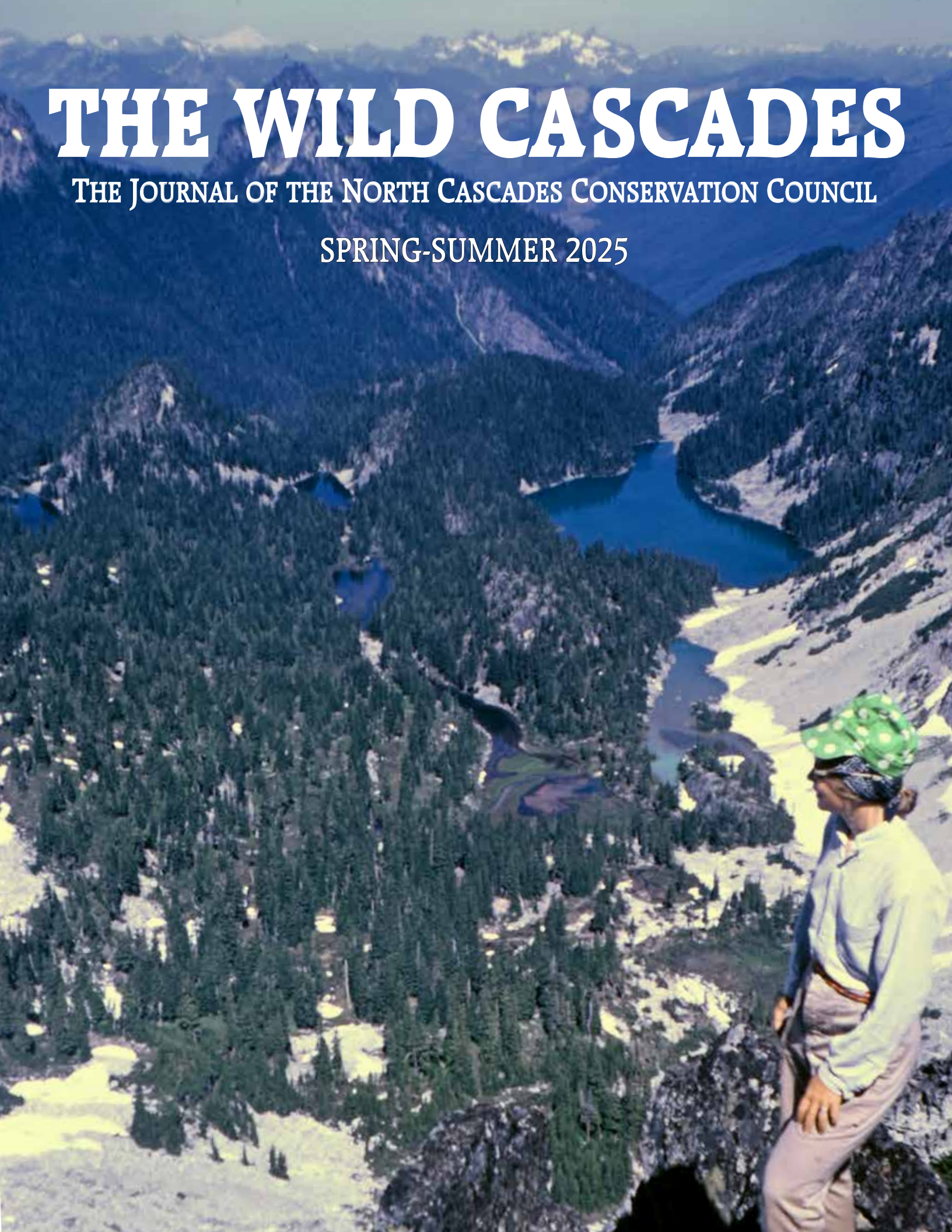


# THE WILD CASCADES

THE JOURNAL OF THE NORTH CASCADES CONSERVATION COUNCIL

SPRING-SUMMER 2025



## THE WILD CASCADES ■ Spring-Summer 2025

- [3 President's report — Phil Fenner](#)
- [4 N3C Actions: February to June 2025](#)
- [6 TLT Lobby Day and Beckler 6 — Rick McGuire](#)
- [7 Help N3C use Trust Fund Transfer to protect land in the North Cascades — Jim Freeburg](#)
- [8 Will the great bear return? — Phil Fenner](#)
- [9 Get ready, get set: Pre-scoping of the Baker River Watershed Landscape Assessment — Dave Fluharty](#)
- [10 Skagit Project relicensing: The continuing saga — Dave Fluharty](#)  
[A sampling of John Warth's photos](#)
- [11 Federal Energy Regulatory Commission letter](#)
- [12 Quo Vadis: NEPA going, going, not yet gone — Dave Fluharty](#)
- [13 Introducing Policy Advisor Kara Parker](#)  
[Northwest Rivers poem by Eugene S. Fairbanks](#)
- [14 Book Review: \*Mixed Severity Fires: Nature's Phoenix\* — reviewed by Jim Scarborough](#)
- [15 N3C notches a win against Twisp logging — Phil Fenner](#)  
[Phase II of Holden remedial action proposed — Anne Basye](#)
- [17 Book Review: \*The Other Public Lands Preservation, Extraction, and Politics of the Fifty States' Natural Resources Lands\* by Steven Davis — reviewed by David Fluharty](#)
- [18 Henderson data rescued — Rick McGuire and Phil Fenner](#)
- [19 N3C membership application](#)

COVER PHOTO: Long-time and well known conservationist Karyl Winn, looking north from Foss River basin in then-proposed Alpine Lakes Wilderness. Snowy Monte Cristo peaks in distance, with Mt. Baker in far distance to left. —JOHN WARTH PHOTO

---

### The Wild Cascades

---

*Journal of the North Cascades Conservation Council*

EDITOR: Anne Basye

EDITORIAL BOARD: Philip Fenner, David Fluharty and Ed Henderson

Pat Hutson, Designer | Printing by Connect Printing, LLC

*The Wild Cascades* is published three times a year (Winter, Spring-Summer, Fall).

Letters, comments, and articles are invited, subject to editorial review.

*The Wild Cascades* Editor

To update your address or request electronic delivery of *The Wild Cascades*,  
[info@northcascades.org](mailto:info@northcascades.org)

North Cascades Conservation Council  
PO Box 95980, University Station, Seattle, WA 98145-2980

**THE NORTH CASCADES CONSERVATION COUNCIL** was formed in 1957 “To protect and preserve the North Cascades’ scenic, scientific, recreational, educational, wildlife, and wilderness values.” Continuing this mission, N3C keeps government officials, environmental organizations, and the general public informed about issues affecting the North Cascades Ecosystem. Action is pursued through administrative, legal, and public participation channels to protect the lands, waters, plants and wildlife.

Over the last six decades N3C has led or participated in campaigns to create the North Cascades National Park Complex, Glacier Peak Wilderness, and other units of the National Wilderness System from the William O. Douglas Wilderness north to the Alpine Lakes Wilderness, the Henry M. Jackson Wilderness, the Chelan-Sawtooth Wilderness, the Wild Sky Wilderness and others. Among its most dramatic victories has been working with British Columbia allies to block the raising of Ross Dam, which would have drowned Big Beaver Valley.

N3C is supported by member dues and private donations. These contributions support the full range of the Council’s activities, including publication of *The Wild Cascades*. As a 501(c)(3) organization, all contributions are fully tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. Membership dues for one year are: \$10 (Living Lightly) to \$100.

***NCCC would like to acknowledge the North Cascade Range and adjacent areas as the ancestral homelands of Indigenous Peoples, First Nations, and all who have lived here for millennia and have stewarded this land since time immemorial.***

North Cascades  
Conservation Council  
P.O. Box 95980  
University Station  
Seattle, WA 98145-2980

[www.northcascades.org](http://www.northcascades.org)



*The Wild Cascades* is printed on 10% post-consumer recycled paper.

