

A photograph of a forest floor covered in large, rounded rocks completely covered in vibrant green moss. Some dry, yellowish-brown leaves are scattered on the moss and on the ground between the rocks. In the background, the trunks of trees and some foliage are visible, suggesting a dense forest setting.

THE WILD CASCADES

THE JOURNAL OF THE NORTH CASCADES CONSERVATION COUNCIL

FALL 2025

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COVER PHOTO: Fall colors along the Perry Creek Trail, on the south fork of the Stillaguamish river. — PHOTO BY RAMONA HAMMERLY, retired artist who illustrated Northwest Trees, written by Steve Arno, available from The Mountaineers Books.

The Wild Cascades

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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.

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Founded in 1957
SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

PRESIDENT'S REPORT FALL 2025

One of the most interesting aspects of leading N3C for me has been the opportunity to talk with some top experts about big-picture issues, where politics and wild nature intersect. Lately I had a chance to learn from these experts about the Roadless Rule, which is now on the way to being rescinded, of course. I may have been a bit naïve about it, but this really cleared things up for me so I wanted to share it with you.

The first fact to recall is that commercial logging on public lands never did pay for itself, especially the logging roads, vast mileage of which was built at a huge loss to taxpayers for decades. And that's how we got the Roadless Rule 24 years ago. The Forest Service finally had to deal with Wilderness designation within National Forests (NF), and they just set aside all the still-unroaded land outside Wilderness as Roadless rather than evaluating it for Wilderness designation, which would have been far preferable environmentally. But the Roadless Rule wasn't for the environment.

They set all that land aside and decided not to log it simply because the high cost of building and maintaining the road network was becoming outrageous to both political parties. The road maintenance backlog was already enormous, and taxpayer and fiscal arguments persuaded even conservative Republicans to stop the road-building epidemic. Sure, we environmentalists would like to think the Roadless Rule was about saving habitat, but really it was about saving the US Treasury money because the FS road budget was losing money fast. Particularly in the Tongass NF of SE Alaska, where the cost of roads was much higher than in the lower 48, and because that's the biggest NF in the nation, it was a large percentage of the road money in the whole system. But even here in the Pacific Northwest the Forest Service is losing money on roads. The Roadless Rule would never have been adopted for wildlife habitat protection alone. No, it was all about the money; habitat protection was just a desirable but unintended consequence.

DOGE and Trump have decimated the FS and its budget, so rescinding the Roadless Rule now is unlikely to suddenly bring a lot of new roadbuilding, because there's little budget and few staff. But that's not why they're rescinding it. It's part of their "wrecking ball" mindset. The goal is to just go in and make a mess of things, to line up all the best environmental protections and knock them down. It's a lot like their push for more energy: if we need more energy, why defund and stop renewable energy projects? They want to fast-track the permit process for fossil fuel projects to drive as much revenue as possible to that industry, to keep it the dominant power source in the country. And they don't really care what the American people want or what happens later, it's all about their buddies getting more money and being able to profit from all this. Fossil fuels, the timber industry, and AI with its silicon valley tech bros—those classes are going to further concentrate wealth to themselves.

So, is that realization about the fate of the Roadless Rule useful? I think it is. Similar to their effort to de-fang NEPA, with the Endangered Species Act soon to follow, the wrecking ball continues to swing. We at the N3C will continue to resist these tear-downs and persist by every means at our disposal by acting locally on behalf of our precious North Cascades.

Phil Fenner

philf@northcascades.org



N3C Actions

JUNE to OCTOBER
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.

- ☒ Continued engaging in the Seattle City Light (SCL) relicensing process, now extended until February 2026. See page 11.

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.

- ☒ Signed on to Western Environmental Law Center (WELC) letters opposing the U.S. Forest Service's recent proposal to rescind the national Roadless Area Conservation Rule. Inventoried Roadless Areas provide essential habitat, protect critical watersheds that supply drinking water for millions, store significant amounts of carbon, and offer unparalleled recreational opportunities. Eliminating this vital rule threatens the integrity of our entire national forest system. See page 6.
- ☒ Gave interview to SFGate reporter re: the Border Lands Conservation Act that would give Homeland Security authority to build roads and other infrastructure in protected areas within 100 miles of the border, without oversight from the Department of the Interior. Hopefully Senator Mike Lee (R-Utah) who introduced the bill will retract it like he did his "Sell the Public Lands" bill earlier this year.



PROTECTING ANCIENT AND LEGACY FORESTS AND PROMOTING RESPONSIBLE FOREST MANAGEMENT

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

- ✓ Signed on to EarthJustice letter opposing two forestry bills in the US House Natural Resources Committee, one essentially reinstating the FS "10am policy" of fire suppression, and one adding more Categorical Exclusions from the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for logging.
- ✓ Attended WELC webinar, "Tools and Strategies for NEPA in 2025."
- ✓ Joined Oregon Wild's logging tracker group to compare notes with other regional logging projects.
- ✓ Joined the newly formed Federal Forest Watch Work Group to share information ahead of an expected increase in commercial logging across federal lands.
- ✓ Signed on to Washington Wild letter urging Congresswoman Kim Schrier to support national forest protections for our state's remaining old-growth forests.
- ✓ Co-sponsored "Ecologically Responsible Fire Safety" event with Methow Forest Forum. *See page 17.*



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.*

- ✓ Signed onto Washington Wild letter regarding visitor use in National Parks, raising concerns about efforts to reduce capacity of rangers and federal employees who maintain and manage public lands.
- ✓ Joined Chelan County Community Advisory Group to help develop a vision and strategic plan for Stehekin and attended first meeting.
- ✓ Submitted comments on NOCA's proposed Visitor Use Management Plan (VUMP) for the Ross Lake National Recreation Area (RLNRA), encouraging attention west to at least Rockport and east to Washington Pass. *See page 22.*
- ✓ Sent action alert re. NOCA's proposed RLNRA VUMP to support N3C request to broaden its focus west to at least Rockport and east to Washington Pass.
- ✓ Met with new Acting NOCA Superintendent Wade Vagias, since replaced by Acting Park Supervisor Denise Shultz. *See page 10.*

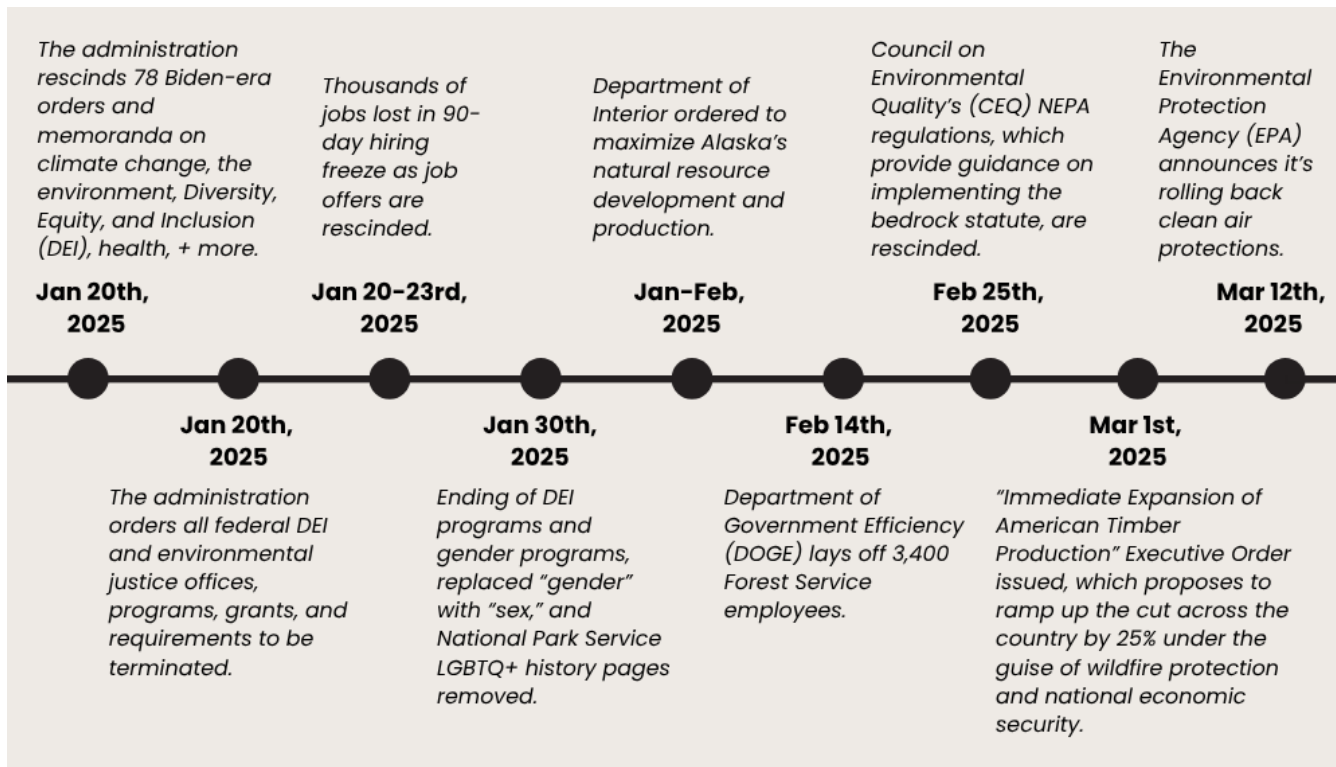


PROTECTING WILDLIFE AND WILDLIFE HABITAT

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 on to National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) letter to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), commenting on Proposed Air Plan Approval Regional Haze State Implementation Plan for the Second Implementation Period, part of a plan to reduce air pollution haze in national parks.
 - ✓ Signed on to Wild Earth Guardians petition demanding that the Interior Department restore meaningful environmental analysis and public participation requirements before moving forward on oil and gas development and other projects that will impact public lands.
-
- ✓ Signed TREAD letter requesting an immediate temporary public access closure to the Enchantments area of the Alpine Lakes Wilderness for the remainder of 2025 or other comparable actions to reduce day use volume and manage associated impacts.
 - ✓ Attended North Cascade Institute's annual Fall Gathering of staff, alumni, and fans, to share perspectives with a key conservation partner. *See page 10.*

How NEPA was kneecapped



Timeline thanks to Cascadia Wild, with permission, www.cascwild.org.

