their numbers will start to increase again.

"The other most interesting mammals we saw were a pair of river otter swimming up the creek. Black-tail deer are quite common in the valley, and we heard, but did not see, an elk bugling. We made casts of the footprints of black bear, raccoons, and other small mammals we've not yet identified. Small mammals seen were chickaree, golden-mantled ground squirrel, chipmunk, and snowshoe rabbit. We had live-traps but succeeded in catching nothing but the omnipresent white-footed deermouse. We had been warned we would need to run a trapline of about 50 mousetraps before we could thin out the deermice enough to determine what other small mammals live in the valley. That would be almost a full-time job in itself.



"We also kept a bird list and were able to identify 35 species. These all appeared to be summer residents and many were rearing young. The area where the lodgepole pine forest meets the lake was especially rich in insectivorous birds -- warblers, flycatchers, swifts, swallows, and the like. We expect to add materially to our count when we go back in earlier in the season next year. We have not even begun to study the insects or the animals in the ponds and streams.

"We hope the City Council's decision will be such as to permit us to carry to completion this work we have undertaken."

DALE W. COLE, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR,
FOREST SOILS, COLLEGE OF FOREST
RESOURCES, UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON
- INDIVIDUAL

"I wish to testify this morning -- not as a representative of City Light, the University, nor any other organization -- but as a concerned individual. Because of my professional background in environmental ecology and my basic familiarity with the Ross Lake drainage area, I should like to ask the City Council a series of serious questions.

Ecological Questions Concerning Raising the Level of Ross Lake

"The following ecological questions are basic to the functioning of the terrestrial and aquatic components of the area:

1. Will any unique existing plant communities be destroyed immediately due to the clearing and flooding? Will there be substantial changes in the ecology of the area endangering unique or scarce plant communities above the proposed flooded areas?

2. Will the existing populations of fish be substantially influenced through the alteration of spawning beds, water currents, lake depth, and potential shifts in food chains and nutrient levels?

3. Will the changes in the winter-summer range ratio and migration routes for the larger mammals seriously influence their population?

4. How does the creation of a large body of relatively still water affect the microclimate of a mountain valley, and does this change have an ecologically significant effect on the plant communities?

5. Will the change in surface area (approximately 40%) and depth of Ross Lake accentuate this effect?

6. If the plant communities are changed, how will this affect the dependent animal populations?

"Since the new level of the lake will be variable, there are additional ecological questions that should be answered:

1. The mud-flat environment, already a north-end ecological abnormality, will be greatly expanded, both at the north end of the

lake and in the side valleys. The impact of this most unusual system (in a montane ecological province) should be assessed most carefully. Alien species will undoubtedly be introduced and balances between native species changed.

2. Concentration of human impact due to the unsightliness of the mud flats must be considered from an ecological standpoint.

Recreational Questions Concerning Raising the Level of Ross Lake

"As a recreationist, I have a series of socially oriented questions regarding the future usability of this site. The value of Ross Lake and its surrounding environment for recreation is completely contingent upon the lake being at the high-water level. We should not be deceiving ourselves by thinking otherwise. The Big Beaver drainage as a mud flat covered with stumps of the present forest has a negative recreational potential. Thus we should know:



ROSS LAKE

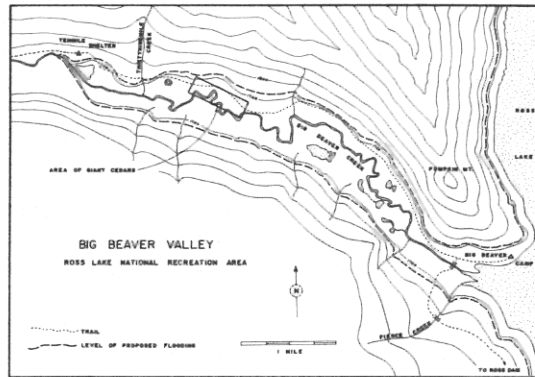
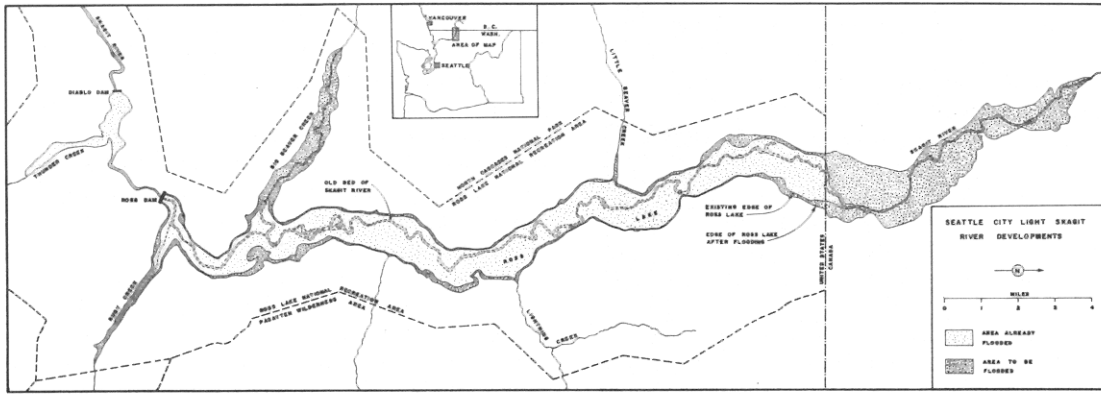
1. How many days or weeks per year will the lake be at the high-water level?

2. Will City Light guarantee that the lake will be filled to a specific height by a specific date? Who will determine what this date and height will be?

3. What will be the maximum drawdown of the lake? Who will control this decision?

4. Will the stumps be removed from the newly-created lake bed or will the visitor be blessed by their appearance during low-water periods?

"These questions certainly do not encompass the total range of environmental, ecological, or recreational concerns that a person should have regarding the High Ross Dam project. They are offered in an attempt to



focus the Council's attention to the types of consideration that should be explored thoroughly before changing the environment on the scale proposed here. I firmly believe that the questions I have raised have strong ecological, environmental, and social implications that cannot be ignored. I hope that the Council feels likewise and will seek answers to these questions before reaching any final decision on this very critical issue."

Following Dr. Cole's statement, Council President Ted Best said, "I don't believe we can answer those questions this morning. If you want to leave them with us, we'll try to get answers for you."

Councilman Hill suggested that perhaps Mr. Nelson's expert, Dr. Sharpe, could answer Dr. Cole's questions.

Dr. Sharpe stood up and agreed that those were indeed good questions, but that he hadn't studied the ecology of the area and couldn't readily answer them.

Councilman Sam Smith then asked Dr. Sharpe if flooding out the Big Beaver would cause any kind of plant or animal to become extinct.

Dr. Sharpe replied, no, that there was no species unique to the Big Beaver that wasn't common elsewhere. Then he went on to make a brief statement deprecating the values of the Big Beaver -- how it was quite marshy, had lots of old avalanche scars and burned-over areas, how the trail was down in the trees so you really couldn't see the valley, how 125 feet of nice blue water would turn it into a beautiful 6-mile-long fiord and let the public get upstream to see the really good part, etc., etc. Quite a reverse sales pitch. You'd have thought he owned Lower Big Beaver and was talking to the County Assessor.

And so ended the first engagement, the conservationists jubilant and feeling they had won the day, Electric John no doubt appalled at the weight of our stubborn opposition, and Councilmen Best, Carroll, Eckmann, and Mitchell just biding their time.

In the days following the hearing, Councilman Hill made available to us a letter from Philip A. Briegleb, Director of the Forest Service's Range and Experiment Station. The letter, because of its scientific import, is reproduced in full elsewhere in this issue.

A similar letter was addressed to the City Council by Jerry F. Franklin, Liaison Officer of the Society of American Forester's Natural Area Committee. (Jerry Franklin is the senior author of the new book, Vegetation of Oregon and Washington, which was prepared for distribution to the XIth Botanical Congress in Seattle this summer. Mr. Franklin is recognized as one of the foremost experts in forest ecology and his book* is something no serious student of Northwest flora can afford to be without.)