## N3C Board

### Officers

PRESIDENT

**Philip Fenner**

VICE PRESIDENT

**Carolyn McConnell**

TREASURER

**Lisa Bergman**

SECRETARY

**Marc Bardsley**

### Directors

Gerry Cook

Dave Fluharty

David Gladstone

Kathy Johnson

Robert Paul Kendall

Kurt Lauer

Kathleen Learned

Thom Peters

Ken Wilcox

### Advisors

Brock Evans

Barry Gall

Kevin Geraghty

Tom Hammond

Ed Henderson

Fayette Krause

Dave LeBlanc

Jim Scarborough

Thom Schroeder

### Policy Advisor

Kara Parker



Founded in 1957  
SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT SPRING-SUMMER 2025

*I'm in the backcountry as we go to press, so in lieu of a message, here is the transcript of a May interview on the topic of the Trump administration's March 1 Executive Order to log the National Forests without environmental review. Considering the rapid pace of developments, some aspects may already be somewhat outdated, but the need for "eyes and ears" to observe and report on what you see within our National Forests is clear and urgent. Please send your observations to: [philf@northcascades.org](mailto:philf@northcascades.org)*

Phil Fenner

[philf@northcascades.org](mailto:philf@northcascades.org)

**Reporter:** What effect, if any, have you seen to date on federal forests from White House promises to open more timber to logging. Are there tangible signs of change? Or nothing yet?

**Phil Fenner:** So many issues swirling around! Your basic question as I understood it is "Have we at N3C seen effects of Trump's executive order calling for more logging in the National Forests?" And the answer is no, we haven't seen that, it hasn't started yet as far as we know. But it could any day.

**R:** I guess the fuller question would be, do you see the structures or the changes being set in place to allow for the expansion? Or do you potentially see things shaping up in a way that would lead to the opposite, that is, less logging?

**PF:** I would say we have seen the erosion of sets of rules the Federal agencies use to implement the environmental legislation that Congress has passed. For example, the big one recently was the Endangered Species Act rule change that would mean you'd have to see dead fish floating in a river to say there was a negative impact to that species. In the past the guiding principle was that you needed to protect that species' habitat in order to protect the species. These kinds of perhaps seemingly subtle rules changes are definitely setting the stage for an aggressive attack on our forest ecosystems. But the attack itself doesn't seem to have begun yet. It's like they're clearing the pathways but haven't brought in the big guns yet.

The Catch-22 is if the environmental laws, including the ones requiring the agencies to announce their projects, are ignored as the administration seems intent on doing, then how would we know the attack had begun unless we happened to be there when they went in and started? Of course, one could argue that some of the stricter aspects of the laws requiring public involvement in the planning process, like the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) have already been watered down a lot by previous administrations like Trump 1, and were not reinforced again by the Biden administration. So some of the groundwork for this assault was already set in place before Trump 2 came in. With NEPA it's been a long slow decline in effective public input, with industry lobbying for more exceptions, exclusions, "streamlining" etc. So we're just waiting for the next big proverbial shoe to drop here.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9



# N3C Actions

FEBRUARY to MAY  
2025

*Advocacy carried out by  
dedicated N3C volunteers  
in the last four months to  
protect and preserve the  
North Cascades lands,  
waters, plants and wildlife.*



## DEFENDING WILD AREAS AGAINST DAMAGING INDUSTRIAL USES

**Why it matters:** resource extraction — mining, logging, hydropower — is the most harmful use of public land. N3C strives to save what remains wild, mitigate what's been lost, and restore what's been damaged.

- ☒ Attended Seattle City Light (SCL) relicensing Comprehensive Table meetings in February and March to receive updates on Settlement Agreement negotiations. The deadline to file for a new license expired April 1, 2025 but the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission granted SCL another extension until September 15, 2025. At the June meeting of the Comprehensive Table, SCL was provided confidential access to the Settlement Agreement as negotiated by the Partner group. See page 10.

### **Join our N3C Facebook page!**

*We're up to 718 followers and growing. Help us build our clout by friending us and then recommending our page to your friends concerned about preserving the North Cascades.*



721 people  
like this



## ESTABLISHING, EXPANDING AND PROTECTING WILDERNESS AREAS

**Why it matters:** federal land designation as Wilderness and Park is the gold standard of ecosystem protection, precluding most damaging industrial and commercial exploitation.

- ☒ Busy behind the scenes....

## OTHER CONSERVATION PRIORITIES

- ☒ Signed on to WAWild letter to the Washington Congressional delegation on the Value and Importance of Federal Employees Supporting our Public Lands.
- ☒ Signed on to WELC letter objecting to Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Interim final rule rescinding its regulations impacting the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), which includes changes to rules of procuring an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), and other environmental reports. The Rule became effective on April 11, ending nearly 50 years of CEQ regulations serving as the foundation for federal environmental reviews.



## PROTECTING ANCIENT AND LEGACY FORESTS AND PROMOTING RESPONSIBLE FOREST MANAGEMENT

**Why it matters:** *like real estate, they're just not making ancient forest anymore. We seek to restore watersheds and fisheries damaged from decades of heavy logging and road building and protect significant forests from degradation.*

- ✓ After winning our appeal of the District Court ruling on the legality of the Twisp Restoration Project (TRP), sent letter advising Methow District Ranger and Okanogan National Forest supervisor not to log until the cumulative effects analysis is completed and a Record of Decision is finalized. Our Appeal remands the case back to District Court for the US Forest Service to improve the Environmental Assessment. *See page 15.*
- ✓ Filed Freedom of Information Act request for N. Fk. Stillaguamish to gather all information to prepare for legal action if necessary.
- ✓ N3C President interviewed by national news outlet re: evidence we may have seen of new logging under Trump's Executive Order. *See page 3.*
- ✓ Filed comments on EA for proposed Carbon River Landscape Assessment Project restoration project for MBSNF Carbon River District. N3C has serious concerns about impacts of the proposed logging and road network as well as recreation.
- ✓ Attended Trust Land Transfer Lobby Day in Olympia. *See page 6.*



## PROMOTING ENVIRONMENTALLY SOUND RECREATION IN WILD AREAS

**Why it matters:** *balancing access with economics and Wilderness preservation, we evaluate motorized use and places where it needs to be limited to reduce land impacts and recurring road repair costs.*

- ✓ Zoomed with Western Environmental Law Center (WELC) and sent comments on the Deadhorse road rebuild CE that would impact listed species.

### Want to take actions that protect the North Cascades?

Join the N3C board.

Contact Phil Fenner for details at [philf@northcascades.org](mailto:philf@northcascades.org)

- ✓ Attended virtual USFS pre-scoping meeting re: Baker River Landscape Analysis to prepare for start of the scoping process in November 2025. Attended virtual USFS pre-scoping meeting re: Baker River Landscape Analysis to prepare for start of the scoping process in November 2025. *See page 9.*



## PROTECTING WILDLIFE AND WILDLIFE HABITAT

**Why it matters:** *From microscopic fungi to top predators, the wilderness ecosystem's living members are interdependent, so keeping viable populations of each species is essential to preserve the ecosystem for future generations.*

- ✓ Signed letters from American Bird Conservancy and Earthjustice opposing redefinition of "Harm" in the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and the proposal by US Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service to exclude impacts on habitat as impacting species.
- ✓ Filed comments to Regulations.gov on ESA rule change defining "harm" to exclude habitat modification.
- ✓ Joined WELC coalition re: Northern Spotted Owl habitat. The Biden administration's critical habitat designation is being challenged and the Trump administration is unlikely to defend it.

- ✓ Submitted comments on Northwest Forest Plan Amendments Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) jointly with Kettle Range Conservation Group and Alpine Lakes Protection Society.

# TLT Lobby Day and Beckler 6

By Rick McGuire



*Reflecting and fish rearing pool in Becker-6 bottomlands. — RICK MCGUIRE PHOTO*

The Winter 2025 *TWC* featured a piece on the “Tulalip/Beckler 6” Trust Land Transfer (TLT) proposal detailed the many natural values of Beckler 6 at length. Suffice it to say here that Beckler Section 6 is (now soon to be was,) a very attractive square mile of isolated Department of Natural Resources land bordering the Wild Sky Wilderness in the lower Beckler valley a few miles NE of the town of Skykomish. With its impressive, nearly 100-year-old natural forests and extensive fish spawning channels in a broad floodplain, it absolutely qualifies as prime real estate.

In September 2023 the Alpine Lakes Protection Society (ALPS) submitted a TLT application to DNR to transfer Beckler 6 to the Tulalip Tribes for long-term conservation and management. This article takes up the story where the previous one left off.