The Roadless Ruse (an opinion piece)

By Phil Fenner

We shouldn't have believed the Forest Service when they said they'd leave the roadless areas outside Wilderness alone. If we'd converted them to Wilderness Areas they'd be safe today.

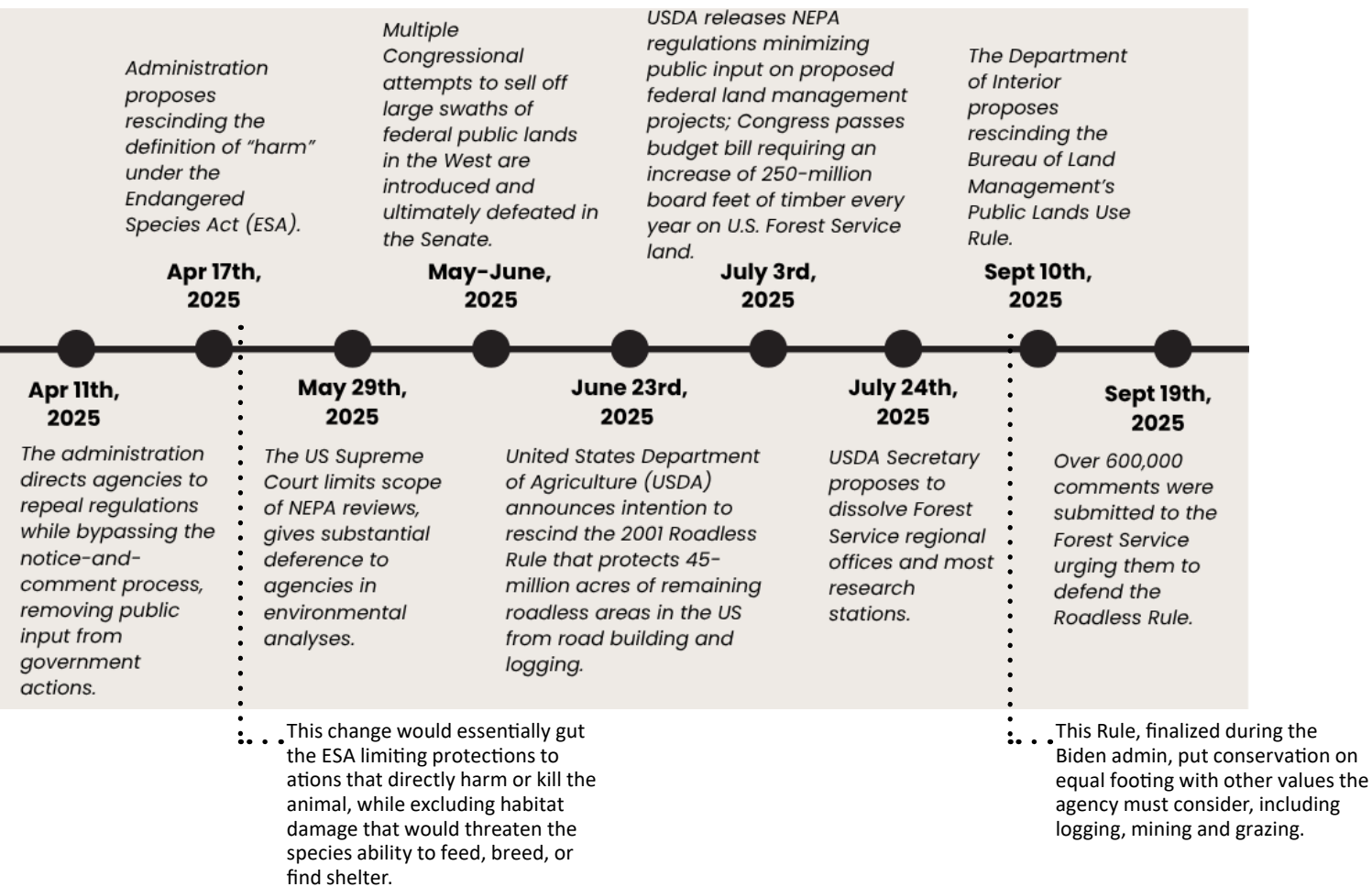
Is history repeating itself for those who didn't learn its lessons? The situation in the 50s with the Forest Service's so-called "Primitive Areas" was a lot like the Roadless Rule now. The FS promised not to log those areas then but changed their mind as they logged up the valleys into them and smelled valuable board-feet. That was a big motivation to get the Wilderness Bill passed, before it was all gone. Our own Pat Goldsworthy (an N3C co-founder) cut his teeth on the

shrinking of the Glacier Peak wilderness which was then protected only by FS administrative rules, "subject to change."

It took almost a decade of hard work to get the Wilderness Bill passed, against huge opposition from logging and mining interests. But of course a lot of roadless areas were left out in 1964 when the Wilderness Act was passed and have remained so since. Arguably, environmentalists share some blame for the current situation by becoming complacent, no longer pushing for Wilderness expansion after the big Wilderness addition bills passed in the 1980s. N3C was one of the exception groups, continuing

to push to protect 97% of our North Cascades National Park as Wilderness in 1988 and finally Wild Sky Wilderness as recently as 2008. But with the adoption of the NW Forest Plan here in 1994 and the Roadless Rule nationwide in 2001, the wind tended to go out of our sails, as it appeared the FS had finally turned the corner from exploitation to conservation. The clearcutting stopped, the road building stopped. Big sigh of relief. Until now.

And corporate donors stepped in and essentially bought-off some of the environmental groups in the 90s, too. But not N3C! Now those other groups are (guess what?) asking for more



donations, ostensibly to fight the FS to protect roadless areas, no surprise there. Where were they over the last 20+ years when efforts like Wild Olympics stalled out in Congress? Until that bill is passed, we've been told, all further efforts to get more Wilderness designated in the Cascades is on hold. And never mind that anyway, it's much more important to go chasing donors to pay growing staff. So, here we are with the Roadless Rule on the chopping block, leaving only Wilderness Areas still off-limits to the chain-saw. When this nightmare ends, let's remember to push as many remaining roadless areas into full Wilderness status as possible. Only then will they be truly safe from the whims of future administrations.

Local impacts of rule recission

Roadless Areas in the National Forests of Washington state protected by the Rule (as of now) total a little over 2 million acres. That's almost half again as many as the 4.3 million protected in our Wilderness Areas. A lot is at stake if the Roadless Rule is rescinded and roads start getting punched in and clearcuts and mining follow.

One of our favorite places is directly threatened: Monte Cristo, where an exception was granted to build a road (a track, really) through a roadless area to allow mine waste remediation. We continue to hope that track doesn't become a full-scale road, but it would certainly be "low-hanging fruit" if the

Rule is tossed and road building begins again in earnest.



State-Tribal Recreation Impacts Initiative Charter to address recreational activity

By David Fluharty

Washington State has a history of outdoor recreation, and recreation industries are a pillar of the regional economy. Participation rates in non-motorized recreation surged during Covid. More hikers, boaters, campers, and hunters spread out into the lakes, rivers, foothills, and mountains as people sought relief from being cooped up indoors. While exposure to nature is positive for human health it has brought more waste like litter, human crime like theft of large old maple and cedar trees or stripping traditional foraging areas of berries and mushrooms, crowding that affects wildlife, damage to cultural sites especially valued by tribes, and headaches for land and water managers attempting to accommodate the increased activity.

Noticing how increased activity encroached on treaty rights for fishing and hunting and their cultural heritage, the Treaty Tribes of Washington proposed to Governor Inslee that a task force be set up to develop a co-management approach to these issues on state lands and waters. Earlier this year a Charter was agreed for a State-Tribal Recreation Impact Initiative (STRII). It involves the Governor's Office of Indian Affairs, 31 federally recognized tribes, the Washington State Departments of Natural Resources, Fish and Wildlife, State Parks and Recreation Commission

and the Recreation and Conservation Office.