On October 30 the Council Committee of the Whole met again to hear Electric John's request to seek permission of the Federal Power Commission to raise Ross Dam. Again members of the major local and national conservation organizations predominated in the audience. Mr. Nelson made his request and Councilman Ted Best immediately moved to end the hearing by barring public testimony. His justification for this curious action was that the council and mayor will be conducting a study-in-depth of City Light in December and January and the public could sound off then. Friend Best was overruled by the other councilmen and the hearing began.



Western redcedars, Big Beaver Valley
(photo by J. W. Miller)

President Goldsworthy warned the council that the conservationists considered this

issue an historic one and would oppose City Light at every step of the lengthy legal procedure involved in raising the dam. He stated that conservation groups would mount a regional and national public-information campaign about the damage the High Ross project would cause in the Ross Lake Recreation Area. He promised intervention before the Federal Power Commission and court action in the event the FPC ruled in favor of City Light.

Spokesmen for the Washington Environmental Council, Sierra Club, and Choose an Effective City Council (CHECC) asked for delay by the City Council until after completion of the study of City Light's programs and policies. New information concerning potential hazards of the proposed "economy-type" High Ross Dam was submitted by Dr. Theodore R. Beck, an engineer. Richard J. Brooks, Seattle businessman and president of the Chemithon Corporation, suggested alternatives for providing more and cheaper peak power. Because of the importance of these latter two statements to the conservationists' case, they are printed in full elsewhere in this issue.

Following these presentations, Councilman Mike Mitchell spoke in favor of the High Ross project and chastised the people in the audience as not representing the majority interests of Seattle residents (that old Silent Majority again?) The council then voted 5 to 4 to give City Light permission to ask federal approval of the project. Voting for Electric John -- Ted Best, Charles M. Carroll, Liem Eng Tuai, Ray Eckmann, and Mike Mitchell. Voting for the American people -- Tim Hill, Phyllis Lamphere, Sam Smith, and Don D. Wright.

Seattle's City Council election on November 4 failed to provide much encouragement for conservationists on the High Ross Dam issue. Mitchell and Eckmann, who had voted for City Light, did not seek reelection. Liem Eng Tuai was returned and indicated he would continue to support Mr. Nelson. Mrs. Jeanette Williams, whose husband is a member of Mr. Nelson's fiefdom at City Light, defeated Mrs. Joan Thomas, who had opposed High Ross. Mrs. Williams' attitude toward City Light's plans seems predictable. Don Wright

*Copies can be obtained without charge from the Pacific Northwest Forest and Range Experiment Station, P. O. Box 3141, Portland, Oregon 97208.

was defeated by Wayne Larkin who had stated: "The Ross Dam area must be increased to provide the needed service. A small loss of trail acreage should not counter the planned development of Ross Dam." The other new councilman, George Cooley, had stated during the campaign that he opposed the high dam.

Any way we analyze the new council, at present we seem to be on the short end of a 5 to 4 vote.

As a final lame-duck action on November 17, the old council refused to let conservationists Richard J. Brooks and P. D. Goldsworthy speak at a hearing on City Light's budget. After about 10 minutes of debate and the vote (5 to 4 again) Brooks said: "It would have been a lot quicker if they'd let me speak."

Where do we go from here? The directors of the North Cascades Conservation Council at the November 1 Board meeting voted unanimously to intervene before the Federal Power Commission in opposition to City Light's proposal to raise Ross Dam. We shall be calling on you to send letters to the FPC requesting a public hearing.

In the meanwhile, we shall be trying, by every means known to us, to publicize this attempt by Seattle City Light to rape the park that belongs to the nation and that all of us fought for so many long years. We have had excellent local press and TV coverage so far, and we hope to carry news of our fight to the national informational media.

These efforts will not be without cost to the organization and, in fact, have already proved the most serious threat to our financial stability since our founding. If we do not succeed in shaming the City of Seattle into giving up this despicable assault on the environment and are forced to take legal action, we shall need new sources of income.

What can the membership do to help NOW?