In 2024 DNR reviewed close to thirty TLT proposals and decided which were in “the best interests of

the Trust.” Unsurprisingly, Beckler 6 was described as “a perfect candidate for TLT,” not because of anything ALPS or Tulalip did, but simply because it fit all the criteria perfectly. DNR also convened an advisory committee to study and rank the various proposals. Again unsurprisingly, the committee ranked Beckler 6 as its top priority, again because of its top-shelf values and because of Tulalip’s proven record as land stewards.

DNR submitted its TLT funding request to the legislature, with Beckler 6 topping the list. Things then got more interesting. The legislature is free to fund all, none, or any mix of proposals that it chooses. To push things in the right direction N3C member and Olympia veteran Jim Freeburg, most responsible for reviving the TLT program after the previous Public

Lands Commissioner abandoned it, set up February 19, 2025 as TLT Lobby Day in Olympia.

Having spent many years focusing on Federal lands, I was quite familiar with lobbying in Washington D.C., but had somehow lived almost my whole life in Washington the state without ever seeing the state Capitol building.

Everything is on a smaller and more approachable scale in Washington state compared with the Imperial capital. The Capitol building itself is not lacking in dignity and majesty, but the rest of the campus and Olympia itself have a rather nice small town feel to them. No metal detectors, no police swarming everywhere. No suit and tie mandatory dress code, except perhaps for professional lobbyists. People often smile at each other as they pass by. An entirely more friendly place.

And thus did Joe Sambataro, conservation advisor for Tulalip Tribes, and I set off for our series of five meetings that showery February morning. Leg-

islators will normally schedule meetings only with constituents from their own districts. But with Tulalip’s treaty rights area spanning all of Snohomish, most of King and even into other counties, we were able to schedule meetings with the most critical members that did not include any from the districts that he and I ourselves live in.

In another contrast with D.C. lobbying, all meetings except one were with the actual member rather than an aide. All were cordial and welcoming. One Republican senator did grouse a bit, asking “why do we need to do all this trading and transferring, instead of just logging places where they are?” but in a friendly way. Another Republican member from Island County turned out to be an expert on the history of the Indian tribes from Tulalip north through Skagit county. We went way past our allotted time as Joe and I enjoyed a long and informative conversation with him.

Just one high-ranking member was unable to meet with us personally, but we’d had encouraging meetings with her in her district twice previously. At the end of the day we visited the office of a legislator who must have been a relative newcomer, as she had a very small office. But it had a nice view out to maple forest and Capitol Lake, and she had obviously made efforts to personalize it and make it attractive. We had to tell her that the place had great Feng Shui, which it did, and which she seemed to appreciate. Tulalip’s Olympia lobbyist accompanied us to that meeting, and she and the legislator were obviously friends, so after our map discussion our meeting became almost an end-of-day office party. All that was missing was coffee and cake. Such things probably do happen in D.C., but they certainly never happened there for me.

One item that proved priceless in every meeting was a large DNR-produced “Skykomish quadrangle” map. Covering the Skykomish valley and surroundings perfectly, and showing

# Help N3C use Trust Land Transfer to protect land in the North Cascades

By Jim Freeburg

There is a long track record of N3C using creativity to protect the North Cascades. Federal protections, spin-off organizations, and private contributions are but a few methods we've used for conservation over the years. After a strategic investment by N3C five years ago, innovative state land exchanges are again showing results for the landscape we hold dear. As the accompanying article by Rick McGuire details at length, the state legislature recently wrapped up its legislative session by investing nearly \$17 million in the trust land transfer (TLT) program

## TLT Lobby Day

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

Beckler 6's position well, every member wanted to look at it as soon as I unfolded it. All studied it at length. As a map lover, I was of course pleased. "The map that protected Beckler 6." Smartphones can never take the place of real maps. Sadly, DNR is no longer producing that series of maps which covered the whole state, though most are still for sale until they run out. Get one of your area while you still can.

After our final meeting, there seemed little point in immediately driving back north through peak traffic, so we treated ourselves to an oyster dinner after our long hard day. D.C. of course has many good restaurants, but again Olympia Washington wins on ease, friendliness and expense. No need to try to get a reservation then find a cab, just hop in the car and easily drive down toward the waterfront.

After Lobby Day, having done about all we could to advance Beckler 6, the waiting began. Weeks passed, the legislative session ended, and budget negotiations moved behind closed

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8



Morningstar NRCA —DNR PHOTO

at the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). N3C instigated the revitalization of TLT in 2020 and applauds this valuable investment in four TLT projects around the state.

Using some creative thinking, TLT uses the legislature's appropriation to buy out the state trust and transfer ecologically valuable into conservation status. Besides the Beckler 6 project, three other land transfers were funded this past session: Tract C North to the Yakama Nation (detailed at length in a noteworthy December 2024 *Grist* article), Okanogan G to Confederated Colville Tribes, and South Lake Ozette to the Quileute Tribe. The legislature also funded an assessment for future TLT projects in the Elwha Watershed, building off the vast federal investments in Elwha River dam removals.

It's been said that trust land transfer is Washington's best-kept conservation secret. It's not a secret anymore. Roughly 30 projects were vetted by DNR in 2024 as being eligible for legislative funding. Those that weren't funded are likely to be re-submitted and another application cycle opens up this summer. This shows quite clearly the high demand for conservation in our state—yet we still aren't using the TLT tool to its full potential in the North Cascades.

There are hundreds of thousands of acres of state trust lands in NW Washington, along ecologically valuable corridors like the Skagit, Sauk,

and North Fork Stillaguamish Rivers and in mid-elevation forests north of Highway 2. However, the state has a lack of TLT applications in the North Cascades, solely because we don't have enough individuals willing to do the work to move these projects forward. If you are interested in doing some creative conservation, reach out to N3C and we'll help you get started. You'll need to pull out some maps, build community partnerships and sell your project to policymakers, but the payoff is high: conserving the land we love.

Ideal parcels for the TLT program have all of these characteristics:

- Economically underperforming state trust land, meaning there are constraints that limit revenue generation (i.e., logging).
- Ecologically or socially valuable lands, suited for conservation, parks, or similar use.
- A public agency or tribe willing to be the recipient, meaning they agree to steward the land in perpetuity.

N3C has supported many TLT projects in the past, adding to Mt. Pilchuck State Park and creating the Morning Star Natural Resources Conservation Area. We hope you'll work with us to create the next chapter for conservation in the North Cascades.



*Jim Freeburg looks for the easiest spot to walk across the Beckler River during low September water. —RICK MCGUIRE PHOTO*

## TLT Lobby Day

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

doors into those formerly smoke-filled rooms. Eventually, welcome word came that Beckler 6 was in the House budget. Soon after came the less good news that it was not in the Senate version.

Any look at TLT funding requires some consideration of the state's budget situation. Unlike the Federal government, states cannot print money. Debt in the form of bonds can be issued for capital projects, but expenses must be paid by taxes collected. Washington has hitherto not been a very heavily taxed state, ranking 29 among 50 in one study. But the trend has been toward higher spending, with one analysis reporting spending growth exceeding inflation and population growth by 50% over the last decade.

Unsurprisingly, this has led to a "diving through the sofa cushions" mentality as Olympia looks to increase revenues. There are limits to what can be done. If taxes get too high, busi-

nesses and people start leaving. This is starting to look like a problem for states such as New York, Illinois and California, where the highest taxes in the nation look to be leading to population decrease and loss of Electoral College votes.

Governor Ferguson appears to be more aware of this than his predecessor, and has tried to keep somewhat of a lid on tax increases. Hopefully Washington can avoid the tax burdens faced by some other states. Every program and budget item has its supporters. And of course, TLT should absolutely rank among the state's highest priorities!

This year's budget negotiations went on and on. Beckler 6 and TLT in general hung in the balance as days stretched into weeks. Then the good news came: Beckler 6 was included in the budget reconciliation, \$4 million of the \$16.9 million total for TLT. Final success came on May 20 when the Governor signed the budget.

And thus it ended, with DNR informing Tulalip that their transactions people would soon be in touch. At Tulalip itself, news of Beckler 6 was somewhat

overshadowed, though in a good way, by Tulalip's own purchase of 18,000 acres of industrial timberland along the King-Snohomish County line. That giant deal was shepherded in large part by the same Joe Sambataro who accompanied me to legislative offices to gather support for Beckler 6.