The STRII does not substitute for formal Treaty Right consultation under federal treaty law, but it provides guidance for ensuring that tribes

are at the table to assist in developing and prioritizing recreation management tools in an adaptive management framework. The overall goals are to share information and provide feedback on recreational programs, projects and

initiatives while developing a technical process to a) identify locations where recreation is causing degradation of natural or cultural resources; b) assess

Tribes will be at the tables that develop and prioritize recreation management tools

CONTINUED ON PAGE 26



Happy centennial, N3C celebrity Harvey Manning

By Ken Wilcox

The Issaquah Alps Trails Club celebrated the late Harvey Manning's 100th birthday in July, next to the larger-than-life Harvey-on-a-rock statue in downtown Issaquah.

At the birthday party, my wife Kris and I handed out copies of Wilderness Alps and members of the Issaquah Alps Trail Club shared stories and memories that were quite wonderful to hear. Harvey coined the term "Issaquah Alps" which helped galvanize the cause of protecting one of the most valued hiking destinations close to Seattle. The Alps include Tiger, Squak and Cougar Mountains, the latter being the former site of Harvey and Betty's "200-Meter Hut."

After the final speaker wrapped up, someone asked when we'd get to sing "Happy Birthday." That's all it took to launch a crowd of nearly on-key bikers into song. And there was no hesitation at the end for adding the phrase "and many more!"

Ken Wilcox with Harvey Manning. —KRIS WILCOX PHOTO

BOOK REVIEW

Conservation Confidential:

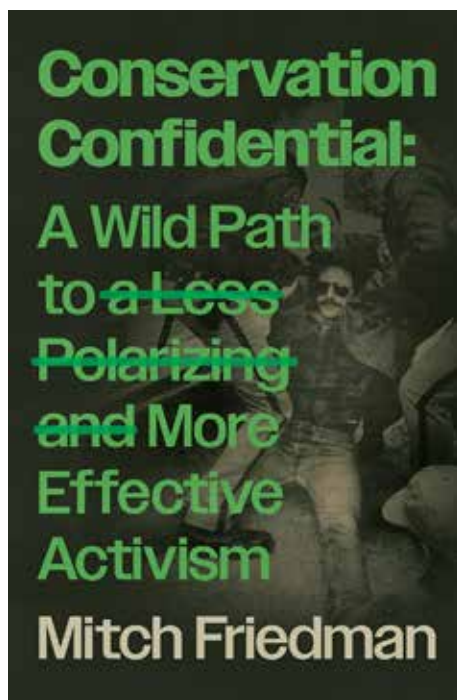
A Wild Path to a Less Polarizing and More Effective Activism by Mitch Friedman, 2025.

Latah Books

Reviewed by David Fluharty

Mitch Friedman is known to many as the founder and director of Conservation Northwest (CNW). Few know that he started his environmental activist role with Earth First! before moving to the mainstream Boards of Bellingham Audubon and N3C (1989-1999) and onward to establish the Greater Ecosystem Alliance in 1989 (CNW as of 2003). The shift from a radical environmental “tree sitting” activist to a mainstream environmental advocate to, finally, a member of a forest collaborative endorsing “restoration logging” is a puzzle to some and has others riled up for what is seen as an environmental cop out. In his new book *Conservation Confidential* Friedman documents his evolution as a member of and leader in the Pacific Northwest conservation community and his transformation from an extremist activist to a collaborator.

Whether or not he changes anyone's views about their own perspectives or on what he ought to have done, *Conservation Confidential* is replete with his insider's perspective on some of the major environmental issues in play in the Pacific Northwest from the 1980s to the present day. It is fair to say that he may take more credit than he is due for some actions but it is clear that he has been in the thick of such actions. He is perhaps less successful in convincing readers of his Conservation Principles and his views on Coexistence than when he is recounting his ideas and actions during the Ancient Forest Wars and his conversion to collaboration as a solution to conservation issues. Still these accounts all tell a tale focused on the author. The real question is why conservation as seen through Friedman's eyes is “confidential” when, in fact,



conservation in its most useful form is transparent. I don't follow.

On a personal note, Friedman writes that by 1988 he realized, as an environmental extremist, that the campaign to protect the ancient forest had entered a new phase. “Powerful national organizations had joined the battle, leading me to think that getting arrested was no longer the best use of my time and talents.” His first act following resignation from Earth First! was to organize and lead the Ancient Forest Rescue Expedition that escorted the giant butt log of a 731-year-old Douglas fir chained to a flatbed truck on a tour of 28 states to raise awareness of ancient forest issues. (Former N3C Board member Ric Bailey drove the truck.)

In apparent preparation for this shift toward the mainstream of conser-

vation, Friedman says he read a lot of books on strategy including John Keegan's *A History of Warfare* where “...in warfare and in life, an indirect approach is often best.” That set him on a quest to test that concept. Reflecting on his activist years Friedman writes, “I learned how to organize and lead, ways to withstand inevitable disappointments, how to raise funds and minds, how to attract media coverage, and more.” He asserts that in the early years in CNW, “We used a range of tactics from litigation to grassroots organizing to legislative lobbying to property acquisition to collaboration.”

However it was not until he found that “Broad coalitions are another form of indirect strategy, as they require the finding of common ground on which to build the big tent, rather than the attempt to impose policies through identity politics and sanctimonious moralizing, trademarks of the counterproductive liberal posture. Collaboration and coalitions do not describe all the work that CNW does, nor all our successes.” The problem with this approach, as this reviewer sees it, is that conservation interests in joining with exploitative interests are substituting themselves for the government entities entrusted or mandated to uphold national laws rather than seeking common interests or compromising until a consensus is reached.

Nowhere is this more apparent than in collaboratives for restoration forest management where conservation interests compromise to meet with forest exploitation interests of logging companies and forest economy communities desperate for employment and economic activity. In such situations, unrealistic fire protection

CONTINUED ON PAGE 27

Education, access, and community in the North Cascades

Partnership keeps learning alive—even in uncertain times

By Sarah Meyer, NCI Development and Engagement Director

The North Cascades teach us that resilience is a natural force—and this fall, that lesson feels especially relevant. Despite uncertainty caused by the current federal government shutdown, North Cascades Institute (NCI) and the Environmental Learning Center (ELC) on Diablo Lake remain open and active. With the support of long-standing partners—including North Cascades National Park, the U.S. Forest Service, and Seattle City Light—NCI continues to provide year-round environmental education in the heart of the North Cascades.

This season includes a wide range of learning opportunities for all ages, from field-based ecology seminars to naturalist courses and climate education workshops. Our primary youth program this fall is Mountain School, a three-day outdoor learning experience for 5th graders. For many students, these days on the shores of Diablo Lake are their first time in a national park and their first hands-on learning experience. They return home with muddy boots, open eyes, and a newfound sense of belonging in nature.

However, Mountain School is operating with fewer students this fall than in past years due to the State of Washington's decision to eliminate funding for outdoor education. Schools want to participate, but without financial support, many—especially rural and Title I schools—cannot afford to come. At NCI, we believe outdoor learning is not an “extra”—it is a foundation for lifelong stewardship, climate literacy, and community connection.

This is where partnership truly matters. North Cascades Conservation Council helped shape this vision from the beginning, playing a key role in establishing the Environmental Learning Center more than two decades ago.

Our shared commitment to education and conservation continues to unite us today.

There are many ways to stay connected to this work—by learning, exploring, volunteering, and advocating for equitable access to nature. One opportunity this season is Base Camp, our flexible educational lodge program that welcomes visitors to stay, hike, and learn at the ELC. For those who want a quiet fall retreat in

the mountains, November stays are 25% off. Whether you join a seminar, support youth scholarships, or simply spend time in the place we're all working to protect, your presence keeps this conservation community strong.

Together, we're not just protecting the North Cascades—we're ensuring future generations fall in love with them too.



NCI Fall Gathering held in September

Long-time and new Institute supporters including N3C President Phil Fenner enjoyed a lovely weekend gathering at the Environmental Learning Center. Award-winning author and biologist Thor Hanson gave a lively presentation on Saturday evening after dinner and Institute Naturalists led guided activities on Sunday morning included a trip on the Salish Dancer.

“The Big Canoe,” built in Canada and with a wolf-like decorative bow similar to canoes in the Coast Salish culture, is a feature of outdoor experiences at the Environmental Learning Center. —NORTH CASCADES INSTITUTE PHOTO

Skagit River Project Relicensing update: An impasse

By David Fluharty

In the last installment of this column it appeared that the grand Settlement Agreement between Seattle City Light (SCL) and license participants would be signed and submitted to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). That would do two things. First, it would indicate that the parties to the agreement were satisfied that the package of license articles and protection, mitigation, and enhancement (PME) measures negotiated was adequate to condition the operation of the three Skagit River dams by SCL for the next 50 years under a new license. Second, it would inform FERC that the package of measures was Ready for Environmental Analysis (REA) and initiate that process. Most important, N3C expected that we would be free to inform our members of the details of the package being put forward by SCL because the Settlement Agreement would then be a public document.

Instead, on September 4, 2025, SCL requested yet another extension of the submission deadline by asking FERC to “further delay issuance of the REA Notice to allow time to resolve outstanding matters in other agreements associated with the settlement package and for leadership of each settling party to approve and execute the comprehensive settlement agreement for submission to the Commission.” The original request for delay was tendered by SCL on April 23, 2023, after four years of study and negotiation when SCL submitted its Final License Agreement. FERC granted an extension until April 2024. On February 28, 2024, FERC granted another extension until December 31, 2024. Two more extensions were approved by FERC until June 1, 2025, and subsequently until September 15. FERC approved what may be a final extension until February 17, 2026.