1. Become as knowledgeable as possible on the issue and talk about it at every opportunity to groups and individuals.

2. Write letters to Seattle's Mayor and City Council expressing your indignation that a department of the city would propose to ravage your park for the sake of a few kilowatts.

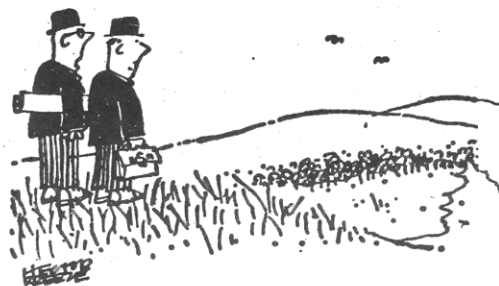


Big Beaver Creek (photo by J. W. Miller)

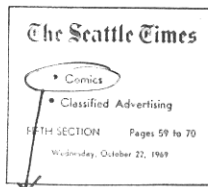
3. Write letters to editors, especially to those of papers outside Seattle. Help make the American people aware of what the city of Seattle is planning to do to their park.

4. Help the North Cascades Conservation Council, through your contributions, to recoup its expenditures for its advertising campaign and to build a war-chest for the fight ahead.

5. Be of good cheer, for the right is on our side!



"Shall we use this area of unique ecological interest for a reservoir, a power station, an overspill or an airport?"



Greater Potential Seen

Higher Ross Dam Won't Hurt Area Says City Light

By BOB LANE

Raising the height of Ross Dam and the level of Ross Lake by 125 feet will have only a negligible impact on the natural environmental features of the area, a report prepared for Seattle City Light says.

A number of persons have expressed opposition to City Light plans to increase the size of the lake to produce more electrical power because of the damage the

project would cause, including the flooding of virgin cedar growing in river valleys branching off from the lake.

Dr. Grant W. Sharpe, a professor of outdoor recreation at the University of Washington, studied the Ross area for the utility and said raising the level of the lake would enhance "in many instances" the environmental features of the area.

SHARPE SAID he explored all of the valleys feeding into Ross Lake either by helicopter or by foot and that he sometimes used both methods in his research.

Conservationists particularly have complained about the loss of virgin cedar growing in the lower Big Beaver Valley Creek.

Sharpe commented: "The loss of the groves of cedar . . . is understandably upsetting to those who value the wilderness aspects of the Ross Lake National Recreation area. However, it is not

a wilderness area, but was specifically set aside from the surrounding national park and wilderness area that its hydroelectric potential might be realized.

" . . . there are fine groves of cedar and numerous huge individual trees remaining above the area to be flooded, both in the valley of Big Beaver Creek and elsewhere."

The Ross project, on which City Light plans to spend \$520,000 for engineering next year, would raise the level of the lake from 1,600 feet above sea level to 1,725 feet.

Sharpe said the lake now is disfigured in the winter as water is drawn from the lake for power production. "With the advent of High Ross, this drawdown will be substantially less," he said.

Big Beaver Valley is 17 miles long and six miles will be flooded when the hydro project is completed.

"Although many cedar will be destroyed, there are

groves of cedar containing numerous fine specimens above elevation 1,725 on Big Beaver Creek . . . Large cedars also occur along the 12-mile Little Beaver Creek drainage to the north, as well as along other streams of the Ross Lake watershed . . ."

Sharpe's report included photographs of trees growing above the 1,725 level with diameters of 8 to 12 feet.

Flooding of the valley also would provide an opportunity for the development of a natural-history trail along the stream, Sharpe said.

BEAVER PONDS, which Sharpe said are as important in the "Big Beaver Valley story" as the large trees are found both above and below the 1,725 level.

Only about one mile of 13-mile-long Little Beaver Valley will be flooded by raising of the lake, Sharpe said. The valley is of significance because of its forest containing large cedar and other trees.

After raising of the lake level there will be more suitable land available for campsites than now exists along the lake, Sharpe added.

"In fact, care will have to be exercised to prevent over-development," Sharpe said.