The 18,000-acre "Skyline" purchase (a provisional name) has been heavily logged, and Tulalip has work to do figuring out how to sustainably manage it for truly long-term timber production while also restoring and enhancing conservation values. But if anyone can do it, Tulalip will. It is exciting to see their land base grow, both for multiple purposes at Skyline, and conservation with Beckler 6.



*TOM HAMMOND PHOTO*

## Will the great bear return?

By Phil Fenner

All bets are off now, despite years of efforts to find the best way to reintroduce this apex predator to its former range in the N. Cascades, and last year's decision in favor of proceeding. During the first Trump term, his first Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke happened to be from Montana where grizzlies are recovering, and we were pleasantly surprised to see him come to N. Cascades Park HQ in 2018 to call for the return of the Great Bear here. But Doug Burgum, the new Interior Secretary under Trump 2, doesn't seem interested in much other than "drill, baby, drill." Which doesn't bode well for the bears.

# Get ready, get set: Pre-scoping of the Baker River Watershed Landscape Assessment

By Dave Fluharty

N3C was in the virtual audience at a March 26 meeting when Mt. Baker Snoqualmie National Forest staff issued a pre-scoping notice and information concerning the Baker River Watershed Landscape Assessment. The 30-day notice of Scoping will be issued November 5, 2025 and MBSNF expects to be able to complete the Assessment by early 2027.

What is being scoped and assessed is logging. The Planning Area is the watershed encompassed by the Mt. Baker Ranger District managed by MBSNF, bounded by North Cascades National Park on the east; the ridge running from Mt. Shuksan to Mt. Baker in the north; and west along the border with the South Nooksack watershed. It includes Baker Reservoir but not the Lake Hancock area in the south.

In other words, a core area of our interests in the North Cascades. This is important!

We've watched previous Assessments in other areas set the stage for logging now and in the future. The extensive forest thinning likely to be proposed for the Baker River Watershed may be a kinder, gentler form of forest practice than clearcuts, but it is not restoration of the forest ecosystem in which aquatic and terrestrial species thrive and recreation is enhanced.

The forests that were heavily logged between 1940 and 1990 are starting to recover by the processes of natural succession. The most likely USFS prescription for the initial thinning is to return the forest to early seral stages (looks like a clearcut) so that remaining trees can grow faster into larger trees to be logged later. This approach to restoration repeats the mistakes of the original forest management practices and makes the forests MORE vulnerable to forest fire. Besides the logging issues to be addressed, there are potential opportunities to reassess the system of forest roads and

put roads to rest in order to decrease sediments from slope failures as well as to right-size culverts. In addition, maturing forests benefit habitat for endangered species of wildlife and aquatic fauna.

Participating in the scoping process coming up in November allows N3C's interests to be taken into account in preparing the alternatives to be assessed. Look for instructions on how

make your views known in the next issue of *The Wild Cascades*. This summer N3C needs boots on the ground to observe forest and management conditions in the area so that N3C can document existing problems of concern. Please send your trip reports to N3C at [nccinfo@northcascades.org](mailto:nccinfo@northcascades.org) so that we can incorporate them in N3C official comments.

---

## President's letter

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

However, concurrent with this EO to just start logging, the DOGE folks pretty much stripped out the Forest Service of a lot of its personnel, then some of them were invited back in, but none of them know how much longer they'll be employed if they still are. And the Forest Service can't just start logging without somebody to administer the timber sales—the FS doesn't actually log, they sell the public timber to logging companies and mills. There has to be some FS staff to do what the EO says they have to do. So maybe the administration's DOGE cuts shot the EO in the foot.

**R:** That staffing question is an interesting one. I was speaking with the owners of a small timber mill who said there used to be at least five timber sale administrators, but they're down to one. I guess the other question is, what is your sense of the potential legal liability of companies that move forward under questionable rule relaxations. If there is a move by the White House to skirt the rules, does that set up the possibility of lawsuits? Is that something you're already preparing for?

**PF:** It is. Those suits would be directed against the government, not against the loggers or mill operators, of course. We've had lawsuits in the works for some time already, to try

to stop logging projects that were proposed under the Biden administration, which were flawed in many ways, primarily not abiding by either the ESA or NEPA or both, and they're still playing out in court. Looking ahead, how would we know if cutting started without any public process, no announcements or intake of comments? We'd have to encounter it, see it in person and if we didn't happen to see it going on, it would be too late.

**R:** Is there anything you're doing on that front, have you done any form of organizing for citizen monitoring? Or is it too early for that kind of thing?

**PF:** We try to do as much of that as we can, we call it "ground-truthing," and direct it mostly at projects that are already underway to assure they are following their stated plan. Our membership reports back to us what they observe as they go out. We have an active membership that spends a lot of time out there in the public lands and we always encourage them, "if they see something, to say something." There are other organizations we ally with, some include former FS employees, and they know what's going on and tell us. Recently one of our suits was in the appeal stage, we appealed a timber sale on the Twisp River as shortcutting NEPA and for other reasons. The decision from the Circuit Court was pending, but the Forest Service had already started some cut-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

# Skagit Project relicensing: The continuing saga

By Dave Fluharty

As predicted in the Winter 2025 *Wild Cascades* on the Skagit Project Relicensing, no Settlement Agreement was forthcoming among the Parties much less among all the participants in the seven-year long process leading to a new license for the Seattle City Light (SCL) Project. A Settlement agreement informs the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) of the management and mitigation measures agreed among the Parties. It signals the next step (Ready for Environmental Assessment REA) and requests that FERC begin the process of performing an environmental assessment of the license provisions to inform the FERC decision to relicense (the REA) as is required under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The 30-year license under which SCL operates the Project expired in April 2025.

The convoluted pathways to the last few years of Settlement discussions are documented in the FERC letter of June 2, 2025 (see page 11). It is well worth the time to read entirely. It is a document typical of those N3C is reading in this process on a daily basis. To be clear, no single party has deliberately delayed the negotiations. Achieving Settlement is a complex multi-party exercise in communication, patience and compromise. The process was limited by Covid restrictions on face-to-face meetings. The pledge of confidentiality among all those participating in discussing the positions taken by other parties has also limited the normal back-and-forth outside of scheduled meetings.

The failure so far to agree to a Settlement means that SCL will continue to operate the Skagit Project under a Continuing License based on the conditions specified in the previous license for one more year. On the one hand, from the perspective of N3C, this is an unfortunate state of affairs because the management measures under the old license need to be updated and new provisions leading to better management as well as cultural and resource protections implemented. On the other hand, it is

important to have agreement among the Parties and other participants on the measures necessary to include in a new license covering the next 50 years and to have a strong environmental impact assessment to inform FERC decision-making. That consensus may ensure that the grant of a license is less likely to be fraught with legal challenges. However, if a third hand were available, N3C observes the FERC process is uncertain and the role of the President and his administration could be hazardous to license provisions, environmental review, adaptive management for climate change, Tribal consultations, etc. And, if there were a fourth hand, it is hard to predict how others may choose to react, including Parties to the Settlement (Tribal sovereigns with Treaty rights and federal and state agencies with statutory permitting authority); Participants in the process (Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs) like N3C that have been excluded from the negotiations among the Parties but invited to sign the Settlement Agreement; the Seattle City Council that must approve the license package of license and off-license expenditures; and finally Canadian interests, i.e., First Nations, NGOs, and government agencies involved in transboundary issues. We have a long way to go.

With respect to the Settlement Agreement, N3C is told by SCL that substantial progress has been made to many of the license and off-license matters, but substantive issues remain among the Parties. Foremost are those issues dealing with fisheries, recreation, and the Environmental Learning Center at Diablo which N3C regards as a very important on-license mitigation measure to be carried forward from the recently expired license.

Despite the persistent, heroic and sensitive efforts of the SCL negotiating team to bring the process toward a Settlement Agreement, progress has been slow. Even late in the process the outcomes remain uncertain and fragile.

Stay tuned.



Meadow, north side of Mt. Stuart. —JOHN WARTH PHOTO

## A sampling of John Warth's photos

By Phil Fenner

Founding N3C board member John Warth was a dedicated explorer of, and photographer of the Cascades for nearly fifty years, starting in the 1940s. Some of his photos appeared in early advocacy coffee table books, such as the Sierra Club's famous 1965 *The Wild Cascades: Forgotten Parkland*. He was also the first public advocate for the Alpine Lakes Wilderness.