In its extension approval letter to SCL of September 22, 2025, FERC states, “With the granting of this latest request, we will have delayed REA issuance for two years to give the settlement parties time to reach a final agreement. We believe two years will be sufficient time for the parties to reach a final agreement.” FERC notes that in SCL’s request, SCL “states that if the settlement agreement and supporting documents are approved by all parties, it will incorporate provisions of those agreements into an amended final license application and file it for review. If the parties are unable to reach a final agreement, City Light states that it will submit selective amendments to the final license application that include updates, corrections, and clarifications.”

What effect does this delay have on how the Skagit Hydroelectric Project is operated by SCL and why do these details matter to N3C?

The Skagit Hydroelectric Project will continue to operate under the existing 30-year license. The new conditions, many of which appear to provide environmentally beneficial changes, will not go into effect. The environmental impact assessment by FERC to use in making its decision to approve the settlement agreement is most important to N3C. Why? Because the environmental impacts of the Comprehensive Settlement Agreement have not been assessed and alternative actions not considered. Some of the articles propose actions, e.g., the building of a road from Highway 20 down to Ross Reservoir in an unstable geological formation, that are likely to be environmentally harmful and a visual disaster. (See *TWC Winter 2025*). N3C asserts that it is imprudent to endorse the Settlement Agreement until its license provisions have undergone environmental assessment as required by law. N3C is also waiting to see how

the concerns raised in comments on the August Draft Comprehensive Agreement are treated in the Final License Agreement.

Because of confidentiality agreement applying to the negotiations, N3C does not know which issues continue to delay agreement among the agency and tribal parties. We can only surmise that they are quite important. In the past, non-governmental organizations like N3C asking for further study or assessment of alternatives have been accused of delaying agreement. However, since groups like N3C have been excluded from negotiations, we are not the impediment. Stay tuned!

Give the gift of the North Cascades through our Gift Membership Program

Know someone who’d like to be part of N3C? Give them a one-year gift membership—and at a discount. Your friend will get a copy of *The Wild Cascades* immediately, as well as the next two issues.

Go to our website at www.northcascades.org and click Join Us, then “Give a Gift Membership.” Enter the gift recipient’s name and mailing address, then, enter your info under Credit Card Info. We suggest a \$20 donation for a gift membership. Thanks, and give a friend the North Cascades now!

If you have questions, contact us at GiftMember@northcascades.org. If you lack internet access, simply cut out the membership card on page 27, complete your information, write “GIFT” across the top and attach a note with the name and mailing address of the gift recipient.

TWC readers will recall from the last two issues that we've been rescuing the legacy of one of N3C's founders, John Warth, a prolific writer and photographer whose photos and writing appeared in this journal for over 20 years from N3C's founding in 1957 until 1978.

He was one of "the twenty-seven" who answered the call to meet in 1957 and form a new organization specifically to save the Cascades. N3C's mission statement was written at that meeting, and much of the Cascade range from the Columbia to the Canadian border was saved from exploitation in the coming years. John's photography continued to be published in *TWC* after he ceased writing for us in 1967 — his last photo was published in this journal in 1978, gracing the cover.

What became of him then we only know through his family, but we have undated photo journals of his explorations in the Cascades that were handmade on a photocopier and given to Patrick Goldsworthy, so we believe he dedicated the final years of his life to assembling those as testaments to his explorations. Harvey Manning recalled him in *Wilderness Alps* in 2006, and his work was cited by Lauren Danner in *Crown Jewel Wilderness* in 2017, but other than a few such references his legacy was fading fast into obscurity.

Thanks to some luck with online searches, I found his uncle, daughter, and granddaughter who were able to rescue a significant number of his slides and negatives for us, a small selection of which we present to you here with links to the larger online collection. We also scanned much of his early writing in *NCCC News*, linked below. They remind us of a time when the entire range was unprotected, a few individuals answered the call and saved much of it for us, the coming generation.

Let us dedicate ourselves to carrying on that struggle. —Phil Fenner

John Warth photos



JW setting out on his first trip to the Cascades by biking from Spokane to Leavenworth, carrying sandwiches made by his mother to fuel his way there, 1941.

*Beatnik
takes a
break,
NW of
Ingalls
Peak,
1958.*



"I met John Warth when Pat Goldsworthy gave me his number and told me to call him. I had asked Pat if he could suggest someone to supply Alpine Lakes area photos for the Wilderness map that Alpine Lakes Protection Society was producing. Little did I know that I would soon be meeting "Mr. Alpine Lakes," the man who started the efforts to protect the Alpine Lakes country as Wilderness, back when all the focus was on the North Cascades. And he lived just down the hill from me.

John was delighted to donate photos that turned our map from a good one into a beautiful one, which people still buy. His photos stand apart from the austere, technical perfection of Ansel Adams and others like him. John Warth's pictures, and the people in them tell a story of his life in conservation in the Cascades. Going through them gives one the feeling of really knowing the man and his passions.

ALPS will be forever grateful to N3C president Phil Fenner for doing the detective work to find John Warth's surviving relatives, allowing ALPS and N3C to preserve this wonderful record of images from the glory days of the early conservation movement in the Cascades."

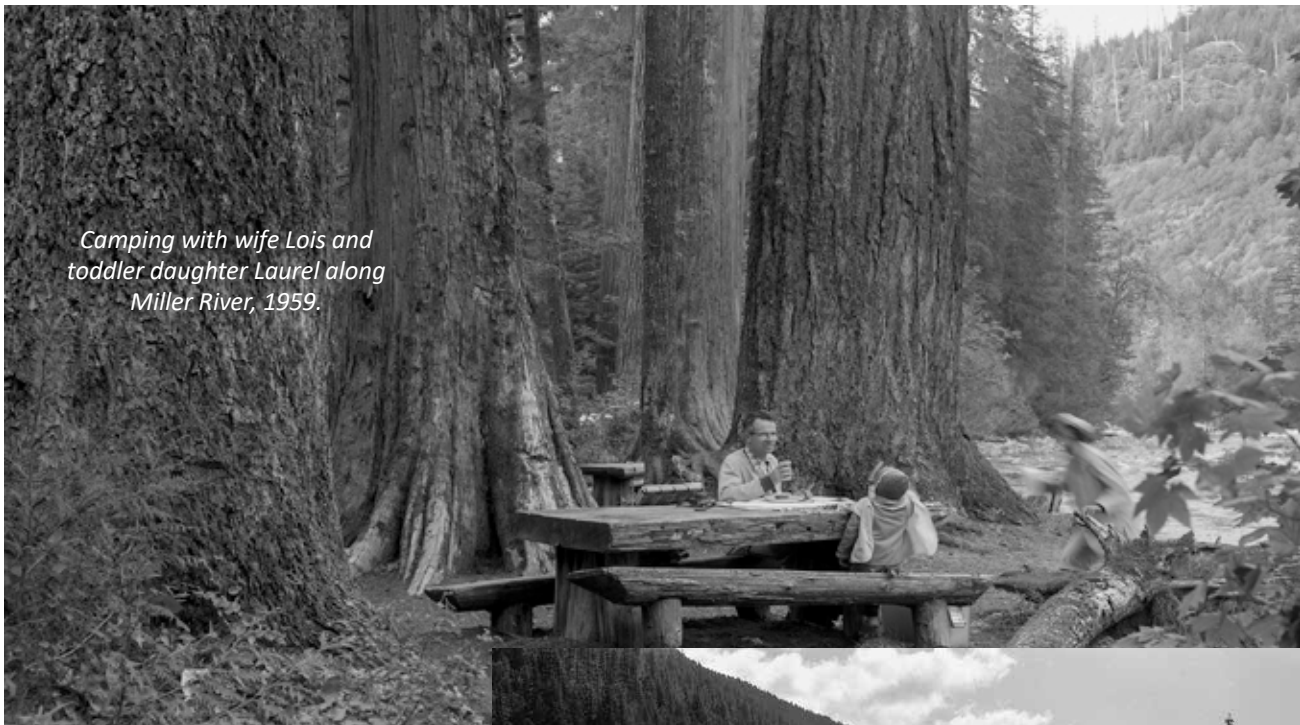
— Rick McGuire, Alpine Lakes Protection Society president
www.alpinelakes.org/



Twisp River road, 1961. A beautiful drive through a beautiful valley, now slated for destruction by the US Forest Service with their planned "TRP" and "Midnight" timber sales. Both are being vigorously opposed by N3C.



Checking out the road to Green Mountain above Lake Hancock with the '54 Pontiac.