THE SHARPE REPORT

Reviewed by The Kerosene Kid

High Ross Dam:

Some Observations on its Impact on the Natural Environment

Grant W. Sharpe, Ph. D.

The North Cascades Conservation Council has been fortunate in being able to examine a copy of this highly-classified document. The strict security measures taken by City Light precluded our obtaining a glimpse of the work prior to the October 3 City Council hearing, but our operatives were successful in penetrating Mr. Nelson's "apparatus" shortly thereafter. Although Mr. Nelson has not seen fit to make public disclosure of this report (which was financed by Seattle residents through their electric bills) we are glad to bring you its highlights as a public service.

The work is a weighty one (while our agents did not have access to scales, they estimate its weight at between 2 and 3 pounds). Most of the weight appears to come from the lavish use of Kodacolor prints, although there are some pages of text as well. The most impressive part of the text is the last page on which Dr. Sharpe cites his qualifications for undertaking a work of this magnitude.

In preparation for this work Dr. Sharpe spent an unspecified period of time touring the Ross Lake Recreation Area by helicopter and on foot. He does not say how much of each. He devotes considerable space to telling what a good job his employer, City Light, has done in maintaining Ross Lake in a tidy condition. His primary thesis is that the additional 125 feet of water is going to turn Ross Lake into a real recreational paradise.

As an example of the kind of thorough investigative work Dr. Sharpe did in preparation for this report, we wish to quote in full that portion of his work relating to Big Beaver Valley, the area of greatest controversy:

"BIG BEAVER VALLEY"

Since Big Beaver Valley appears to be the single most important issue, it will be considered first. This broad valley contains groves of outstanding western redcedar both below and above elevation 1725. The cedars do not form a continuous stand along the valley floor but are

interspersed with large openings. Aerial photos reveal that about 30 percent of the valley floor to be flooded is cedar type. The remainder of the valley below 1725 is composed of other tree species*, brushy marsh, active and inactive beaver ponds, forest fires healed over with vine maple, avalanche chutes, and Big Beaver Creek itself, which meanders extensively.

We note that Dr. Sharpe does not mention the grand firs, lodgepole pines, western white pines, and cottonwoods that also occur in the valley, some in great profusion. We wonder how a doctor of philosophy and a University professor could have missed them. To be sure, at the City Council hearings he admitted he had concentrated on studying the areas that would not be flooded! A curious species of "objective science", this. But then, how much can you see from a helicopter, anyway?

QUESTIONS and ANSWERS REGARDING CONSERVATIONISTS' POSITION
on SEATTLE CITY LIGHT

Q: Why are you against City Light? Hasn't it done a good job keeping our rates low?

A: We are not against City Light. We are against what its present proposed projects for dams in Thunder Creek and the Ross Lake area will do to the environment. The issue is not how good a utility it is, but what its proposal will do to our natural environment in the North Cascades.

Q: Are you against public power?

A: No. The issue is not one of public versus private power. The only issue which concerns the conservation groups is the impact of City Light policies upon our environment, whether it be the lack of underground wiring, air and water pollution, or the destruction of virgin forests and wilderness valleys by dams.

Q: Don't we need more electricity? If this is so, how can you be against more dams in the North Cascades?

A: You must keep in mind that even if both the controversial High Ross Dam and Thunder Creek Dam projects are constructed, they will only meet the projected additional needs for peaking power (City Light's figures) for about 2 years. In other words, City Light states that we will need about 650,000 kilowatts of peaking power (both dams are peaking projects) by 1980.

AN ELASTIC DAM ?

1. The figures from the report by Smith, Barney, Inc., the consulting firm hand-picked by City Light indicate that High Ross Dam would generate 140,000 kilowatts of peaking power.
2. At the time of the October 30 hearing Mr. Nelson was stating that the project would generate 204,000 KW.
3. On November 30 on KING-TV's program on the environment, Commitment 206, Mr. Nelson said that High Ross would generate 240,000 KW.

How about it, Electric John? Will the dam stretch as much as these conveniently elastic figures of yours?

*Other trees found in the valley include red alder, Pacific silver fir, western hemlock, Douglas-fir, paper birch, and bigleaf maple."