It was thought that his extensive work was lost, until some detective work by N3C president Phil Fenner led to contact with his daughter, Laurel, who had managed to save much of her father's photo legacy after his death.

Laurel was delighted to find that there was still such interest in her father's work. A few of the 500+ rescued photos can be seen at

<https://flic.kr/ps/2jVzPX>

Stay tuned for more, in the next *TWC*.

**FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION**  
**WASHINGTON, D.C. 20426**  
June 2, 2025

OFFICE OF ENERGY PROJECTS

Project No. 553-244—Washington  
Skagit River Hydroelectric Project  
Seattle City Light

**VIA FERC Service**

Chris Townsend  
Seattle City Light  
P.O. Box 34023  
Seattle, WA 98124

**Reference: Request to Further Delay Issuance of the Ready for Environmental Analysis**

Dear Mr. Townsend:

On April 28, 2023, the City of Seattle, Washington, through its City Light Department (City Light), filed an application with the Commission to relicense the Skagit River Hydroelectric Project (FERC Project No. 553). On May 9, 2023, Commission staff issued a notice of the filing of the application that included a procedural schedule with a target date of April 2024 for issuing the notice that the application is ready for environmental analysis (REA notice). On February 28, 2024, Commission staff granted a request filed by City Light on behalf of itself and other licensing participants to delay issuance of the REA Notice until after December 31, 2024, to allow the parties time to reach a comprehensive settlement that resolves the outstanding issues in the relicensing proceeding. On January 2, 2025, Commission staff granted a second request filed by City Light on behalf of itself and other licensing participants to further delay issuance of the REA notice until June 1, 2025, to allow additional time to complete ongoing settlement negotiations and finalize the settlement agreement and supporting documents.

On May 27, 2025, City Light filed on behalf of itself and the licensing parties, another request to delay the issuance of the REA Notice until September 15, 2025. City Light states that the parties have continued to work collaboratively and expeditiously and are in the final stages of finalizing all settlement documents, which should be completed by June 2, 2025. However, the parties need the additional time to complete the approval process. City Light states that it expects it will take several months for the leadership of all parties to approve and execute the settlement agreement, given the number of settling parties, each with its own approval process, and the changes within the federal agencies under the current Administration.

In consideration that the settlement parties have made considerable progress toward reaching a final settlement, staff will further delay the REA notice until after September 15, 2025, as requested, and will update the procedural schedule at that time. However, we do not anticipate the need for further extensions.

If you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact David Turner at 202-502-6091 or via email at david.turner@ferc.gov.

Sincerely,

Nicholas Jayjack  
Director  
Division of Hydropower Licensing

# Quo Vadis: NEPA going, going, not yet gone

By David Fluharty

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1970 has been a legal asset to N3C and others seeking to limit environmental impacts of federal management decisions. Agencies must identify and suggest ways to mitigate the environmental impacts of their actions. In the Winter 2025 *TWC* Hayden Wyatt traced the development of NEPA and recent US Supreme Court (SCOTUS) decision in *Marin Audubon Society v. FAA* that the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) does not have authority under NEPA to issue regulations for how that law should be applied across the federal government despite having done so since 1978.

The first Trump administration sought to scuttle NEPA but Congress kept it somewhat intact. However, other recent decisions by SCOTUS have been confusing at best and devastating at worst. Last year in *Loper Bright Enterprises v. Raimondo*, SCOTUS upended the judicial precedent set in *Chevron v. NRDC* that the courts should defer to the environmental assessments made by agencies. Instead, they specified that only judges can interpret the law and set the standard to apply in a ruling on fisheries regulations in *Loper Bright Enterprises v. Raimondo*. A decision made last month in *Seven County Infrastructure Coalition v. Eagle County* (hereinafter Seven County) SCOTUS seems to have flip-flopped by declaring that courts must give a great deal of deference to agencies who say they have complied with NEPA. The Chevron and Seven County decisions seem to be directly contradictory.

What does this mean for N3C in its current and future challenges to the multiple, 20-year forest restoration plans that are only thinly disguised excuses for logging under the guise of forest fire reduction and habitat improvements? [Such logging is an example of fixing a wrong outcome by repeating the action. Stop digging the hole deeper]. N3C is unsure about the direction SCOTUS and POTUS

---

*Trump 2 is even more hostile to the environment, with less resistance from Congress or the Courts.*

---

(President of the United States) will take with NEPA. If judges interpret the standards for environmental review, it could be to N3C's advantage. This could have been the case in N3C's challenge of the Twisp Restoration Project of Okanogan/Wenatchee National

Forts. Judges sorting through science in that case agreed that cumulative impact assessment was inadequate. However, it is more likely that a Chevron-type deference to agency decision making will be the approach—or that NEPA will simply be ignored, or, finally, that federal agency actions can be taken without environmental review under a Presidential determination that they should be Categorical Excluded (CE) from NEPA rules. President Trump's first administration was no friend of the environment. The second administration is even more hostile with less resistance from Congress or the Courts.

## President's letter

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

ting. We got photos of it and contacted the FS and told them to stop. When we prevailed on one aspect of the appeal, they agreed to stop. So that's an example of how "ground truthing" can work.

**R:** But that's not new, right?

**PF:** No, we've been doing that sort of thing for years, it's just that the threat is greatly increased by this EO, which is now already almost three months old, and all the specific things that it ordered be done by the Federal lands agencies have been done. So now we're waiting to see where and when they start the chainsaws. One good thing—we have to give ourselves some credit here—a lot of the public seems to assume that the entire National Forest system is subject to this EO, but it's not. About half of the National Forest in Washington State is protected permanently as designated Wilderness. In those areas you can't do anything mechanized, let alone motorized. No roads, no logging, no mining. A lot of that's due to the past efforts of our organization. The North Cascades Conservation Council was a prime mover behind the Wilderness movement here, we've been on a 60+ year campaign to designate as much as possible of the North Cascades as Wilderness, so that part's safe. So far nobody has suggested exceptions to the Wilderness Act for any extraction.

That leaves half our National Forests here only protected by rules. And there are a few important rules that have protected some of the most important parts of the National Forests outside Wilderness, like the "Roadless Rule" that says if an area doesn't already have a road built into it, you don't build one until there's a really good reason to, you leave it roadless for the sake of the ecosystem. Before that rule, the FS was building roads in lots of then-roadless areas because they figured within the next few years they'd start logging there. And as soon as those roads are built, that valley or ridge can't be designated as Wilderness, so then it's exempt from any future protection. That was the Forest

CONTINUED ON PAGE 16



## Introducing Policy Advisor Kara Parker

Welcome Kara Parker, who is picking up where our former Policy Advisor Hayden Wyatt (taking time off to study for the bar exam) left off. Parker is an environmental educator, ski instructor, rock climbing guide turned environmental attorney. She graduated from Lewis & Clark Law School and moved to Alaska to clerk for the Superior Court. Growing up backpacking in the Cascades and rock climbing in Washington Pass, the North Cascades have a special place in Kara's heart. She is excited to be supporting N3C in protecting these beautiful places. She will work remotely from Alaska.

☞ Northwest Rivers ☞

Skykomish, Stehekin, Snoqualmie,  
Wynoochee, Palouse, Okanogan,  
Queets, Klickitat, Kootenai, Nooksack,  
Sauk, Skookumchuck, Quillayute, Skagit-

Gather moisture in the mountains,  
mingle rain with summer snowmelt;  
fed by streams that trickle downward,  
cold and clear, the waters chatter.

Cascade down through twisting canyons,  
scour massive granite boulders,  
plunge themselves from rocky ledges,  
leap and roar like raging beasts.

Wend their way past peaks and ridges,  
tumble through the wooded foothills,  
ply vast stands of fir and hemlock-  
nourish wetlands at their margins.

Drain broad fertile inland valleys,  
spread high water over lowlands,  
seek out bays and estuaries,  
cycle rainfall to the ocean.