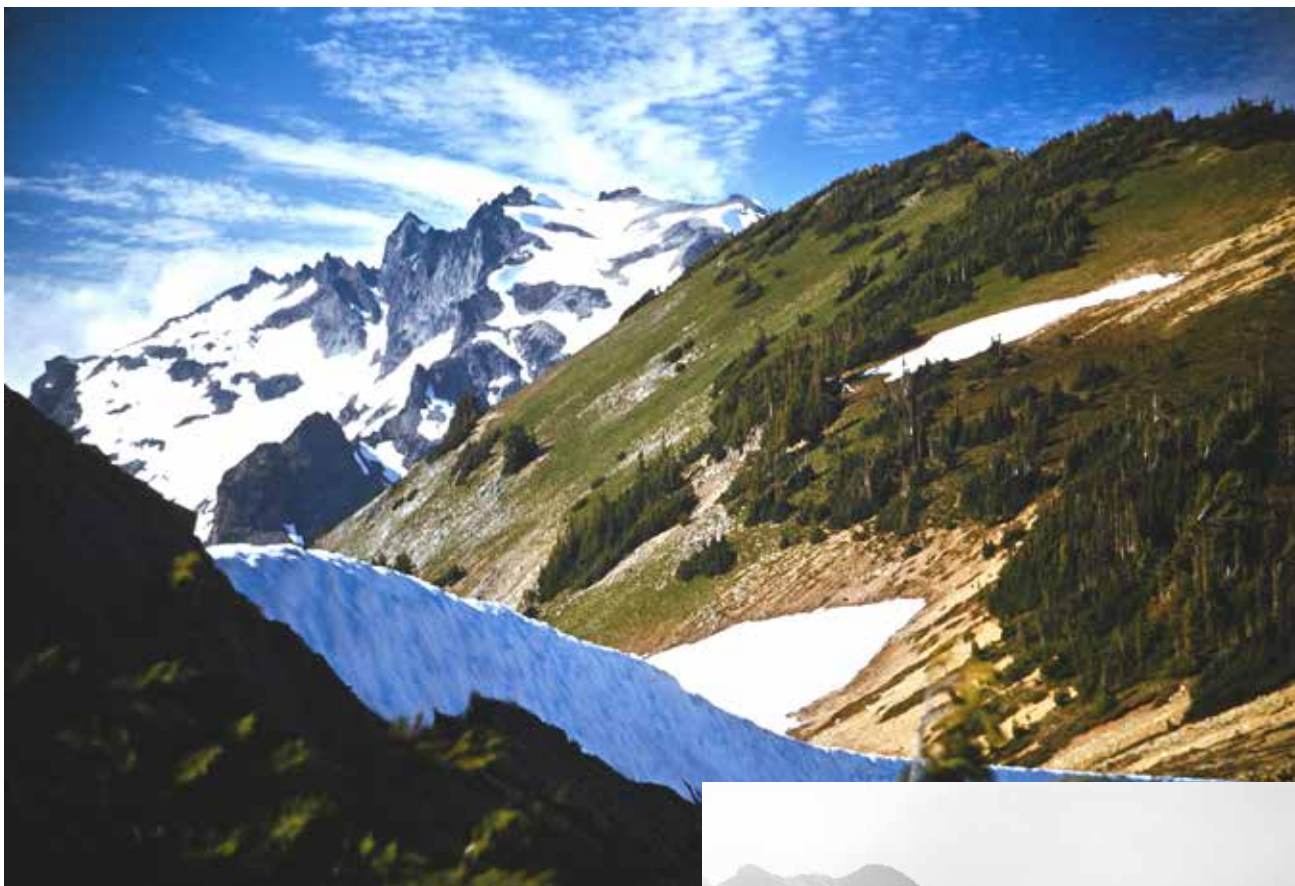
Camping with wife Lois and toddler daughter Laurel along Miller River, 1959.



CBS camera crew shooting footage of Glacier Peak and approaching logging in Crystal Creek, early 1960s. This area in the Suiattle River valley remains unprotected today.



Fishermayden, outlet of Cooper Lake.



Mountain heights — Mount Daniel.

*Young sailors having fun at
Cooper Lake, 1960.*



John Warth photo and writing links:

COLOR SLIDES:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/202807184@N02/>

MORE COLOR SLIDES AND B/W FROM NEGATIVES:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/87050842@N05>

PROSPECTUS FOR A NORTH CASCADES NATIONAL PARK:

Cover & Photos: https://northcascades.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/prospectus_ncnp_photo_sa.pdf

Chapter 3: https://northcascades.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/prospectus_ncnp_3.pdf

PHOTO BOOK "THE NORTH CASCADES: THE REDISCOVERED RANGE":

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1wj4o7vm1aTifH3JseQH3G_I_T6Y_DhON?usp=drive_link

COLLECTION OF HIS ARTICLES FROM 1957-67:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/18XlmUz3yzSNtyljebiapCc4NvOvGgsc6?usp=drive_link

N3C-sponsored community meeting

Fire science over fear in the Methow

By Robert Kendall



Methow Forest Forum's "Ecologically Responsible Fire Safety" event in Winthrop 10/29 filled 'The Barn' auditorium to near capacity. Methow activists and N3C members Michael "Bird" Shaffer and Ric Bailey were co-hosts and organizers. Bird showed his stunning and passionate film *"Our Backyard."* N3C President Phil Fenner and board member Robert Kendall attended.

Special guest speaker Chad T. Hanson drew on his many years of fire science to provide the public with tools to understand many of the counter-intuitive lessons learned about wildfire behavior, especially the often-heard fallacy that logging prevents it, debunking thinning as a cure-all for the threat of wildfire to communities. Hansen showed examples where thinned areas were sources of rapidly moving fire that caused catastrophic damage.

The sheer scale of the Forest Service's proposed thinning projects in the Methow were shocking, and the public was encouraged to have its voice heard on the matter soon, since the Trump administration is pushing forward on extraction with little regard for the NEPA process, despite

N3C's valiant efforts in court. Bailey pointed out that even the project's purported economic benefits would bypass the Methow where there hasn't been a sawmill in decades, instead leading to a continuous chain of log trucks through the Methow, over the North Cascades to Darrington!

A lively open-mic discussion took place after the presentation. All sides were heard. One Twisp resident said that he was routinely awakened at 2:00 am by the first shift of log trucks! The District Ranger told him that only with two shifts of trucks running a day, at 2:00 am and 4:00 pm, would the Twisp project break even. So the economics and local resident impacts were made abundantly clear.

Before the event, Hanson took part in a field trip into the Twisp River valley with MFF and N3C members, which was especially useful for ground-truthing and information exchange.

N3C was pleased to be a co-sponsor of the event with the Pacific Northwest Forest Climate Alliance. The event was recorded on video. See links to audio and video recordings at the top of the next column.

Meeting audio recording: <https://tinyurl.com/MFFmeeting>

Hanson talk: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I6q_I-q-vmA

More about the Methow on the pages following.



Bardsley wrapping up 31 years as N3C officer

Marc Bardsley has had a long and stellar career with N3C and is stepping down now as secretary of the organization, to be succeeded by Robert Paul Kendall.

Marc was first mentioned in *TWC* 52 years ago, in 1973. He was voted onto the N3C board on 12/20/1976 (49 years ago), then elected president in June 1994. After 18 years as president, he became secretary in 2012 and has served in that office for the past 13 years. He continues to serve on the board. We will include a more complete article in honor of Marc's service in the coming issue.

Robert Paul Kendall first contributed to *TWC* in Fall 2019, became an Advisor in Fall 2020 and joined the Board of Directors in Fall of 2022. Along with his epic thru-hikes of the PCT and PNT, he is the steward of the Hidden Lake Peak lookout.



Updates on the epic battle against the Twisp logging Projects

By Phil Fenner

The Forest Service just published their Cumulative Effect Analysis for the Twisp Restoration Project (TRP), as ordered by the Appeals Court after our win there in May, and then announced they intend to begin “implementation”. The chainsaws may already have started by the time you read this.

And just as we go to press, the Decision Notice and Final Environmental Assessment for the Midnight Project in the upper Twisp River valley was released. A double-whammy if there ever was one!

N3C finds the new Cumulative Effects document for the TRP fundamentally deficient. And meanwhile the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) rules have been watered down

by this administration (see timeline on page 6) such that further legal proceedings based on NEPA may not be effective. And now that Final EA for Midnight is out. Surely the timing was calculated for maximum effect.

N3C raised funds to challenge the TRP on NEPA grounds when the legal requirements of NEPA and the Administrative Procedures Act were still being upheld by the courts. Now, the administration is ignoring the intent of the laws and, worse yet, rewriting the rules. We can simply no longer justify spending our funds to go back to court on the TRP when all the advice we are given is that it would not succeed. We are seeking pro bono legal representation as a possible route for further legal challenges based on the

Logging impacts on the Mission Project in 2022. —RIC BAILEY PHOTO

Northwest Forest Plan.

Thus we now come to a new set of decision points. We are sure we would have prevailed on the TRP if the political scene wasn't so averse to true citizen input and best available science and so rigged in favor of extractive industry by the current administration, Congress and the Supreme Court. Our TRP case relied on NEPA violations, and if it's not yet entirely dead, NEPA soon will if the SPEED Act is passed. Given the risks of setting bad precedent, which has already happened elsewhere, few if any reputable law

CONTINUED ON PAGE 19

Help protect our Methow Valley woods

By Michael “Bird” Shaffer

As published in the *Methow Valley News* 10/23/25

We live in one of the most special places on Earth, and that’s a benefit we share as Methow Valley residents. It’s what connects us, no matter where we came from or how long we’ve been here.

I’m writing today because I fear for the loss of the very things that make our home so extraordinary—our forests, wildlife, clean water, outdoor recreation and scenic beauty. I studied environmental science in college, though activism is new to me. When I learned of the logging plans for Poorman Creek, where I’ve lived in community for 50 years, I had to speak up.