Walk Award  
**2020 Sue C. Boynton Poetry Contest**  
Whatcom County, Washington

☞ Eugene S. Fairbanks

With special thanks to the Whatcom Transportation Authority  
BoynstonPoetryContest@hotmail.com ~ <https://thepoetrydepartment.wordpress.com>

Broadside illustration by Megan Carroll

WTA pull date: June 2022

Thanks to Boise poet Eugene S. Fairbanks for permission to reproduce his poem, which our editor bookmarked after it won a prize in the Sue C. Boynton Poetry Contest.

## BOOK REVIEW

### *Mixed Severity Fires: Nature's Phoenix (2nd Ed.)*

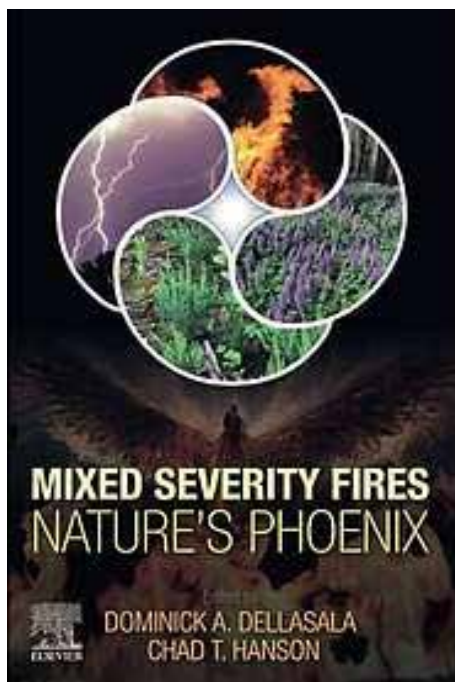
Edited by Dominick A. DellaSala & Chad T. Hanson

Reviewed by Jim Scarborough

Look in any direction across the political spectrum and one finds the basic Enlightenment principles of reason and scientific inquiry in fast retreat, replaced by fear-laden dogma and mysticism. Yet one constant in this march to a new dark age is the universal drive to turn a tidy profit, consequences be damned. Few societal debates have heralded this regrettable trend quite like the magical thinking centered around wildfires. For decades, it's been observed that the politics of fire burns hotter than the flames themselves. Objectivity and dispassion may have recently become globally scarce resources, but when it comes to fire, crackpottery and deceitfulness in service of greed have been with us for a long time.

In response to an increase in wildfires since the anomalously cool and moist period of the mid-20th century, timber companies, government agencies, politicians of all stripes, and more than a few turncoat environmental organizations have adopted rhetoric and practices that resemble nothing so much in their absolute certainty and reflexive attacks on dissent as the War on Terror. Broadly speaking, their canon emphasizes the canard of “fuels reduction” through commercial logging in backcountry areas far from human settlements, as well as an extraordinarily expensive command-and-control response to remote fires when they inevitably start. Given that the disciples of this fireproofing religion are primarily concerned with their own bottom lines, they blissfully disregard the utter lack of a scientific foundation for their actions.

The resulting smoke arising from fire politics and its profit-seeking byproducts are so toxic and thick as to thoroughly befuddle—by design—an understandably concerned but ill-informed public. But thankfully, much as the murk of the Middle Ages received much-needed illumination through the works of Petrarch and



Boccaccio, we're fortunate to have access to the scrupulous rationality and peer-reviewed research summarized in Dr. Dominick DellaSala's and Dr. Chad Hanson's second edition of *Mixed Severity Fires: Nature's Phoenix*, published in 2024 with numerous contributions from leading lights in the field. For students of fire ecology, both lay and professional, this revelatory and weighty volume is an antidote to the wanton hocus-pocus of contemporary orthodoxy on forest management as it relates to fire.

*Mixed Severity Fires* contains three information-packed sections. The first explores how mixed- and high-severity fires facilitate increased biodiversity in forested ecosystems, up to and including so-called megafires. This section devotes considerable space to bird and mammal responses to fire effects across spatial and temporal scales, nearly all of which are positive when a mosaic of postfire legacies (snags, fallen trees, residual live trees and patches) remains and early successional habitat is allowed to develop.

Section II travels the world to examine the role of mixed- and high-severity fires across subalpine, boreal, chaparral, sub-Saharan, and Australian mountain ash ecosystems. This section concludes with an analysis of factors driving recent increases in wildfires, which are confirmed to still be within the historical range of variation, despite the potential for exceeding this threshold in the future as a result of anthropogenic climate change. Finally, Section III takes on the damaging and corrosive groupthink surrounding fire management, with its purportedly preventative but ultimately bogus backcountry logging or “thinning” practices, as well as postfire logging which devastates what would otherwise be among the rarest and most productive ecosystems occurring via subsequent natural regeneration.

The authors conclude, with evidence, that pyrodiversity begets biodiversity, and that mainstream practices of fireproofing through logging, command-and-control firefighting, and postfire logging are not merely a colossal waste of public resources, but deeply damaging to our lands and waters and the irreplaceable habitats they provide. The authors convincingly argue instead for redirecting our efforts toward hardening the immediate vicinity of human communities (thus far largely neglected by policymakers) and reducing their sprawl into hazardous areas which are certain to burn when extreme fire weather arrives. Given its serious and perhaps counterintuitive subject matter, *Mixed Severity Fires* will unfortunately not be widely read by the masses, and for a paperback volume it's also quite expensive. Yet for astute and curious readers motivated to build their awareness of the natural world, this volume is indispensable. One may never again view a natural, regenerating, postfire landscape in quite the same way.

# N3C notches a win against Twisp logging

By Phil Fenner

The N3C just scored an important partial victory against a misguided Forest Service “restoration project”—that is, a logging deal—in the Methow Valley. We filed suit to stop the project and initially lost before the district court. But on May 2, 2025, the Ninth Circuit partially reversed, finding that the Forest Service had improperly segmented the Twisp Restoration Project and failed to consider the impacts of the complete project.

While the court rejected our challenges to the Forest Service’s comment process and its use of condition-based management, what it agreed with us on is crucial. After a massive fire in the Twisp area in 2021 burned much of the project area, the Forest Service chopped the project in half, pushing off for separate consideration the part of the project on the burned area, now renamed the Midnight Project. “This kind of divide-and-conquer approach to NEPA compliance is simply not allowed,” our attorney, Liam Sherlock of Hutchinson Cox, argued. The Ninth Circuit agreed, finding that NEPA requires consideration of cumulative impacts.

Let’s pause and savor this victory for just a moment. This was the most important part of our argument. This wasn’t just procedural; it went to the heart of the problem with what the Forest Service was trying to do with the TRP. It’s how agencies often try to game NEPA. Having a court catch the Forest Service on this is a big win.

However, of course, it is not the last word. The court sent the case back to the district court. N3C can ask the district court to vacate the Forest Service’s decision to go forward with the TRP, or the Forest Service may be interested in coming to a settlement of the case.

Unfortunately, right on the heels of this victory, the U.S. Supreme Court issued a decision, in *Seven County Infrastructure Coalition v. Eagle County*, that undercuts the requirement to



*“Thinning” near Buttermilk Cr. If the Twisp “Restoration” Project proceeds it will do similar damage on a larger scale. —PHIL FENNER PHOTO*

consider cumulative impacts under NEPA. The Court held that agencies are required to consider only the impacts of specific projects, rather than the overall purposes and effects

of those projects, and that courts must give deference to agencies’ NEPA analysis. This is bad. It remains to be seen how it will affect the TRP.

---

## Phase II of Holden remedial action proposed

By Anne Basye

The mining company Rio Tinto’s proposed Phase II Remedial Action at Holden Village will capture and contain groundwater through installation of hydraulic containment wells along Tailings Piles 2 and 3.

At an April Town Hall presentation at Holden, Rio Tinto presented a slide deck reviewing the history of the Howe Sound Mine and Phase I of the remediation project before introducing Phase II plans.

According to the slide deck, the Howe Sound Mine generated three tailings covering 90 acres plus eight acres of waste rock piles between 1937 and 1957. Phase I of cleaning up the

toxic, unstable tailings and closing the mine was federally mandated under the Comprehensive Environmental Response Liability Act (CERCLA), also known as Superfund, and managed by the USFS to address legacy contamination and restore the environment.

Phase I was completed in 2018 with oversight from the US Forest Service, US Environmental Protection Agency, the Washington State Department of Ecology, and the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation. Many heavy metals were leaching through the tailings and from water

CONTINUED ON PAGE 16

## Holden Phase II

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15



*Tailings overview: Looking east from atop one of the three tailings piles. Coincidentally, this photo was taken July 17, 2014, showing smoke rising from the Methow Valley on the day the massive Carlton Complex fire erupted. —MARY KOCH PHOTO*

still escaping the mine. To capture them, Rio Tinto and its contractors constructed a 4,700-foot-long subsurface barrier wall along Tailings Piles 1 and 2, a groundwater collection system along Railroad Creek, and a mine-water treatment plant where water collected by the wall is treated and pumped back into the creek. The enormous tailings looming over the Village were regraded and stabilized to better withstand earthquakes, then capped and revegetated.

Two billion gallons of water have been treated since the water treatment plant began operating in May 2018. Slide deck statistics indicate that 515,000 kg of contaminants have been removed that otherwise have made their way into Railroad and Copper Creeks and Lake Chelan. This includes 420,000 kg of iron, 45,000 kg of aluminum, 42,000 kg of zinc plus 140 kg of cadmium and 55 kg of lead. Twenty-eight 20-ton dump trucks of this sludge has been placed in a hazardous waste site on Tailings Pile 1.

Phase II will focus on Tailings Pile 3, says Holden Village co-director Mark Bach. “Remediation was always planned in two phases, although

Phase II has been delayed by both the pandemic and a more complex renegotiation between federal and state agencies.”

The Agencies are currently preparing regulatory documents describing the remedy, with an opportunity for public comment. Their administrative process timeline will dictate the timing of Phase II construction.

This month Rio Tinto informed Holden that it will begin preparing to construct new worker housing units near the water treatment plant and the Lucerne dock. When the Phase II document has been signed by agencies and stakeholders, work will begin in 2027-2028. The plan is to install containment wells and a small, new groundwater containment well building at the toe of Tailings Pile 3. They will also install conveyance lines to the new building and Mine Water Treatment Plant.

The overall scope of Phase II is much smaller than Phase I, and Holden Village operations will be minimally disrupted, unlike the several-year long Phase I work.

## President’s letter

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

Service’s industrial strategy.

You’ve probably heard of the “Northwest Forest Plan” that dates back to the Clinton administration in the 1980s. That was under revision during Biden, mostly to help out the local timber-dependent communities, and try to prevent wildfire because the public is demanding something be done to reduce risk of wildfire and the Forest Service has used that as a justification to go in and start logging without much environmental review. And that’s one of the things in the Trump EO, logging without environmental review specifically to prevent fire. Then there’s this law that’s going through Congress right now, it’s in the Senate now and might very well pass—called the “Fix our Forests Act.” That one just says because of the threat of fire, forget all the environmental regulations, let’s just go start logging. That one’s as bad or worse than the EO, because it’s statutory. EOs are limited, they always have to say “in accordance with with the law,” meaning Trump can’t order anything be done that is illegal. Theoretically.

**R:** This notion that the DOGE cuts might make it difficult to do what Trump says he wants to do—that’s a fairly quickly solvable problem. Just hire some more timber sale administrators and off you go.

**PF:** You’d think so, wouldn’t you? But from what I’ve heard, once you let go these skilled Forest Service administrators, it’s not so easy to just hire them back. A lot of them are senior personnel and they may not want to come back. FS staff have been stretched very thin for a long time and some are burned out and near retirement anyway, so where are you going to get these skilled people? You can’t just flip a switch and bring them back. Which would ironically be fine with us, we’d love to see them struggle to do what they say they want to do in Trump’s EO, because it’s not a good thing.

**R:** Interesting to hear how some of the actions of this administration may frustrate some of their ambitions.

## BOOK REVIEW

### *The Other Public Lands: Preservation, Extraction, and Politics of the Fifty States' Natural Resource Lands*

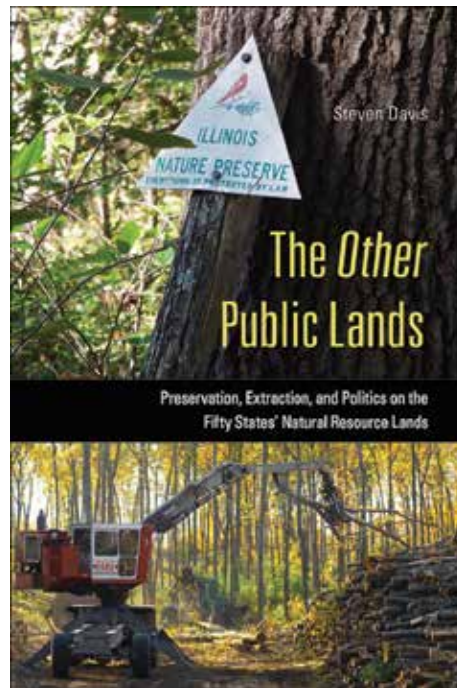
by Steven Davis

Reviewed by David Fluharty

Our focus at N3C has been on federal lands managed by the US Forest Service and National Park Service. Only occasionally have we stood up for more protective management of state lands, e.g., Trust Land Transfers, the Reiter ORV routes in the Highway 2 Corridor, proposed logging in Deception Pass State Park and in mature forests. Steven Davis, in *The Other Public Lands*, reminds us that every state has significant holdings of public land which supply recreation, wildlife habitat, jobs and revenue. His contemporary assessment of the surge of public land visits and their importance in the face of the vicissitudes of the Covid era speaks volumes "...with life wildly upended, the natural world was one of the few things to dependably offer the succor that we all so desperately needed." The attacks on the staffing of National Parks and other federal lands make one wonder how (if) state lands can make up for the budget cuts and absorb the waves of citizens seeking similar relief going forward.

I am getting ahead of the story. The history of public lands management in North America is one of Spanish, British, French, and American appropriation of land from the original inhabitants by settler colonizers who in turn, and amazingly quickly, transformed lands alienated from federal control into commodities. This transformation was almost complete in the United States east of the Mississippi with only 4 percent of the federal lands retained and where state public lands are significant.

Davis is Professor of Political Science and Environmental Studies at Edgewood College in Madison, Wisconsin, and author of *In Defense of Public Lands: The Case against Privatization and Transfer* (Temple). The Other



Public Lands fills an important gap in the public lands literature with its assessments of contemporary issues and challenges.

Writing as a professor, he states that he "is most interested in how states approach management of their public lands, especially how they prioritize competing claims related to conservation, equity and access, resource development, recreation, and finance." That may sound like a recipe for a dry academic treatise, but rest assured his prose, while not journalistic, is eminently readable and informative. His heart is in defending public lands and foremost access to wildlands.

Davis provides us with well-documented information summarizing key or representative findings from his extensive research. There are, as expected, statistics about land holdings in each of 50 states. Did you know that Hawai'i is the state which owns

the greatest percentage of land within its territory (37.0 %) and Kansas is the state which owns the least of its land (0.3%)? Nearly half of the public lands owned by states is found in Alaska—about 100 million acres (much of which was granted upon achieving statehood in 1959), while only 145,000 acres are state-owned land in Kansas. Davis cites examples of states like Florida that are taxing themselves to acquire more lands for parks, and others like Michigan and Wisconsin that are privatizing their lands to gain revenue, reduce costs and minimize the role in state government in management. The remarkable stories that explain these differences are told concisely and authoritatively.

Davis packs an enormous amount of information about public lands and their significance for local users and compares and contrasts state management processes to federal land management practices. I found it both challenging and helpful to read sections like "A Very Brief History of State Lands" because it pulls together events and policies in chronological order to remind me how the things I have learned separately fit together.

Davis divides state land by purpose: lands for preservation, extraction and recreation. He then searches for patterns in the way lands are managed and by whom they are managed. He systematically exposes the reader to compare how much land area in each state is devoted to the three categories. Davis finds that states vary in the amount of land in each category (as a percentage or areal extent) but does not see significant patterns based on the total size of the state versus

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18

## The Other Public Lands

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 17

how much land is managed for each purpose. Similarly, he examines how states organize for management of their lands and finds that about a third are highly centralized, meaning there is a single agency in charge of all public lands, a third are highly decentralized and the remaining third are somewhat in between. While he may not have been able to establish patterns Davis does an excellent job of documenting the differences and along the way provides fascinating observations about what historical events explain the differences. All in all, the reader gains an appreciation of the variety of ways states have retained or acquired public lands and the values served in the way those lands are managed.