The federal government is proposing more than 20 years of intensive in-

The Methow is being treated like a resource colony to feed corporate timber profits.

Twisp logging projects

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 18

firms are interested in pursuing NEPA cases any longer.

We will proceed to document current conditions and monitor the TRP in close detail to assure USFS compliance with the stated plan. And we are working with attorneys at Western Environmental Law Center to seek a full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Midnight project in the upper Twisp River valley where Endangered Species Act claims are strong, as well as co-sponsoring the October 29 event in the Methow covered on page 17 in this issue. The epic has not ended. In the immortal words of Rachel Carson, “Conservation is a cause that has no end. There is no point at which we say, ‘Our work is finished.’”

dustrial logging across our watershed. Four expansive projects are proposed on roughly 200,000 acres of our local forests—in the Twisp River and Libby Creek Watersheds, and at Goat and

Eightmile Creeks east of Mazama. Promoted under the banner of “fuels reduction” and “fire safety,” boots on the ground have shown us what’s really in store.

Ongoing management activities in Libby and Buttermilk Creeks on the Mission Project tell a different story, and it’s not a pretty picture. The objec-

tive of these projects isn’t fire safety, it’s sending logs over the mountains through our national park to distant sawmills. A Feb. 6 article in *Columbia Insight* confirmed that the primary goal of these projects is to meet inflated timber quotas, not to protect homes from wildfire.

Instead of thoughtful management that leaves healthy, fire-resilient forests, we’re seeing high-intensity “commercial logging” that leaves de facto clearcuts—resulting in a wide-open forest canopy, slash piles, road scars, and degraded landscapes.

Our forests can be more fire resilient with sensitive, science-based approaches that reduce risk while protecting the precious resources that make the Methow a cherished home and a world-class destination. Yet, the federal government insists that commodity-based management is the only option.

By using appropriated federal funds for targeted thinning of dense timber stands and treating undergrowth through prescribed burns near communities, we can keep our ecosystem intact and our valley thriving.

Shut out

Like many others, I’ve offered alternative solutions during public

comment periods. Unfortunately, those concerns went unanswered. As a last resort, I joined North Cascades Conservation Council challenging the Twisp Timber Sale—and last May, a federal court agreed the Forest Service had violated federal law temporarily halting the project.

Still, our community is being shut out of meaningful involvement. These projects are being pushed forward without transparency, before residents can even understand their full impacts.

I grew up working in the woods—planting, thinning, and fighting wildfire. I have great respect for our local Forest Service, but the marching orders for this logging surge are coming from Washington, D.C., not from our valley. The Methow is being treated like a resource colony to feed corporate timber profits at the expense of what we love most.

We don’t have to accept that. Imagine a locally driven, science-based and ecologically responsible vision for our forests—one that protects our communities from wildfire while safeguarding our watershed, and way of life. Check out our wildfire protection measures included, as a good starting point.*

Our community has always risen to defend our home—from rivers to ridges. In a world full of division and distraction, this is a real, tangible issue right here at home that can bring us together. Let’s unite, speak up, and stand for the living heart of the Methow.

Michael “Bird” Shaffer lives in Twisp.

* <https://tinyurl.com/PrinciplesFuels>

Park Service abandons Stehekin—and its mission

By David Gladstone

For the past two years, the Golden West Visitor Center has sat locked and dark and there have been no visitor-facing rangers in Stehekin. During the summers, visitors troop up the hill from the boat dock looking for advice and assistance. They try the door handle, peer through the windows, look for other doors. They often walk across the path to the volunteer-staffed crafts cabin and ask when the visitor center will be open. They tell volunteers they need camping permits, advice on where to hike, park badges, information about ongoing fires or what trails they can bicycle on or bring dogs on and how to get there, and even medical attention. The only answer volunteers can give on when the visitor center will be open is no one knows.

In 2024, more than 1500 of you signed a petition demanding that the National Park Service open the visitor center and staff it with trained public servants. We delivered the petition, with your heartfelt comments, to the Park Service and Department of Interior. Faced with your pressure, the Park Service did finally do a seasonal hiring for Stehekin—one general (law enforcement) ranger for the entire east side of the North Cascades National Park Complex.

The next summer, the Park Service hired two general rangers for that vast area but kept the visitor center closed. No Park employees greeted boats or made themselves visibly available to visitors in Stehekin during the summer of 2025. These two general rangers weren't trained in providing advice and direction to visitors; they seemed mainly to have been told by superiors what they couldn't do—issue tickets to violators (trained interpretive staff also can't issue tickets, but they are trained to use information and persuasion to get visitors to do the right thing, which they mostly want to do). When confronted with dangerous situations such as a commercially rented vehicle

blocking the road next to a cliff drop-off, the ranger said there was nothing he could do.

In 2025, we put out a call for letters to the Park superintendent again demanding interpretive rangers and staffing of the Golden West. More than 30 of you sent thoughtful, passionate letters. The response? Crickets. As far as we know, the Park Service never responded to a single person.

The Park Service has abandoned Stehekin, even though Congress has

assigned the Park Service the responsibility for protecting the valley unimpaired for all to enjoy. The protection of Stehekin and the North Cascades as a national park in 1968 happened only because thousands of people raised a ruckus to demand it. Stehekin has been an early warning that we can never just rest on our laurels. Now it is up to all of us to raise a ruckus again, standing up against shrinking public services and creeping privatization and for the public good.

It's never too late to try!

Write a brief, personalized email to acting North Cascades National Park superintendent Denise Shultz at denise_m_shultz@nps.gov AND noca_superintendent@nps.gov (Please cc us at ncccinfo@northcascades.org. Tell her to hire interpretive rangers to staff the Golden West Visitor Center in Stehekin and assist visitors there in 2026. Key points to make:

- Visitors who make the journey to the remote Stehekin Valley need and deserve to be able to count on assistance from trained public servants meeting the boats and in the Golden West Visitor Center.
- It would take a tiny amount of money to ensure the Golden West Visitor Center is staffed with interpretive rangers who can issue camping permits, describe and advise on appropriate hiking and backpacking trips, and give crucial safety guidance to protect visitors and wildlife and prevent wildfires. The Visitor Center, which was renovated at a cost of millions of dollars, is fully visitor-ready—so with the hiring of just a few seasonal interpretive rangers, basic services at the Visitor Center could be restored.
- Lack of visible Park staff presence and assistance is endangering visitors and the wild beauty of Stehekin that Congress assigned the Park Service to protect. With no visible Park presence, many visitors have little idea they are in a Park-protected place with special rules. For example, jet skis have been seen at the head of Lake Chelan, although the Park Service banned them decades ago. Off-leash dogs have been spotted on trails. Privately rented utility vehicles block roads and careen at high speed near cliffs and bicyclists.
- State where you are from and if you've spent time in the North Cascades National Park.

NOCA leadership playing musical chairs

By Phil Fenner

Leadership of our National Park is, well, “in flux” might be the best way to describe it.

We last heard from Superintendent Don Striker last May, and then we heard in June that he was on “extended leave” from North Cascades National Park (aka “NOCA” in Park parlance) and that he might be appointed to a high office in the Park Service or Interior Dept.

Then in late June we heard Wade Vagias, Supt. of Craters of the Moon National Park in Idaho, had been appointed Acting Superintendent, and we arranged an in-person meeting with him in mid-August at the (then) Park Headquarters in Sedro-Woolley. The meeting was cordial and encouraging to us in many ways. Wade suggested we set up regular Zoom calls, but when we reached out again in September to arrange one, the former NOCA Chief of Visitor Services, Denise Shultz, replied that Wade had gone back to Idaho and she was now Acting Superintendent.

Then the Federal Government shut down on October 1, and our emails to Denise have come back with auto-replies saying she is furloughed until the Government re-opens.

Ms. Shultz has been in several “deputy” roles with NOCA since Karen Taylor-Goodrich was Superintendent, prior to Don Striker.

In a perhaps related recent development, we saw that the sign in front of the Headquarters building in Sedro which had said both National Park and Forest Service for as long as the building has been there, had been replaced sometime since late August with a sign identifying the building as a Forest Service office. Our sources tell us the Park Service was unwilling or unable to continue staffing the front desk alongside the Forest Service and largely relocated its remaining staff to the Park Ranger facilities in Marblemount prior to the shutdown.

And we have still not seen any updates on Don Striker’s status. He was heavily involved in the Skagit Hydro Project relicensing, as TWC readers will know, and thus that process will also be affected.

Overall, the trend seems to be one of a collapse of leadership in “our” National Park under the second Trump administration. We anticipate this trend won’t reverse soon, although we do hope to connect with Ms. Shultz after the current shutdown (hopefully) ends, and will continue to reach out.

Finally, we can report that as of Oct. 2 the only place you can drive into the Park, the North Fork Cascade River road, is gated at the so-called Eldorado parking lot, adding a 3.5 mile each-way road walk to a hike to Cascade Pass. That lot was nearly

full on an early October weekday, so folks continue to make either a much longer day hike or to backpack in. The usual road washout points above the gate are intact, so all we can conclude is the Park Service must have locked the gate at Eldorado because they couldn’t respond to emergencies on the upper-road segment or the trail during the shutdown. It’s a bit of a “silver lining”, as overuse and trampling of the Pass and Sahale Arm areas will be reduced the longer that gate is closed. N3C has advocated for permanent road closure at that point for many years to reduce impacts on that hyper-popular alpine pass area. And the walk up the road offers many spectacular views of the peaks across the valley not seen on the trail until you reach the final traverse to the pass!



NPS headquarters in Sedro Woolley. —PHIL FENNER PHOTO

Skagit Corridor Visitor Use Management Plan (VUMP) may relieve RLNRA overuse

By Dave Fluharty

One of the surprising outcomes of the long deliberations over relicensing of the Skagit River Project by Seattle City Light (SCL) is an agreement to amend the action plan from the 1995 license requiring SCL to recoat the transmission towers to better blend in with the landscape. Instead of coating the towers, SCL would fund an early planning process to better interpret and expand the recreational uses of the Skagit River corridor. N3C supports this planning process as a means of relieving some of the recent pressure from recreation in Ross Lake National Recreation Area (RLNRA) and Rainy, Washington, and Cascade Pass areas that is damaging resources and cultural areas important to Skagit River tribes.

The formal planning process is termed the Ross Lake NRA and SR 20 Visitor Use and Frontcountry Planning – Summer 2025. Documents are available on the NPS Park Planning site: <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/document.cfm?parkID=327&projectID=127903&documentID=14530>.

Anyone who has driven from Marblemount to Newhalem is acutely aware of the industrial landscape created by the transmission towers and how they detract from the otherwise incredibly beautiful highway corridor extending into Ross Lake National Recreation Area (RLNRA). The Skagit River upstream from Concrete and downstream from the Sauk-Suiattle Rivers is designated by Congress as a national Wild and Scenic River as well as part of the North Cascades National Park Service Complex. Comprising 158 miles of rivers and streams, the Skagit River is the nation's largest Wild and Scenic River system, but the average visitor is totally unaware of its significance.

N3C has commented extensively on this process and has strongly urged that the scope and area of attention



Skagit River near Marblemount. —PHIL FENNER PHOTO

be expanded beyond Ross Lake NRA. N3C argues that the “frontcountry” from east of Concrete to RLNRA and east of RLNRA to Washington Pass and on to Winthrop offers the greatest opportunity to form partnerships with other agencies and private entities to offer valuable recreational opportunities and to protect important resources.

Limited ways to increase capacity

Studies developed for the Seattle City Light Skagit Project Relicensing process confirm that RLNRA is being overwhelmed with visitors and there are limited ways for the NPS to increase capacity. Important cultural resources are not being respected, trampled by excess visitor use. Environmental impacts from visitor use are increasing as the visitor experience declines. Thus, license participants (signatories to the previous license provisions) agreed to divert funding from one of the projects in the 1995 license to investigate ways to reduce impacts and visitor demand in RLNRA by focusing on opportunities to increase visitor use in the Skagit River Wild and Scenic River corridor along SR 20 and South Skagit Highway up to and including RLNRA, to visitor management projects upstream from

RLNRA to Washington Pass and beyond.

The commitment to fund this planning process is described in a May 2024 Letter from SCL to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), which licenses the hydro project:

Alternative management strategies

As an alternative to transmission tower painting, City Light proposes to insert a new provision into the Visual Quality Plan under which City Light will provide funding to the National Park Service (NPS) for development of a Visitor Use Management

Plan (VUMP). Broadly speaking, under the plan, the NPS will assess existing facilities and services within the geographic area between Washington Pass and Marblemount. Through the NPS planning process for the VUMP, the NPS will establish the exact geographic boundary of the VUMP, which at a minimum will include the Ross Lake National Recreation Area (RLNRA) and areas within the Skagit Wild and Scenic River System. The VUMP will also identify improvements and opportunities that will enhance the visitor experience. Recommendations in the assessment will guide investments in future recreation facilities and services in not only the RLNRA, but other locations within the geographic boundary of the VUMP. Upon completion of the VUMP, NPS, the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), City Light, and others will collaborate and coordinate on implementation of these VUMP recommendations.

Initial conversations with the National Park Service's Management Plan development team have emphasized the participation of external partners and discussed NPS planning for Gateway areas of National Parks and other units in the NPS system. Examples of good practices for the Skagit River

Wild and Scenic Corridor have been suggested as models include, e.g., the bald eagle sanctuary viewing and interpretation, the Steelhead Park in Rockport, etc.

In its initial comments, N3C noted that the last serious planning effort for much of the corridor area took place in the 1983 USFS Skagit Management Analysis (Final) Skagit River, Vol. 1. While that document is now out of date, it contains 90% of the existing information on land management, recreation facilities, cultural values, etc. (<https://rivers.gov/sites/rivers/files/documents/plans/skagit-plan.pdf>). Many of same facilities and entities are present and many of the recommended actions have not been implemented. The original USFS planning for the Skagit River Wild and Scenic corridor also suggests many unrealized opportunities.

What alternative management strategies could and should be introduced to reduce these heavy recreational impacts? What else could be done to improve appreciation of the area outside of RLNRA through cooperation with local and other entities including the Tribes, Seattle City Light, Skagit Land Trust, etc.?

N3C argues the planning process should identify potential areas outside the RLNRA. The RLNRA General Management Plan and Skagit Hydro Project relicensing recreation provisions have largely dealt with RLNRA issues. N3C proposes that the study area be expanded to cover the full range of the Skagit River Wild and Scenic River Corridor and the Highway 20 corridor east of RLNRA as far as Winthrop.

The National Forest area between the RLNRA eastern boundary and Washington Pass needs recreational management to control overuse, especially during “larch madness” foliage season when trailhead parking overflows onto the highway and trails are packed with hikers.

As well, the average North Cascades Highway visitors do not know when they pass from NPS to USFS jurisdiction in driving across the Cascades. It is just a highway in a beautiful place. Joint cooperative management of recreation can create tremendous opportunities for joint interpretation of the North Cascades ecosystem. Finding

ways to interpret the landscape and the different land and water designations along the Highway 20 corridor should be considered so that the casual visitor can be informed. Some examples: a brochure with numbered locations, streaming broadcast from west to east and east to west between Concrete and Winthrop, downloadable audio tour guides. The National Park Service could develop these resources in cooperation with USFS and partners like Chamber of Commerce and history museums along the way. This is a rare opportunity when funding from SCL could pay for it.

Acquiring land along the South Skagit Highway and developing public access on the less-used side of the Skagit River is another large-concept possibility. Accessible automobile pull-outs could interpret the river ecology and the area’s logging and farming history. Watercraft put-ins for kayaks, canoes, and fishing boats could increase access to river recreation.

Steelhead Park in Rockport is a good example of cooperation between local, state and federal agencies, like NPS, that provides access, historical interpretation, fishing, recreational boating, etc. Similar sites could attract and accommodate year-round low-elevation recreation and visitation. Another opportunity would be to take greater advantage of the designated Bald Eagle Sanctuary near Rockport.

Given that the VUMP area sits on the ancestral lands of the Upper Skagit Indian Tribe and Sauk Indian Tribe, tribes must be engaged to determine acceptable and appropriate ways to acknowledge their continuing presence, cultural areas and practices. Extensive study and planning have taken place within the Skagit River Project Relicensing process for the Project area. Similar respect should be given to the tribes in the VUMP process in the Wild and Scenic River corridor. Some of the recreation facilities in the Skagit Delta use Lushootseed place names and wildlife names to interpret the lands and wildlife. Village sites and artifacts are recognized. N3C hopes that this planning process will suitably engage with the tribes in the area to fully recognize the ancestral and colonial histories of the area. This would be a great opportunity to explore the

State-Tribal Recreation Impact Initiative (STRII) Charter presented in this issue of TWC (see page 8).

Smaller in concept but still useful ideas to be considered:

- A visitor’s guide to the Skagit River Corridor
- Passive visitor controls, e.g., one-way loop trails in heavily used areas, parking impediments to protect vulnerable areas from traffic, etc. especially in the Cascade River corridor.
- A larger vehicle pull-out, parking area and kiosk and a short trail to the river near the western entry sign to RLNRA, with a similar site on the eastern portal to RLNRA.

Establishing a joint NPS/USFS visitor contact and permit-issuing station in a highly visible spot in Marblemount (before the Cascade River Road cut off) and another in Winthrop or Early Winters is a short-term project that would improve visitor experiences. Clean, accessible restrooms are what visitors need and expect from land management agencies at gateway locations. In the current budget-cutting era, this may be an impossible dream, but it must be part of a long-term vision.

An essential long-term visionary document

This Plan should be the start of a new era in conservation planning for the Skagit River. It is a unique opportunity to plan for recreation in the larger area with multiple agencies!

N3C looks forward to working with the NPS and other parties to envision a bright future for the Skagit river-scapes while lessening pressures on the NPS in RLNRA, Washington Pass. and Cascade Pass.

Accomplishing this vision will require expanding the horizons of the current planning. How can you help this important plan move forward? Familiarize yourself with the VUMP process and offer your experiences and suggestions for how better to interpret and utilize the Skagit River Corridor and Highway 20 for recreation—especially year-round recreation that can accommodate more visitors with less pressure on resources.