The state park movement in the United States is only about a century old. Today the state parks and public lands are overrun by demand for multiple purposes but primarily for natural values and tourism. They are also at risk from extractive industries and privatization. Indeed, the health of state parks is also threatened by budget cutting and loss political support. Davis concludes the Progressive era movement that initiated the broad retention of public lands “was rooted in notions of access, democracy, natural integrity, and an inter-generational public interest. While it originally concerned state parks, this stance is actually applicable to all state public lands—specifically, how to find a balance between responsiveness and accessibility on one hand and the wise stewardship and restraint necessary to protect a natural system’s integrity on the other....With dogged advocacy and a laser-beam focus....the myriad benefits to the public interest all but guarantee a robust return on investment for each tax dollar spent on state public lands operations or acquisition. With that, the very idea of state public land can reach its fullest potential.”

## Henderson data rescued

By Rick McGuire and Phil Fenner

The North Cascades Conservation Council has “rescued” important data left behind by now-long-retired US Forest Service ecologist Jan Henderson, who surveyed the entire Mount Baker Snoqualmie National Forest for the ages of the forest stands and the ages of the most recent fires.

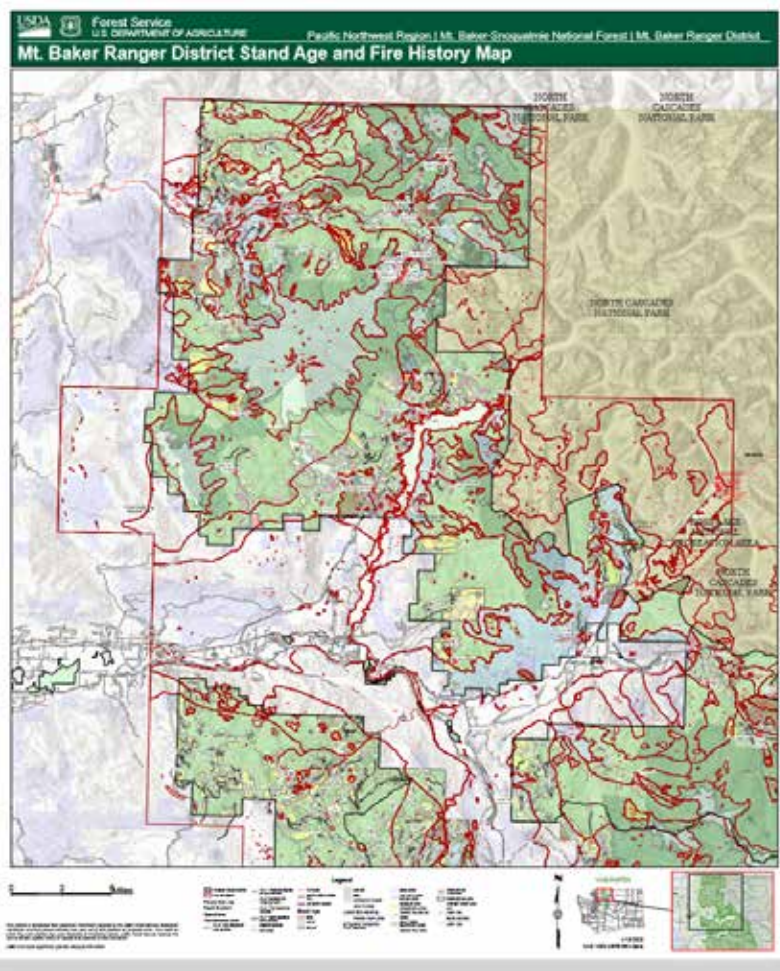
An interview with Henderson when he retired around 2012 explains the importance of these maps:

*Old forests look and act differently from young forests, and I wanted to know the age (at least in a relative time frame) of the different forests and to try to determine which of their characteristics were due to the environment and which were due to age. In the course of taking data on species composition, elevation, site and location, we took data on tree ages and heights. Along with doing*

*tree-ring counts to determine ages of trees, we also recorded information on rates of growth during different decades and growth anomalies that could be due to fire or other disturbance. By analyzing these data we were able to map the extent of forests of different ages, and from that plus fire scars and growth anomalies we were able to map not only the extents of current stand ages but to interpret the probable extents of previous large, stand-replacing fires.*

*The maps of these big fires indicated that a large fire throughout NW Washington in or about the year 1701 burned somewhere between three and 10 million acres. Much of it was mapped off of national forests in the Puget Trough. This was an interpretation of the measured patterns and a process of “connecting the dots”*

SEE NEXT  
PAGE



Screen shot  
taken from  
[northcascades.org/maps](http://northcascades.org/maps).

## Henderson

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

*between the Cascades and Olympics. Other times of large fires were about 1508 and 1308, although the 1308 date may have been simply the end of a long and active burning period that characterized the Medieval Warm Period in western Washington. Other small fires were also identified, but these three were by far the most significant. It is most interesting to me that all three occurred during periods when the climate is believed to have been quite a bit cooler, and probably also drier.*

*One aspect of the vegetation that can be interpreted from such data is based on the species composition that is represented in each of these three major age classes. The older forests show that they had to have started with a large component of Doug-*

*las-fir, even if they are now in what is the cool moist Pacific silver fir zone. Younger forests show fewer Douglas-firs in the same zone, indicating that the climate must have become either wetter or colder (or both!) over this period of time.*

These MBS National Forest Stand Age and Fire History maps now live on our webpage at <https://northcascades.org/maps/>. Next time you're looking for ancient forest remnants on the MBS, these maps will be very useful! Our thanks to Darrington District Ranger Camden Bruner, who guided us on S. Fk. Stilly project tours in October 2024. He helped us find the data on FS servers and made new maps of the Mt. Baker and Darrington Ranger Districts in 2025 based on Henderson's data.

Our thanks as well to Gary Paull, USFS ret., for the Skykomish RD map he produced previously. Note that on

the Skykomish map, numbers are the years of origin of the forest stands, while for the other two maps the forest stands are shown in colored areas keyed in the legends to their "stand age."

Our web page also includes a link to the two-part N3C interview with Jan Henderson in 2012.

For further reading, here's a 2009 report on the USFS Pacific Northwest Ecology Program that Mr. Henderson was part of: [https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE\\_DOCUMENTS/fseprd1178227.pdf](https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/fseprd1178227.pdf)

And here's the FS's "Ecoshare" site where the project info is made public: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/ecoshare>



NORTH CASCADES CONSERVATION COUNCIL

### ***Enjoy The Wild Cascades? Not a member yet? Join NORTH CASCADES CONSERVATION COUNCIL!***

**Yes!** I want to support North Cascades Conservation Council's efforts working on many fronts to establish new wilderness, defend our forests, support wildlife conservation and keystone species, and promote sound conservation recreational use. I want to be a part of a vibrant

grassroots network of advocates for protection of unique lands, clean waters, native plant life, and wilderness of the North Cascades.

**Support N3C with a generous IRS tax-deductible contribution in the amount of:**

☐ \$10 Living lightly/student    ☐ \$30  
☐ \$50    ☐ \$100    ☐ \$200    ☐ \$300  
☐ \$500    ☐ \$1000    \$  Other

Name

Address

City  State  Zip

Phone

Email

All new members will receive a free copy of *Wilderness Alps* by Harvey Manning.

ALL donations include N3C membership and a subscription to our journal, *The Wild Cascades*, published three times a year. N3C is a 501(c)(3) organization. All donations are tax deductible to the extent of the law.

Send your check or money order and this form to:

**NORTH CASCADES CONSERVATION COUNCIL**  
PO Box 95980, Seattle, WA 98145-2980

**Or make your contribution securely online through our website: [www.northcascades.org](http://www.northcascades.org) – just click "Donate Now" and use your credit card.**

**Provide us with your email address and you'll receive our e-newsletter, Action Alerts.**

**NORTH CASCADES CONSERVATION COUNCIL**  
**Post Office Box 95980**  
**University Station**  
**Seattle, Washington 98145-2980**

Non-Profit Organization  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
SEATTLE, WA  
PERMIT No. 8602



*Agnes Mountain and start of Ptarmigan Traverse. —CAROLYN MCCONNELL PHOTO*