Outlook for glaciers dismal during UN's "International Year for Glaciers' Preservation"

By Mauri Pelto, North Cascade Glacier Climate Project

We hiked into the North Cascades to complete detailed glacier observations for our 42nd consecutive year. This year an overall focus of the project was supporting the UN's "International Year for Glaciers' Preservation" by focusing on glaciers that have disappeared and are in critical danger of disappearing in the next decade.

For the third consecutive year North Cascade glaciers on average lost more than 2 meters of glacier thickness. This cumulative loss of 7-8 m on most of the ranges glaciers that average 25-40 m in thickness represents 20% of their volume lost in just three years. On a few of the largest glaciers, such as those on Mount Baker that average 40-60 m in thickness, the loss represents 12% of their volume lost.

The consequence is an acceleration of the collapse of the North Cascade glacier system. This landscape that has for long been shaped by ice is rapidly losing that glacier element. The rate of retreat for the glaciers we work on has accelerated so quickly that we are faced each year with changing terrain and new challenges. Beyond that, we are starting to really see the effect this retreat and the decrease in water has on the ecosystems both near the glaciers and further downstream. During the field season we love seeing the wildflowers, eating blueberries, and counting mountain goats. These are all parts of a habitat that is built around glaciers and snowpack. Seeing these shifts has been really difficult, but it helps to still return to these landscapes and continue to tell their stories through science and art.

The two most prominent mountains of the North Cascades Mount Shuksan and Mount Baker are connected by a ridge from Shuksan Arm to Ptarmigan Ridge. We visited 12 glaciers along and close to this ridge in the mid-1980s, to decide which to monitor annually. At that time each of these had active crevasses and significant area of glacier

ice. By the end of 2023 seven of the twelve glaciers were gone. We continue to monitor Lower Curtis, Rainbow and Sholes Glacier in detail. Portals

and Ptarmigan Ridge Glacier, which we visit every year, but do not assess in detail, will likely disappear in the next few years.



Mean mass balance observed in the field annually by the North Cascade Glacier Climate Project.



Easton Glacier on August 9, 2025 from our research camp. In 1990 glacier ended at small ridge right behind our hats. Now glacier has receded 700 meters. Left to right, Abby Hudak, Jill Pelto and Mauri Pelto. PHOTO: NORTH CASCADES GLACIER CLIMATE PROJECT

New conservation advocacy group has roots in N3C advocacy

By Jim Freeburg

The ascendance of the state Trust Land Transfer (TLT) program has been well documented in *The Wild Cascades*, a natural fit given N3C's significant role in revitalizing this once-floundering conservation tool. There's now yet another significant development in the TLT revitalization story that we are pleased to announce for the first time. This fall, a new non-

profit dedicated to the conservation of state trust lands was incorporated. Stewards of Washington State Lands ("Stewards") is the outgrowth of the TLT Advocacy Coalition that N3C founded, funded, and legitimized.

Stewards aims to fill a narrow yet important niche in the conservation community. With a dedicated focus on building a community to advocate for the conservation and stewardship of Washington state trust lands, Stewards hopes to take advantage of new leadership at the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR), robust public demand for conservation and the massive rollbacks of environmental protection under the Trump administration.

Trust land transfer advocacy will continue to be major focus for the Stewards. Additional attention will be given to the ongoing operating needs of DNR Natural Areas Program, which protect some of the best remaining examples of natural Washington. It will be a major task to turn around the funding trajectory for DNR's Natural Areas, but there's a path forward built on collaboration, focus, and momentum.

Legislators from both sides of the aisle in Olympia understand the intrinsic value of wild places and human connection to nature. However, significant competition for limited resources makes it difficult for natural resource agencies like DNR to get their due. Yet, the incredible outcry over the attempted public lands selloff at the federal level shows that when organized, widespread support for public lands can be a channeled into smart policy (or at least kill bad ideas).

We all know that our natural environment faces many threats. Climate change, wildfires, and exploding outdoor recreation pose real danger to the North Cascades and every wild corner of our state. The economies of rural communities rely on a timber in-

dustry that doesn't really look out for their interests—just those of its Wall Street backers. Our federal government is sadly shirking its responsibilities to address these issues and states have limited resources to fill the void. It'll be up to local communities and advocates like N3C to look for new ways of protecting our ecosystems while acknowledging tough realities. Stewards hopes to be a part of that response.

Revitalizing DNR's trust land transfer program happened because it had a 30-year history of turning state trust land into parks and natural areas, while also improving financial returns to trust beneficiaries. It created wins for many stakeholders: conservation, schools, local governments, land managers, and even the timber industry. Because it created wealth in every definition of the word, it's easy for politicians to get behind. We want to emulate that path to again achieve political success.

Leaders in the TLT revitalization movement recognize that we have an opportunity and an obligation to do more. We need more conservation, more funding (both public and private), and more collaboration to get big things done.

In shepherding the TLT coalition the last five years, I've seen amazing work happening in local communities across the state. A reshaping of the landscape around Dabob Bay. Communities from Port Angeles to Naselle, pushing to protect their drinking water from logging on state lands. Spokane fighting against developers in a battle for open space. Tribes taking back their land. A new movement to protect older, mature forests. Each of these actors is incredibly important and doesn't need a new statewide advocacy group to tell them what to do. However, uniting these communities will get us even further than we can go on our own. I look forward to the work ahead.

See North Cascade Glacier Climate Study art show in Twisp



Following a successful run in Seattle, the show will be mounted at Confluence Gallery in Twisp from January 13 - February 21, with an opening reception on January 17 at 5:00 pm.

The climate art show "Glacial Identities: Shaped by Ice," features Jill Pelto and artists who have participated in the annual North Cascade Glacier Climate Study. The show explores how our glacial regions are changing and how these changes deeply impact human and natural communities at many levels, from the loss of freshwater resources to ecosystem shifts.

Tribes charter

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

impacts of recreation in a consistent manner across state lands and waters; and c) identify management strategies to avoid or mitigate recreation impacts. As Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission Chairman Ed Johnstone writes in the latest issue of the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission magazine, “Our hope is that this initiative will better connect residents and visitors to the importance of protecting these lands and waters, which will encourage compliance with the rules, regulation and land management controls we establish.” The approach will use traditional knowledge and best available modern science.

Similar issues have come up in the Skagit River Hydroelectric relicensing

process, which involves predominantly federal lands and resources. Measures to reduce impacts on natural and cultural resources are part of the Comprehensive Settlement Agreement. More important, the Visitor Use Management Plan process for the Skagit River/Highway 20 Corridor involves state lands and waters and presents an opportunity to implement the practices and policies laid out in the Charter. (See page 22-23.)

The final Charter is not posted yet, but the Draft STRII is available online at <https://parks.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2025-03/State-Tribal%20Recreation%20Impacts%20Initiative%20Charter%20-%20Review%20Draft%20March%202025.pdf>

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A view across a western portion of the Pressentin Roadless Area toward the Higgins Roadless Area on the opposite side of the Deer Creek valley. Whitehorse Mountain in the Boulder River Wilderness looms on the far horizon. —JIM SCARBOROUGH PHOTO

Book Review

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scenarios and uneconomic logging prospects are packaged with aquatic and other so-called improvements to sell widespread restoration plans in forests that are nicely trending toward natural maturation after disastrous clearcutting.

Friedman argues, "Our national forests contain hundreds of thousands of acres of forest regrown after clearcut logging up through the 1980s. Research supports thinning these stands to accelerate growth of the remaining trees and expedite stands attaining old-growth characteristics." However, Friedman does not divulge that the purpose for improving the growth of such trees is so they can be logged. There is a distinct indication in Friedman's reporting that these trees will be allowed to mature into old-growth forests. In fact, their growth is intended to increase harvestable wood fiber. It seems from Friedman's September

2025 piece on the website Writers on the Range that he finally understands the intent of restoration forestry, which he has supported, to be to "strip big trees from the national forests." (<https://writersontherange.org>) That seems to indicate that Friedman is starting to feel bamboozled by the lure of harmony with other interests in cutting forests rather than maximizing their ecosystems values for fish, wildlife, watershed and carbon sequestration.

As a reviewer of *Conservation Confidential*, I admit that I do not find the efforts CNW has invested in wildlife corridors for wolves, fishers and wolverines as significant as its other exploits. Friedman's more philosophical push-backs on the perspectives of wilderness advocates John Muir and Aldo Leopold are interesting but not unique. His thoughts on developing relationships with Indians and First Nations peoples are suitably complex and challenging for organizations seeking to create allyships with tribal entities.

Overall, there seems to be a void between the author's extreme environmental protest politics on one hand and the quotidian efforts of many large powerful conservation organizations prone to environmental lobbying as opposed to one-off protests. Friedman seems to glory in his role as a PNW leader while giving some credit to his resolute staff and to other entities engaged directly in implementation of programs.

Overall, my unease boils down to a rejection of a sort of mantra that Friedman espouses, i.e., "Interests can foster collaboration, while positions can engender gridlock". Whose role is it to negotiate interests? Is it the role of an environmental/conservation organization like CNW or is it the role of the land/wildlife management agency? By self-selecting itself as a mediator rather than an advocate for interests and positions, are non-governmental entities such as CNW overstepping their roles in resolving resource management disputes? I don't have an answer. Readers can judge for themselves.



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